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new  
evangelists  
monthly

*September*  
*2017*

# **New Evangelists Monthly #57**

September 2017

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## Forward

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

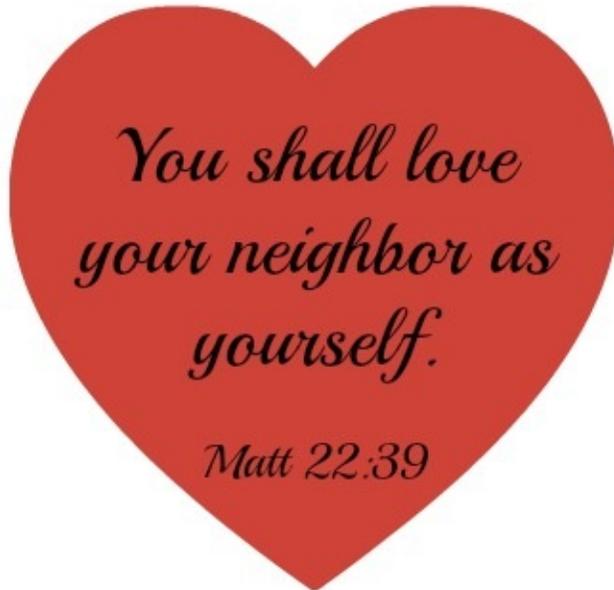
Contributing authors submit their very best piece from the prior month between subsequent first and second Saturdays. Readers are welcome to visit anytime, even while contributions are still being accepted for a new issue. Back issues are available in the archive.

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

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Do you think that you can pick and choose who you want to love? Do you think you can toss aside those not selected? Think again! As Christians, we are called to love, serve and forgive everyone. That is neighborly love! However, given our human weaknesses, that's a tall order! Yet, as followers of Christ, it is a mantle we must take upon ourselves. Christ asks much of us, but with his command to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39), He gives us the grace needed to fulfill His desire.

## **Who is Your Neighbor?**

Although I have the best next-door neighbors (Mike and Carolyn), they alone are not the only ones that Christ calls me to love. When Christ says "Love your neighbor" He is referring to every person that crosses your path. He is not asking you to form a friendly bond with every human being, but He is asking you to respect every person you meet; to treat each person with the degree of kindness that you would want to be treated. That is the practice of neighborly love.

## **What Does Neighborly Love Entail?**

We live in a world where gossip, slander and libel run rampant and unchecked.

Common decency would tell us to refrain from such behavior. Neighborly love requires exertion of common decency toward others. Rather than speaking ill of others, we need to show respect. And let's be real – sometimes that's difficult to do. Nevertheless, we must try. As I write this post, I am reminded of some wise words my mother drilled into me, repeatedly. “When you can't find anything nice to say, don't say anything at all.” Perhaps silence is the best way to start in changing our behavior; moving us toward truly loving our neighbor.

From the silence, we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, showing us ways to demonstrate respect, kindness, and a means to follow Christ's command to “love your neighbor.”

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

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## To Bear the Burden [at On the Road to Damascus]

### Yoke



yōk/

noun: yoke

A wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull.

Yokes are fitted to an animal team. The better the fit the better the animals could work together to bear the load. A well fitting yoke is comfortable and barely noticed by the animals whereas an ill fitting yoke rubs, chaffs, and can do damage to one or both animals it is used on.



There is a tradition that believes Jesus was a master yoke maker. People would come to him from all around to make a yoke for their working team. If this tradition is true then there must have been some people laughing when Jesus said:

*“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* – Matthew 11: 29-30

The yoke maker telling us to take his yoke. Was this holy land advertising?

The Pharisees thought the way to righteousness was by strictly living to the letter of the Torah. This put a great burden on those who tried. You were either lowly because you often failed and couldn't live by the Law or you became holier than thou, like Saul, who boasted of being without fault in the eyes of the Law. Christians see Jesus as the Law fulfilled, the living Torah. Jesus invites all people to live as he does, in the spirit of the Law, and not to be overburdened by trying to ensure every jot and tittle is in its proper place.

The last time I was watching *The Passion of the Christ*, which I can only do once every Easter, a particular scene stuck me in a new way. It was the scene where Simon of Cyrene was pressed into helping Jesus carry his cross.



When I saw this image I immediately saw....a yoke, Christ's yoke. I saw two bearing the burden. I was struck by the way Mel Gibson had "Simon" not only carry the cross but our Lord as well. The two of them worked together to make it to the greatest event in human history.

Jesus goes on to tell his Disciples that if they want eternal life they would have to pick up their crosses and follow him. The way to Calvary was not easy. Nor is it easy to be a Christian. We are called to be better. We are called to be the image of Christ.

Back to the image of the cross being a yoke. A yoke is made for two. We never bear our cross or wear our yoke alone. As Simon helped Christ in his humanity bear the burden so Jesus now helps us in ours. With Jesus as our yokemate is there any burden that could be too heavy? When we stumble is he not there to balance the load. When we can no longer stand does he not put one arm around us and one around our cross and lift us up?

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. Be gentle and humble of heart. I will make your burden light and you will find rest for your soul.



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## Here I Am [at The Mission of Saint Thorlak]

We look more closely this week at what defines our particular approach as missionaries. You will recall that our methods are patterned after the late Bishop Thorlák Thórhallsson of Iceland, whose public leadership and ministry left a lasting impact on the faith of his people, and whose manner was uniquely marked by traits that today would be called autism, social anxiety and communication disorder.

It is the paradox of his success which inspires us to pinpoint the techniques he used with the limitations he had. Did he struggle in secret, or deny his difficulties? Did he rise above his symptoms through some miracle intervention? Was he cured? Did he simply exhibit heroic strength as he fought his way through each obstacle? Did he have parents who advocated for him, friends in high places, elaborate therapies applied to his skill deficits?

No. There was none of that.

Bishop Thorlak did something completely different: He consecrated himself, just as he was, to God's service. To be sure, he did not know the clinical concepts we have today, and he did not explicitly have autism in mind when he chose how to live out his vocation. Even if he had, the process and the result would have been the same. We chose him for our mentor because his method is remarkably simple, accessible and powerful – and it works.



Some might say that Bishop Thorlak was naturally inclined toward everything that led to his success. He was fervent in his faith, loyal in his service and even-tempered in his diplomacy, all of which helped tremendously in his career and as a holy man of God. Yet there were plenty in his time who described Thorlak as somber, rigid, stubborn and headstrong. In other words, he was a saint in the

eyes of the faithful, but not everyone enjoyed his company. (Sounds a little like us ordinary folk, no?) The truth is, he was as human as anyone else, with regular human failings amplified by the effects of autism. For everything remarkable he did, he likely had just as many moments of sensory overload and complete shutdown. We say this to head off any notion that we idealize Bishop Thorlak or portray him as someone above our own experiences. On the contrary, we believe Thorlak had a full range of emotions, traits, behaviors and foibles. Be sure to keep this in mind as you continue reading.

Bishop Thorlak, being fully human and fully fallible, took all that he was, and all that he was not... all that he could do well, and all that confounded him... all that was asked of him, and all that he dreaded in fear... and consecrated it all to God's service. When he did that, a remarkable thing happened: His useful traits became a pleasing, acceptable offering by their own merits, and his (shall we say) less helpful traits were transformed from stumbling blocks into keys which opened doors for him, by way of voluntary humility. He assessed what he lacked and then chose not to curse his disabilities, but to offer his needs as a chance to learn from the people in his see. Rather than being a Bishop of high and removed social standing, he embraced mentorship as a way of life: first seeking mentorship from the people he served, and after receiving their friendship and wisdom, mentoring those in his own employ.



Consecrating ourselves to God's service, in the manner of Bishop Thorlak, is as simple as starting with these three Biblical words: *Here I am*.

**Here I am** – just as you see me. Nothing polished or embellished, as in a job interview, but starkly honest, hiding nothing.

**Here I am** – and I need you. I need you to be a friend to me. I need your company. I need to experience God through you.

**Here I am** – with only that which I’ve got on me. My hands are rather empty. I imagine that I know what you are looking for, and I know I don’t have that. What I do have, I offer you... my skills, my ideas, or maybe just my company. I would love to feel like I am valuable to you, but I have no idea how to be. You tell me.

**Here I am** – and I am glad to be here. I have a lot to learn from you.

**Here I am** – and I have a lot of experiences which might be interesting or helpful to you. I would love to share them with you.



## **PRAY**

**Here I am**, God. What can I do that is useful for You, when I am ordinary and imperfect?

**Here I am**, God, and I’m watching and listening. Show me, by leading me to people around me.

## **CONTEMPLATE**

Imagine presenting yourself to God, seeking Him to employ you. What do you genuinely have to offer Him? What do you feel holds you back? Ask God to show you... and He will, over time. Go slowly as you watch and listen for clues, and thank Him as you notice each puzzle piece.

## **RELATE**

Become aware this week of how God is mentoring you by speaking through

others, and then, how God might be mentoring others by speaking through you.

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This contribution is available at <http://mission-of-saint-thorlak.weebly.com/mission-activities/missionary-thought-for-the-week-of-august-14-2017-here-i-am>  
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## Be Ready [at Plot Line and Sinker]



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

*“Be ready then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”* (Matt 25:12-13)

We all have stories of “sudden deaths” in our families.

In 1909, [my great-grandmother](#) – the mother of eleven children – collapsed and died in the middle of the street while on her way to pay the rent. Her two youngest daughters (twins) were 18 months old. My grandmother was one of those twins.

My husband’s uncle was tragically killed in a bakery accident when he was only 15. My mother-in-law was only 13 at the time her brother died, and he was her closest sibling.

My own father died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 49.

From those killed on the Titanic in 1912 to those who died in the World Trade Center during 9/11, none of us knows the exact hour and day that we will enter eternal life. For many of us, it will be sudden and without warning. It doesn't matter how old we are. All of us need to be ready and spiritually prepared when our time comes.

It doesn't matter whether we are teens, young mothers, middle-aged or elderly, the following points can help us to "be ready."

### **1. State of Grace**

Attend Mass at least weekly, more if possible. The graces from receiving the Eucharist are abundant and help us to be the best we can be. Go to Confession frequently, even if there are only venial sins on your soul. Confession has so many beautiful benefits and graces.

### **2. Prayer Life/Adoration**

Spend time in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Make sure you have a prayer life: Morning offering, Daily Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, Divine Mercy Chaplet. If you don't have a lot of time for prayer, get a Rosary CD or a Divine Mercy CD for your car that you can recite on your way to work or coming home from work. If you're a young mother, pray with an audio CD of the Rosary or say a decade while you're doing the dishes or changing a diaper. Take your children to Adoration, even if it's only for ten minutes.

### **3. Forgive and Ask for Forgiveness**

It sounds easy, but it's not. However, if we want God to forgive our sins, we must forgive those who have sinned against us. And ask forgiveness from those people you have offended or hurt. No one is perfect and we all need to ask forgiveness.

### **4. Fast All Year Round**

Fasting is not just for Lent. When we add fasting (having lighter meals and abstaining from meat) to prayer on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year,

there are many benefits. Fasting invites the Holy Spirit into our hearts, helps us to increase in virtue, and adds weight to our prayer intentions. When we fast for others, we are truly the Good Samaritan. If you can't fast from food, then fast from social media, treats or the internet. Any fasting is positive!

## 5. **Pray to Your Guardian Angel**

Be open to your guardian angel's promptings. Our Guardian Angel has been placed in charge of protecting us and leading us to heaven.

## 6. **Surrender**

*"Not my will, but yours be done."* Surrendering to God's will is not easy in this day and age. Our pride often gets in the way because we think we know best.

## 7. **Give of Yourself to Others**

I have a plaque over my desk that reads "I Am Third." God should always be first in our lives, others (i.e. our family) second and "I am third." Visit the sick and shut in, help others in need.

## 8. **Share Your Love With Your Family**

Don't wait for tomorrow to tell and show those you love. And remember that love isn't just a "feeling." It's a choice to will the good of the other. It's a decision to love even when a person is not lovable.

If we are always ready and if we stay close to God, we will be prepared for eternal life and for the day when we reach the gates of heaven and hear the words of God: *"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master."* (Matt 25-23)

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## Who will defend the innocence of our children? [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

As states impose sexual education on every child in the land, are they truly doing what is best for these children, or have they allowed themselves to become the unwitting tools of an ideology? We who are parents - fathers and mothers - relatives, teachers, pastors, mentors, and other interested parties, are we to stand idly by and allow our children and future generations to be violated and have their innocence shattered? Many German people later regretted having been intimidated by the Nazis and having remained silent out of fear. What is silencing us?

*A distinct society*

This is Québec, Canada, one of ten provinces known for its "

### [distinct society](#)

" since the 1760 British conquest and the 1763 Act of British Parliament which unusually opted to allow French society and culture to continue unchanged alongside the British, which would now be dominant. The British Parliament provided for British Common Law to govern new arrivals (especially British ones) and to allow French civil law to simultaneously continue to govern French-speaking inhabitants.

During the so-called "

### [Quiet Revolution](#)

" of the 1960's the

### [Québec provincial government](#)

nationalized or privatized many health and social services, which were originally created by the Roman Catholic Church during the first generations of the colony, or which were developed later.

During all the time that elapsed since the

During all the time that elapsed since the

### [foundation of the colonies](#)

in Canada between 1534 and 1608 until the mid-1900's, the French population and its clergy - despite differences of opinion and conviction - acted with one will and common purpose when they needed to collaborate to live out together and to preserve their French language, their faith, their values, culture, and society. Primary among their values were marriage, family life, social order, cooperation, and the value of human life as the bases of a harmonious and healthy community and society. This harmonious collaboration in the service of shared values has now eroded and changed.

*Sexual education should be dispensed by parents not by strangers in schools*

This September of 2017 - next month - the Québec Ministry of Education is poised to impose on the entire school population, from grades one to eleven, the most aggressive

### [sexual education program](#)

this land has ever witnessed. This government is in effect aligning itself with those interests which for years now have been

### [intensively lobbying from the United Nations](#)

to persuade or compel nations to abandon traditional values regarding human sexuality and any links of meaning or significance with Christian or other religious and moral principles.

The ideology which is driving "Comprehensive Sexuality Education" is in fact conductin a

### [war on children all over the world](#)

and clearly trying to eclipse the Judeo-Christian understanding of human life and human sexuality as only one dimension of this life, albeit an important one. The Québec government and its Ministry of Education are aligning themselves with the proponents of the "sexual revolution" initiated by Alfred Kinsey in the 1940's and 1950's with his

[fraudulent science](#)

, and so they are choosing to ignore everything that our society has come to understand about human development and the maturation of the human person, as well as the social and religious values held and defended by this society until recently.

Kinsey and all those who adopted his erroneous data have done

[great harm to women and children](#)

in particular, as well as to men. However, a good number of people have been

[laboring to expose](#)

the

[fraudulent science](#)

with which Kinsey ignited the "

" by enthraling educated as well as relatively undeducated people as he demolished social taboos against speaking about sex at all.

I invite you, reader, to reflect on this further with me, that we may see why sexual education should be dispensed by parents and not by strangers in schools.

Sexual education touches children to the very depths of their identity and their purpose and meaning in life; so it should happen in the loving and trusting context of the love and care of parents for their children. Parents know their own children most personally and completely, and in their parental love they are the most qualified and competent to dispense their children's complete human formation.

It seems apparent and undisputable, then, that when the state takes over this crucial parental role of introducing children to such an intimate dimension of their human life and identity - which for those who believe in God as He has revealed himself to Jews and Christians is inseparable from our life of faith in a personal and communal relationship with God - then what the state is doing is declaring that its citizens who are parents are incompetent to educate and form their children adequately.

their children adequately.

So then, how is the qualification "adequate" being interpreted here? Those interests - that are so bent on having "Comprehensive Sexuality Education" adopted worldwide - want every child on the planet to explore and play with their genitals and those of other children years in advance of their puberty. It is no longer enough for these homosexuals to be accepted by society; now they want all of society to be as they are, and to this end they are attempting to intimidate the whole world into adopting this very aggressive sex education program. In their eyes, only CSE will be adequate to their ends.

Let's be perfectly clear about it - this CSE sex ed program is indoctrination - which is dangerous for children unless their parents ground them in a wholesome understanding of their human sexuality and dignity in accord with their family values. The web and social media already expose most children from a young age to sexual imagery - inappropriate for the most part from many points of view - which is another reason why

[parents should initiate](#)

sex talk with their children from a young age. Some parents may find this easier to do than others, but even when they find it awkward or difficult, it is still

[well worth doing](#)

, and children will be better off for experiencing their parents' support.

For parents and for all those who authentically care for children, the best way to serve what is good for children and most effectively serve their well being, the context and setting of parental love and trust is to be prioritized and favored as the most adequate to educate and form children to discover and understand most fully and deeply their human sexuality and dignity. Even

[parents who embrace the secular values](#)

that accept the omnipresence of sexual expression advocate for parents to educate their children to understand their sexuality.

Parents naturally would appreciate true

[collaboration and support](#)

from their children's schools, the ministry of education, and their church.

### [Christian parents](#)

can choose from a variety of approaches from a Christian

### [Bible Study](#)

to a Catholic online

### [Family Life Education](#)

Program. A Roman Catholic woman - wife and mother - in France has developed an incredibly sensitive, insightful, and creative way to speak to her children about their human dignity and sexuality in a way that reveals the full

### [beauty of God's plan](#)

for our happiness and "waxes" children to protect them and help them withstand the onslaught of our hyper-sexualized world.

*Children and youth are in flux as they grow and develop*

Psychological anthropology had firmly established by the 1980's that the human person has not yet experienced the full cycle of its human development

### [until the mid twenties](#)

, when a person's identity tends to arrive at sufficient clarity to enable more mature, balanced, and responsible decisions. This means that children and youth are likely to experience a very wide range of emotions and feelings, but that throughout this period they live in a state of relative flux and development.

Care must be taken not to encourage children or youth to "lock themselves in" on a particular state of being or of experience by applying any social or psychological labels to themselves. Whatever it is that they are going through, they are quite likely to change over time. All the more reason then must care be taken to protect children from indoctrination and manipulative exposure to exceptional or risky lifestyles even though these

[may be portrayed as normal and safe](#)

when they actually represent conditions that present greater risk against health and life.

The period between the age of nightmares (from age 3 to 6) and puberty has come to be understood as the latency stage, when pre-pubescent children are not interested in sex and should be respected and allowed to thrive in their innocence. Naturally curious, they may act out their curiosity and play doctor or nurse to "examine" one another. Moreover, if exposed to sexual situations or images they will show interest, but if left on their own and not forcibly exposed to sexual situations, young children are not spontaneously interested. During this stage they may make derogatory remarks or exchange jokes with their peers to mask their interest, especially if their environment is particularly obsessed with sex and won't allow them

not

to be interested, but we should not conclude that they are. This has been the considered view of those in the medical and psychological professions, parents, teachers, and pastors until the sexual revolution of the mid-1900's.

*Political activist interference in medicine, psychiatry, and science by lobby group interests*

It is important to realize that some well established medical knowledge, based upon long experience and scientific study, suddenly changed in the final decades of the 20th century, but not for scientific reasons. The latency period was dropped as were all the psychiatric diagnoses that long considered homosexuality and other peripheral sexual practices as deviant or even diseased.

The APA - The American Psychiatric Association -

[dropped homosexuality from its DSM II](#)

, its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, in 1973. This came shortly after

## [gay lobby activists disrupted the APA annual convention](#)

in San Francisco in 1970, quite intimidating the speakers and convention participants. It was not strict science and medical or psychiatric practice that brought these changes in due course. The fraudulent science and ideological claims of Alfred Kinsey in the 1940's and 1950's exerted undue influence as well. The situation was governed more by politics than science.

### *The latency period in children is real and it protects them*

The latency period, though held as a theory, is based upon observation and makes sense. Much of our medical and psychiatric knowledge is constructed on theories that show themselves to be reliable even though it may not be possible to define them as scientific laws. Not all that happens in nature is as clear cut as gravity. Our developmental stages came to be well established and generally accepted until the gay lobby exerted undue political pressure on medical and psychiatric bodies.

The latency period is good for children and it can be shown that they are worse for it when their latency is disturbed. So much is already changing within children that in order to develop a healthy persona they need during these intense few years to "enjoy a break" from the greater complexity and intensity of emotion which will most certainly be generated by puberty and the great upheaval of sexual awareness. They don't need to be forced to give more attention to sexual things sooner than their human nature requires of them, particularly during this period from 6 to 12 when they are far more preoccupied with learning and with competitiveness in a host of domains and activities.

Unless forcibly exposed to sexual things, during the latency stage the normal child is generally not interested in the other gender or in anything sexual, putting behind them their initial curiosity as little children quite intent on playing "doctor" and "nurse". Older children actually find the other gender or any overtly romantic behaviours as "disgusting" and may take great pleasure in declaring this to the world. While there may be subconscious interest or fascination with sexuality in general and with those who are different in particular, children normally like to show their disgust for such things and to remain free to give their attention to the other concerns and activities which they and their peers prioritize, such as comradeship, games, competition, learning, discovery, and adventure.

*We must be alert to sexual abuse and vigorously protect children and all minors*

There is a legitimate concern that some children are forcibly exposed to sexual matters, or worse, are actually abused sexually through exposure or by being touched and manipulated by others who are more sexually aware or even predatory. Sexual abuse of minors is a very grave wrong and we must do all we can to prevent it and to care for those who have suffered in such ways. However, protecting the innocence of every single child in a society can never justify broad exposure of all children to controversial sexual lifestyles as a strategy to protect them in advance from abuse by alerting them to every possible danger in exhaustive detail.

*What is a woman? What is a man?*

Our best understanding of human life is that we require some 25 years to emerge from basic human development with sufficient balance and depth to make responsible decisions for ourselves and for others. Our discussions about human sexuality likewise are more likely to serve the common good on the basis of altruism, that is, selfless love of others, as the primary principle that organizes human existence. This does not for all that exclude the legitimate love of self.

The woman who is aware of her own impulse to seek pleasure and avoid pain but who restrains her impulses when motivated by consideration for and love of others is, in this view, more feminine than should she favor herself over others. She is not forever depriving herself but deliberately choosing to withdraw her attention from self satisfaction for the time it takes for her to care for others, and the more she is willing to endure discomfort - even pain - out of love for others, the more womanly she is. Moreover, there is a higher or deeper or more perfect sense of joy or pleasure or satisfaction available to her for doing so, for serving others in this way. Putting up with labor pains for the sake of giving birth to her child(ren) is the classic example of female altruism.

A man is most manly when he puts up with discomfort and delays or puts aside his own pleasure to attend to and serve the needs and pleasure of others. The more patient, selfless, and courageous he is, the more manly he is deemed to be and appreciated and loved. A classic example of male altruism or selfless love is for a father to put the good of his wife and his children ahead of his own benefit or comfort, even to the point of laying down his life for them.

Similarly, this husband will withdraw his attention from his own pleasure as he

approaches his wife in intimacy in order to attend to her; in order for the groom of the bride - the bridegroom - to "groom" his bride or care for her in the ways in which she most needs to be cared for. In the act of sexual intercourse, the male is notoriously "faster" than the female, and this tends to result in dissatisfaction or even pain for the woman when the man is preoccupied with his own pleasure and attending to himself rather than to his wife.

### *Chaste lovers versus sexual addicts*

This is the whole point of chastity in the Judeo-Christian world view and anthropology: a chaste man approaches his wife not seeking his own pleasure but motivated and focusing his attention and energy on expressing love to his wife by attending to her appreciation and pleasure. In response, a chaste woman gladly receives pleasure from her husband and dwells not on her own pleasure only but rather with the beloved who is pleasuring her and responds to him with love, gratitude, and tenderness.

Chastity is primarily and constantly loving the other, not the pleasure I am getting in their company. Chaste love chooses to love the giver of the gift rather than merely on the gift or the pleasure it gives. Chaste marital embrace brings husband and wife face to face, revealing themselves to one another as they do their best to do all day long every day of their lives. How deeply they may contemplate and look into each other's soul through the windows of their eyes as they tenderly hold one another in loving embrace....

This is one reason why the many forms of sexual pleasuring rampant today that tend to join face to genitals rather than face to face may cause feelings of discomfort or embarrassment or shame in one or the other. We can be suspicious that what motivates one to want such things has more to do with desires that evoke addictive impulses than with authentic love of the other. A second reason to doubt the life-giving character of such practices comes from what motivated the Creator to assign pleasure to that specific function that is capable of giving life, of conceiving new life. We can legitimately doubt the validity of any other use we may want to make of sexual pleasure. The chaste conservation of genital sexuality for marriage and family is primarily a manifestation of respect for the procreative act, for the incalculable value of human life, and for the intention of the Creator.

Chastity outside of the relationship of husband and wife opens itself to a love that is wider and deeper than mere sexual passion and pleasure. Outside of

that is wider and deeper than mere sexual passion and pleasure. Outside of marriage, people who love chastely put aside all that seeks sexual gratification in order to attend fully to the people they love and serve, as well as to attend with their full attention to the many complex facets of human life alone and together. Chastity opens one fully to experience and appreciate the simple pleasure of being alive and participating fully in one's life in every wholesome and moral way other than sexual genital expression.

Chastity reveals to human beings that genital sexual expression is not a basic human need akin to our need for food, drink, shelter, heat, clothing, work, society, play, truth, goodness, and beauty. All of these are necessary for human life; whereas genital sexual expression is not. People have clearly demonstrated in every culture and time that human beings can live a fully meaningful and happy life without sex, but there are many today who want to suppress this knowledge and history.

*The ephemeral in love is a doorway to the infinite, to the divine*

Sexual pleasure is notoriously brief and ephemeral, which is one reason why there is so much hype about it in human society these days. It is an attempt to stretch out that sexual pleasure by capitalizing on the pleasure of anticipation. There is no doubting that anticipation is truly a precious aspect of our human existence. Even more precious is the contemplation of which we the human species are all uniquely capable. Married couples - husbands and wives - have witnessed that there is no greater pleasure than laying side by side after having given and received from one another in sexual union.

The undisputably ephemeral character of sexual pleasure is the greatest clue it contains that it was designed not to be experienced in isolation but in conjunction with a close friendship that grows into ever greater and greater depths. True love of the other wants to remain with the other forever to go on pouring oneself out in loving service of the other. Sexual union taken as a rogue act denies this truth and actually inflicts harm on the other as well as on oneself.

The inseparable bonds between sexual union, marriage, new life, and family are strong evidence for their design by a benevolent, loving Creator. Taken by itself, or for its own sake, sexual pleasure in "deflating" emotional energy leads to depression, disappointment, and intensifies loneliness; rather than intensifying communion and selfless love, for which it was designed. Employed as a natural means for developing couple unity and communion in marriage, sexual union unceasingly builds on the past and looks to the future while it attends so

unceasingly builds on the past and looks to the future while it attends so generously to the other in the present.

Moreover, for those who believe in God, God's love is enough to more than satisfy the human heart. In fact, only the love of God can truly and lastingly satisfy and fulfill the human heart, even that of spouses, and the love of God relieves spouses of the impossible burden of "making their spouse happy", which is humanly impossible. No human can "make another happy", but God can, because only God can perfectly bestow his life, his own self, upon us. In his Gospel John the Apostle and Evangelist reports Jesus declaring that we can only have life fully by welcoming his gift of himself into us, into our lives.

### *Sexual union in view of contemplation and the integration of human life*

From the moment they met and fell in love they have grown in their personal capacity to attend to the other and effectively express to the other their love and appreciation, their mutual help and service, and to discover ever more creative ways to spend time together, alone and including their children in time, as well as their families of origin, other relatives, friends, associates, those with whom they share their faith, neighbours, and even strangers. All week long they share their common life and the elements of their lives that are particular and unique to each of them. They journey together even as they are engaged in separate labors, duties, and activities.

Day by day they grow in admiration for one another's qualities and giving of themselves to others, and in compassion and understanding for one another's weaknesses and shortcomings. They offer each other mutual help, encouragement, support, forgiveness, rescue when needed, care, sollicitude, and love. All their intensity of living as individuals and of sharing their lives together and building up this new entity that is their "couple" relationship is what builds their family and creates their home, and it is into this "nest" that they welcome their children when these arrive; whether it is through their own mutual giving in conception and birth or by adoption.

It is all this living and giving and loving that is the true "foreplay" of love between husbands and their wives, which is going on all the time, and the more conscious they are of this truth; then the more beautiful and satisfying - even thrilling - are the moments they experience and efforts they deploy in

anticipation or coming together in love and affectionate embrace. By the time they come to their moments of sexual union, their minds, hearts, and souls - for having lived their love for one another so truthfully and completely all week long - are vibrating more deeply and intensively than their bodies. Once their moment of sexual union is over - as it so quickly tends to be - they relax in the utter satisfaction of mutual love and contemplation as they lay side by side, glowing with the love they have for the other and the love they feel and receive from the other in the blessed relationship and union which they are uniquely privileged to enjoy together.

It is in this contemplative dimension of their marriage relationship that Christian husbands and wives discover the loving presence of God as the very source and fountain of the love pouring into them, through them, and out from them to one another and to their children. In contemplating one another in love, wives and husbands discover God revealing Himself in his perfect divine love to them in the person of their spouse. It is precisely for this revelation and life infilling of love that God the Creator designed human beings in his own image, male and female in complementary difference; so that in their willingness to forget about oneself they might in ever greater depths discover themselves and receive more abundant life in the very act of loving the other by giving themselves away.

*Forgiveness pushes the boundaries and expands the limits of human love*

For people who embrace the Creator's design for our life and loving, they discover how to live in two dimensions simultaneously: the human and the divine. In the human dimension they learn how to live through both pleasure and pain / discomfort without allowing these experiences to overly impress or disturb them; while in the divine dimension they discover ever more deeply how to love the other by pouring themselves out and spending themselves completely in a self-giving that ironically renews the self through the very act of pouring the self out, of spending the self to the very last drop for the sake of the other and the other's highest good. This is what could be called an integrated human sexuality because the sexual dimension is fully integrated into the full meaning and purpose of human existence with all the complexity and depth of what it means to be human.

You may have heard or read the expression or proverb: "to err is human, to forgive, divine." "All people commit sins and make mistakes. God forgives them, and people are acting in a godlike, divine way, when they forgive." This saying is from "An Essay on Criticism" by

## [Alexander Pope](#)

. Christian spouses or spouses inspired by Christ who practice mutual forgiveness consistently plumb ever more profound depths of authentic love as they become ever more intimately familiar with one another's faults and are hurt by one another's sins and yet faithfully forgive the other with a pure heart sincerely desiring the other's good, conversion, and perfection. This dimension of forgiveness exponentially increases the mutual love of spouses and enhances their sexual embracing and expressions of love.

This is so because there can be no more perfect or authentic expression of love than forgiveness; since to forgive is to give with no assurance of ever receiving an equal return. Every time they are hurt and forgive, every time they have offended and been forgiven, every time they embrace and show love to the other, every time they pour themselves out in selfless effort and the giving over of their self, every time they love with divine love; every time, they add layers of beauty, truth, and goodness to their spousal love and mutual relationship. Every time they lay side by side after their embraces in the nuptial bed, they continue to weave the tapestry that is their married and family life and make room in its warmth for their children and all those they welcome into their "home".

*Matrimony qualifies parents to educate and initiate their children to the beauty of living to love*

All of this endeavour transforms marriage from a human contract into a divine covenant, from sexual union into matrimony, which is from the latin

*mater*

for mother and

*monium*

for state or condition. Matrimony is this enterprise of love initiated by the man / groom / husband and reciprocated by the woman / bride / wife, which creates the optimum conditions for the woman to transform into mother and fully activating her awesome powers for giving and nurturing life, not only for her children but also for her husband and for all those that are privileged to be welcomed into the family circle.

When married couples, husband and wife, embrace this awesome design in their mutual love, they experience the very love of God in each other and in their pouring out selflessly of themselves for the other. It is this very presence of the divine life-giving Spirit within their love and their couple that gives ever more life to husband and wife and the children they welcome into their family. They have every reason to be peaceful and to experience with great joy their great freedom and dignity in God, and have no true reason to be ashamed of their sexuality. They can enjoy and exercise their authority fully as parents to form their children in this wondrous understanding of the meaning and significance of human sexuality and its role in giving both life and love.

### *The complementarity of marriage and celibacy in the kingdom of God*

It can truly be said then that woman needs man in order to fully develop her potential as woman; just as man needs woman in order to fully develop his potential as man. The man needs to love his wife - this other who will always be different from him - accepting in this way without limit to endure pain and deprivation and forgetfulness of his own impulses, needs, and wants, even to the point of laying down his life; in order to become truly manly. The woman needs to be cherished and loved to this extent by her husband in order to fully appreciate her own riches and generosity and so bloom and discover within her depths her almost limitless capacity to give of her riches, pouring out her very life in order to give and nurture life to others without destroying herself.

In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, what is true of marriage and matrimony is equally true of celibate vocations whereby men and women separately pour themselves out in love and service to their fellow human beings in a great variety of life settings: for medical and social services; for education and human formation; for art, music, and literature; for the cultivation of the Earth and its resources; for the solitary and communal contemplation of the mystery of God; and for providing the opportunity and means for their fellow human beings to come to know, love, serve, and worship the Almighty. This too expands the horizons of all that can be integrated into our human experience.

### *Integrated human sexuality versus sexology*

It would be foolish not to acknowledge that for other human beings, the acceptance or quest for pleasure and the avoidance of pain and discomfort is the primary organizing principle of human life. It is logical then for such people to view sexual pleasure as everywhere and always desirable, in or out of marriage.

It their view, given that sexual pleasure is ever available and seems to cost nothing, it makes perfect sense to prioritize it.

From among the adherents of this view of human life and sex we hear that some see themselves as champions of the rights of children and youth to suffer no restrictions in the enjoyment of sex, not even from their parents. What they are doing is substituting themselves as the primary care givers of children, by the same token declaring those parents incompetent and holding them in contempt as likely antagonists working against children's sexual emancipation.

As this trend grows, tolerating no religious or moral principles that would limit in any way their quest for unrestricted sexual pleasure; the appearance of a new layer of society more intensively interested in sex has coincided with the development of "sexology" as a new profession with a claim to seek to help people with sexual dysfunctions or difficulties. Those who embrace this new trend may tend to reject the notion of a period of latency in children to favor the view that human beings are interested in sex in differing degrees from birth throughout their lives. These folks would be among the most energetic proponents of a school based Sex Education program to "trump" the parents.

*Comprehensive Sexuality Education - a euphemism for sex without moral restraints*

What we are currently witnessing throughout the world could be characterized as a hostile takeover by an aggressive sexual ideology - euphemistically called "

### [Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#)

" - which is currently pushing on the world stage to displace what has been the normal constellation of human values since time immemorial. Credible witnesses report weekly the

### [relentless attacks at the United Nations](#)

that aggressively seek to impose on all member nations their sexual ideology, which seeks to

### [promote particular lobby interests](#)

rather than the actual good and rights of children.

The manifest intention of these lobbyists is to displace those values contained in the "

### [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

" and adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and replace them with the complex ideology which underpins what is being called "

### [The Global Sexual Revolution.](#)

" It is no coincidence that

published his first book to disintegrate western society's social and moral values with his first book also in 1948, ostensibly launching the "sexual revolution".

During the French Revolution the

### [Marquis de Sade](#)

may have been the first to portray as pleasurable and desirable with the written word forms of sexuality that society found to be perverse.

### [Margaret Sanger](#)

(1879-1966) and the Eugenics Movement has been less known but most people living today have at least heard of the Nazi's "pure race" National Socialist ideology which they carried out in Germany by exterminating all those deemed "impure". Here is a

### [quote from Sanger](#)

indicating her thought about "engineering" the kind of society we want tomorrow through abortion.

*“How are we to breed a race of human thoroughbreds unless we follow the same plan? We must make this country into a garden of children instead of a disorderly back lot overrun with human weeds.” (1924)*

Eugenics was "in the air" at the beginning of the 20th century and popularly held in intelligentsia circles, at least some of them, primarily out of a concern for "overpopulation". Margaret is recognized as the

[foundress](#)

of "

[Planned Parenthood](#)

" which movement is far less about parenthood and planning for children and far more about planning for a reduction of babies, particularly among segments of society considered to be less worthy of passing on their genes. This movement is also promoting sex without consequences or risks, which is an illusion and a lie generating deadly effects throughout society. It generates a culture that holds in contempt the very idea of sexual abstinence.

De Sade and Sanger are among the pillars upon which today's sexual activists have their footing. In most societies it is the husband and wife couple that are the heart of the family, and any other models of sexual expression have been marginalized by the majority of their populations. This consigning to the margins may have been simply through benign neglect or withdrawal of attention or through active and even severe persecution and repression. One clear feature of the 20th century has been the various movements of emancipation and liberation, most notably of black slaves in the Americas.

Emancipation has been co-opted as an ideology by homosexuals in what was initially deployed as the social engineering agenda of the "gay lobby" in the middle of the 20th century. Documents internal to this movement have since come to light delineating a clear and deliberate strategy to approach the general population by winning sympathy to their espoused cause of liberation from persecution. Once sympathy was won, the next step was to progressively erode the general population's aversion to homosexuality until this different perspective was accepted as an alternative to the traditional model of marriage and family.

*We need to distinguish the political movement from the lives of real people and families*

What appeared to be the destination or final goal of the gay lobby was the advent of "gay marriage" or the social acceptance of marriage between two people of the same sex. In fact and practice, "same sex marriage" has stretched the traditional definition of marriage to the point that the word no longer means

what it used to mean. Furthermore, the understanding of parenting has also been stretched to make the exceptional situation of single parenting a basis for extending this exceptional reality and practice as a normative alternative for parenting by two mothers or fathers.

We need to carefully make the distinction here between political movements and lobbying and the real lives of people and families. I would dare venture that most if not all of us know someone, maybe even someone whom we love dearly, who have entered into a "same sex civil marriage" and / or are raising children with two mothers or two fathers. As Pope Francis said so well, "Who am I to judge?" We can only have admiration and respect for anyone who brings children into the world or adopts them and the commits decades of their lives to raising them to live a meaningful life.

What we are discussing here is the political movements that are trying to replace traditional values with peripheral ones, that is, trying to indoctrinate children into thinking that a homosexual lifestyle is equal in value to the marriage of one man and one woman for the raising of children, and going so far as to encourage all children to experiment with homosexual sexual expression from a young age in order to engineer a society in which the homosexual agenda may become the dominant one. In the long experience of humanity, it can be fairly and justly said that

[children have a right](#)

to a mother and a father, to have both parents. The gay lobby will have none of that.

In the last few years it has become shockingly apparent that the impression that same sex marriage and parenting would be the final destination of the gay lobby was just that, a false impression, and nothing more. "Gay rights" has since progressively developed towards a full blown ideology which step by step was publicized as "lesbian and gay" rights, then "lesbian, gay, and bisexual" rights, then "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transexual" rights, then "LGBTQ" rights (adding Q for queer, or for some, questioning, and swapping transexual for transgendered), and most recently with the full deployment of "gender theory" initially in Europe, "LGBTQIA" rights, where T is for transgendered, I is for Intersex, and A is for Asexual.

It is finally clear now for all to see and understand that this entire social

movement values, promotes, and champions nothing less than unlimited and unrestricted sex devoid of any traditional morality. This is not to say that those who bear in their spirits these convictions and aspirations are incapable of selfless love and dedication. On the contrary. Every human being is capable of altruism and at some point feels drawn to give selflessly, even courageously and generously. What we are considering here is the degree to which any individual or group wants human life and society to be sexualized. Once again, we are discussing here political manipulation of society and not the value of real lives.

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is no longer quite as universal as it was*

Before all these social revolutions, church, government, and most if not all public institutions served the public purpose of defending and promoting the values of the general population and the common good, which since the time of the colony consisted primarily but not exclusively of Judeo-Christian faith and values. While it is true that these values and the lives upon which they are based have gone through varying degrees of erosion; the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights has continued to most accurately represent this society's foundational values, particularly with regard to marriage and family life, and public institutions reflected this fact.

In the public square the primary motor driving change appears to have been what has rapidly evolved from the "gay lobby" into the "LGBTQIA" ideology. At the outset the gay lobby simply called for the general society to recognize as equal citizens those with a different sexual orientation and to help stop persecution and unjust treatment towards such persons. A major shift is now occurring as you read this from Europe to the Americas to Oceania and soon to Asia and Africa: those pushing this complex of ideologies is now demanding that their ideology and interpretation of human anthropology replace all that has gone before. For a growing number of individuals and practitioners of various social, medical, and psychological services, "wall to wall" sex is already the "

[new normal](#)

". Ultimately now, there are those who want children to be so indoctrinated that any other view of what is a human being, what is human life, and what is human sexuality will be stamped out.

The new sex education program will be encouraging children from grade one if

not from kindergarten to "explore their sexuality" in every way imaginable, and presenting this as the new normal. Anything else will be increasingly seen as deviant, and perhaps soon, criminal. If you don't believe these words, then

[check it out](#)

for yourself.

December 8th, 1995, the Roman Catholic Church published "

[The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality](#)

" which expresses clearly and intelligibly the place and role of our sexuality in our human life and both private and social beings. Sections V to VIII are specifically addressed to parents as the first educators of their children and declares that states should never displace or attempt to substitute for the parents, and that formation of children in their affective lives and in their human sexuality should take place within the context of their loving and trusting relationship with their parents and with reference to the constellation of our moral values and faith if at all possible.

*More life and more love, not less*

The good news brought to the Earth and humanity by the Son of God who became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, was born in Bethlehem, and came to be known as Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary and of Joseph the carpenter - this good news that He brought by his very life and example and then more explicitly in his preaching, miracles, passion, death, and resurrection - this good news is for all of humanity to experience more life and more love, not less.

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believe in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly*

*seen that their deeds have been done in God." John 3:16-21*

Jesus revealed even more clearly than the Word of God in the Jewish Scriptures that God loves every human being and wants to pour into each person his own divine life. All He asks is that we come to know his ways and then to abide in them. The "manufacturer" has the right to issue instructions or a "user's manual", which is what God has done. It is up to each of us to take greater interest in what He has to say to us about Himself - about God - as well as about us, about our human life. After all, our life here is only a beginning, and when we die, we bring with us all that we have become as a person, both the good and the bad. We hope to lay aside all the bad and retain only the good by the end.

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This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2017/08/who-will-defend-innocence-of-our.html>  
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## One Who Does not Possess the Truth

by Lawrence Fox

This is the Quran:

“Who could prevent Allah from destroying the Messiah, the son of Mary along with his mother and all the people of the

earth? His is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He creates what He will and has power over all things." (Surah 5:19)



That’s right Mohammed (570-632 AD), alleged prophet, founder of Islam and the author of the Quran, says that his god, allah, could destroy Jesus, the Messiah, and His mother Mary. Not to mention the rest of humanity. What kind of god did Mohammed create?

This was allah’s wake of destruction in 2017: the Palm Sunday bombings in Egypt with 45 killed; 23 murders in Manchester, London by a British Muslim; and deaths in the Philippines top 500 with 381 of those ISIS fighters. In seaside towns near Barcelona, Spain, 13 are dead. There are countless others injured in all those locations and hundreds of thousands fled their homes in the southern Philippines to escape Islamic terror.



I am repeating the following observation:

We must understand Mohammed's justification of violence in the name of his god, allah, by reflecting on the Islamic doctrine of unitarianism in the Quran. Islamic unitarianism is the belief that god is a solitary person. He has no inner reflective life. And he — the god allah — **is revealed in violence and power.**

Allah tells Mohammad, "Unbelievers are those who declare, 'Allah is the Messiah, the Son of Mary.' Allah then says to Mohammad, say: 'Who could prevent Allah from destroying the Messiah, the son of Mary along with his mother and all the people of the earth?' His is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He creates what He will and has power over all things." (Surah 5:19)



This so-called unitarian god is totally opposite of the Christian God. God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, His Son. He is self-sacrificing Love. He will not act against His own Goodness. He has an inner reflective relationship -- a trinitarian communion of Three Persons in One God. In Islam, allah is a master of slaves. We are all slaves. In Christianity, God is Our Father. Jesus came in the flesh and revealed that to us.



“I’m your boss because I am your boss. Allah is god because he destroys.” Islam believes it has the right to destroy and when it does, it demonstrates the will and nature of allah. It is a circular argument within the Quran and as such is lived in a circular manner throughout the life of Mohammad and Islamic History.

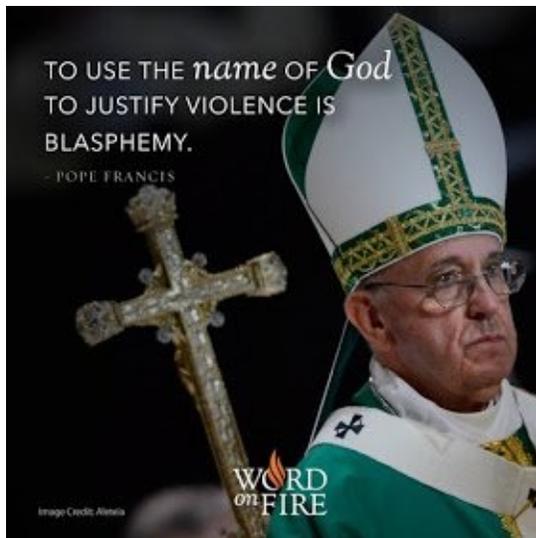
“O Prophet ! Urge the believers to fight...they will overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because the disbelievers (non-Muslims) are people who do not understand.” (Surah 8:65) and again, “It is not for a Prophet that he should have prisoners of war and free them for ransom until he had made a great slaughter among his enemies in the land.” (Surah 8:67)

Allah argues in the Quran that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because allah is able to destroy Jesus and his mother Mary and every other living thing. The destruction of all living things would be for allah a sort of Pyrrhic victory, Who would be left behind to give allah glory? This is a satanic teaching.

It is also a strange revelation since allah recites elsewhere in the Quran, “They plotted and Allah plotted. Allah is the supreme Plotter. He said: “Jesus I am about to cause you to die and lift you up to Me. I shall take you away from the unbelievers and exalt your followers (Muslims) above them till the Day or Resurrection. Then to me you shall return and I judge your disputes.” (Surah 3:55)

This Surah refers to the fact that -- while the Muslims do not believe Christ died on the cross -- allah supposedly killed Jesus in the first century before the Quran was written. If the Quran proposes Jesus' death -- given that Jesus is already once dead and revived -- then the argument is absurd.

The ability to destroy is void of any evidence of divinity, it is a non-sequitur (does not follow from the premise). Human beings are quite capable of destroying other human beings



as well as whole cities, cultures, churches, libraries, monuments, images, and anything else related to human history. But none of these men are gods.

Tragically, men rise and fall throughout human history arguing, “power as justice, power as truth, power as good” only to leave behind the ashes of destruction and pain.

The promotion of violence as means of demonstrating truth betrays a weakness in one’s knowledge of the truth; a confusion of the mind and an absence of Wisdom.

*“For the Lord God did not make Death, He takes no pleasure in destroying the living.”*(Wisdom. 1:13) Allah is not arguing from a position of strength but weakness. He does not possess the Truth.

Note that while I read through the Quran a number of times, it became quite obvious that the author of the Quran was unable to comprehend what is Orthodox Christianity.

According to the Quran, Christians worshipped Jesus and Mary as two separate gods along side Allah; and the Jews worshipped Ezra the Priest, “The Jews say, ‘Ezra is a son of God’; and the Christians say, ‘The Messiah is a son of God.’ Such are the saying in their mouths. They resemble the sayings of the infidels of old. Allah, Do battle with them! How are they so misguided! They take their teachers, and their monks, and the Messiah, the son of Mary for Lords (masters) beside Allah, though bidden to worship Allah alone. There is no Allah by Allah! Far from His glory be what they associate with Him.” (Surah 9:30)

One would think that Allah “being all knowing” would be able to grasp what Christians and Jews actually wrote and believed. Christianity never taught that Jesus and Mary are other gods. Jesus is True God and True Man, One in Being with the Father. Mary, His mother, is a human being. The Jews never said Ezra is the son of God. It's not in the Old Testament.

Anyway, Mohammed was taught to discern truth, virtue, and justice (right and wrong) from this perspective of power and violence. It is no wonder that after his journey to Medina; he becomes a warrior Prophet; recitals are begotten alongside acts of terror on neighbouring Arab and Jewish tribes.

While in Medina, Mohammad received the revelation, “Kill the pagans (polytheists) wherever you find them, and capture



them and besiege them and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush.”

(Surah 9:5)

After Mohammad's flight from Mecca to Medina -- known as the Hijra -- the swell of violence begins. Mohammed and his merry men attack Meccan caravans traveling between Syria and Mecca. In 624 AD Quraysh tribesmen respond and engage Mohammad and his followers at the Battle of Badr; which did not go well for Mohammad. The same scenario was played out again in 625 AD when Quraysh tribesmen engaged Mohammad and his followers at the Battle of Uhud; which again did not go well for Mohammad. So Mohammad changes his tactics. In 626 AD, Mohammad attacks the Jewish tribe of Al-Nadir and expels them from Medina. In 627 AD, Mohammad and his followers defeat the Meccans at the Battle of the Ditch. Things are now turned around and Mohammad is willing to attack the city of Mecca directly. In the same year (627 AD) Mohammad slaughters the Jewish tribe of Qurayza, beheading eight



hundred Jewish men allowing only one man to live and takes as slaves all the women and children. In 629 AD, Mohammad and his men slaughter the Jews of Kybar during a night raid. Mohammad's tenth wife (Safiya bint Houyay) is the result of this slaughter.

In the same year Mohammad -- according to Islamic Tradition -- sends letters to various Kings inviting them to embrace Islam including: Kings of Persia, Yemen, and Ethiopia and the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. These letters were Mohammad's last will and testament to his followers, "Who is more wicked than the man who invents a falsehood about Allah or denies his revelation? Truly the evil doers shall not triumph." (Surah 10:18) He is referring to Jews, Christians and pagans -- all non-Muslims.

In 630 AD, Mohammad takes Mecca and the city's population is forcibly converted. The Kaaba — a polytheistic shrine of the Quraysh Tribe — is turned into an Islamic religious site. The same thing happens to the Cathedral Hagia Sophia located in Constantinople. It was conquered by Turkish Muslims in 1453 AD.

By the time Mohammad dies in 632 AD, all of Arabia was conquered for Islam. When



Mohammad died, a number of the Arabian tribes had to be re-conquered including the tribes in present day Kuwait. Between 639 AD and 651 AD, the land of Egypt, Syria and Persia were put under the foot of allah. Before the end of the 17th Century, lands today known as Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Libya, Algiers, Spain, Sicily, Greece, Balkans, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine were under the sword of the Quran, “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), until they pay the jizya (tax) with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.” (Surah 9:29) Prior to collapse of the Turkish Islamic Ottoman Empire, they slaughtered about 1.5 million Armenians in the name of allah.

Tragically, those who today adhere to a literal reading of the Quran continue to reason that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because he (allah) is able to destroy Jesus and His mother Mary and every other living thing.

However, we report that allah has not succeeded. Jesus and Mary prosper. Many have survived Islamic violence.



To the serpent in the Garden of Eden, God said,

*“And I will put enmity*

*between you and the woman,*

*and between your offspring and hers;*

*he will crush your head,*

*and you will strike his heel.” (Gen 3:15)*

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This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.co.at/2017/08/what-kind-of-god-did-mohammed-create.html>  
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## **Amoris Laetitia is a Hymn to Fidelity in Marriage, And How to Get There**

*No one can think that the weakening of the family as that natural society founded on marriage will prove beneficial to society as a whole. The contrary is true: it poses a threat to the mature growth of individuals, the cultivation of community values and the moral progress of cities and countries. There is a failure to realize that only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a plenary role to play in society as a stable commitment not allow communion for divorced remarried. The [Polish Episcopal Conference](#) on June 6-7, 2017 affirmed that Amoris Laetitia has not changed Church doctrine on the issue. Of course not, Amoris Laetitia reiterates the Church's traditional teaching on marriage.*

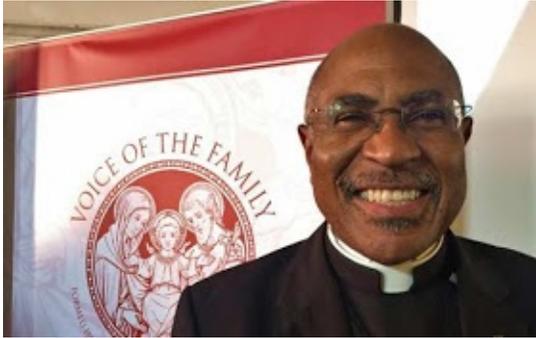
How did the Polish bishops understand, and the Belgian bishops did not?

They stayed close to Our Lady. They dedicated their whole meeting to the 100th anniversary of Fatima. The Beloved Disciple John was the only apostle who remained faithfully at the foot of the cross, while the others hid, because he was with Our Lady.

Secondly, they read their own Polish pope's works, those of Pope Saint John Paul II. While much of the world buried the words of John Paul II in the library, the Polish bishops faithfully studied them.

*“Familiaris Consortio (by John Paul II) and Amoris Laetitia are in the same line, with this linear understanding of these documents” the Polish bishops said. Pope Francis is spiritually the little Argentine brother of Pope John Paul II. But he is gravely misunderstood.*

“The apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* is the catalyst that has divided not only bishops and Episcopal Conferences from each other but, priests from their bishops and from each other, and (left) the laity, anxious and confused. As a Trojan



horse, *Amoris Laetitia* spells spiritual ruin for the entire Church,” thundered Fr. Linus Clovis of [Family Life International](#) at the Rome Life Forum May 18, 2017.

I agree with Fr. Clovis that the **false** interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia* — like the **false** spirit of Vatican II — is separating priests from their bishops and bishops from their fellow bishops and cardinals from their pope! Lies always do that. But the solution is not to malign Pope Francis. The solution is to read the document and explain it to your bishop. Such an act will save the Church in this crisis.

[Marriage Theologian Rev. Dr. Jean-Yves Brachet O.P.](#) said *Amoris Laetitia* can be difficult to understand because you need a theological background. “It has to be read in the light of the whole teaching of the Church, especially *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) for the teaching on marriage and family, and *Veritatis Splendour* (1993) for the moral teaching.”

Fr. Brachet admitted the existence of the document has raised false hopes about eventual changes in the teaching of the Church on marriage and divorce, or the opposite, unjustified fear of such changes.



“In both cases it seems that there is a lack of confidence in the fact that the Holy Spirit leads the Church,” Fr. Brachet said. “Thus it is important to read the text, the whole text, but the text only, in the light of the teaching of the Church.”

“The documents of the magisterium, including those on moral issues, must be interpreted according to the hermeneutic of continuity and development. And certainly not according to the hermeneutic of discontinuity, rupture, or transformation with respect to the perennial magisterium,” said [Fr. Angelo Bellon, O.P.](#), Professor of Moral Theology, Archdiocese of Genoa.



To give communion to divorced remarried Catholics — without demanding they live chastely — would rupture 2,000 years of Catholic teaching on marriage.

“The progress of the moral doctrine of the Church takes place under the action of the Holy Spirit that gradually leads to the knowledge of the whole truth, without ever contradicting or denying the *previous magisterium*,” Fr. Bellon wrote.

Not only that, but he points out that Pope Francis himself in the text of *Amoris Laetitia* repeatedly says he is following this hermeneutic of continuity:

“Therefore **while clearly stating the Church’s teaching**, pastors are to avoid judgements that do not take into account the complexity of various situations, and they are to be attentive, by necessity to how people experience and endure distress because of their condition,” Pope Francis wrote (*Amoris Laetitia* 79).

It is chapter 8 on “accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness” that has caused the most consternation in the Catholic world. And it is probably the most fascinating document that the Church has produced in some time.

All of the Church’s magisterial documents on marriage have been undergoing a quiet development since the Middle Ages. As late as 1880, Pope Leo XIII spoke about the ends of marriage as an *institution*, the first and primary end being the procreation and education of children. The spouses were to give “mutual help.” That was a secondary end. My Catholic in-laws were schooled in that view of marriage. Marriage was the foundation of the family, and the family was the foundation of civilisation.

But something changed in the last century. The Church turned the lens of her camera to the intimate *relationship* between husband and wife, instead of marriage as an objective *institution*. By 1968, [\*Humanae Vitae\*](#) rhapsodised about married love in which man and wife become “one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfilment.” *A Theology of the Body* took it further, and we discovered it was possible to commit adultery with our own spouse. Oh boy. The Church in the Middle Ages never mentioned that.



The same development of doctrine is taking place in the pastoral issues related to contraception and divorce. Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* began the development when he applied the law of gradualness in the use of contraception, while still cautioning that it doesn't change the moral law. "They cannot look on the law as merely an ideal to be achieved in the future: they must consider it as a command of Christ the Lord to overcome difficulties with constancy. "And so what is known as the 'law of gradualness' or step-by-step advance cannot be identified with 'gradualness of the law,' as if there were different degrees or forms of precept in God's law for different individuals and situations."

In *Familiaris Consortio* 34, Pope John Paul II is urging couples to recognise the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* as the norm for exercising their sexuality. He is also saying that they may take step by step advances to living the truth that every marital act must be open to new life. But he is warning confessors not to mix up the law of gradualness with the inflexibility of the objective law. Whether the couple understands it or not, contraception is always intrinsically evil.

The law of gradualness has been in the church since the woman met Christ at the well. It simply means that we sinners take our time getting converted to the truth and the Church must be patient with us.

St. Paul used this gradual pastoral approach: *“I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for solid food. In fact, you are still not ready, for you are still worldly. For since there is*



*But solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.*

*jealousy and dissension among you, are you not worldly? Are you not walking in the way of man? For when one of you says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men?” (1Cor 3:2-4)*

Pope Francis breaks new ground in doctrine using the law of gradualness (step-by-step advance to living in the truth) in *Amoris Laetitia*, Fr. Brachet told *Christ’s Faithful Witness* in an interview. It is the same principal that Pope John Paul II used in *Familiaris Consortio* in 1981. Pope Francis calls it accompaniment.

Pope Saint John Paul II applied the law of gradualness to life issues'; Pope Francis applies it to pastoral situations. This is a stunning development in moral theology.

“Priests have the duty to “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation **according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop.** . . What we are speaking of is a process of

accompaniment and discernment which guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God. Conversation with the priest, in the internal forum, contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the Church and on what steps can foster it and make it grow. Given that gradualness is not in the law itself, this discernment can never prescind (be separated) from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church.” (*Amoris Laetitia* 300)

In other words, Pope Francis says the discernment process is to take place in the context of the traditional teachings of the Church, including the prohibition against giving communion to the divorced and remarried.



So as the lens of the Church’s camera shifted from marriage as an *institution* to relationships within the family, now the church is changing her emphasis to look inside the conscience of the sinner and not at the place where his foot is stuck. It still doesn’t change the fact that an unrepentant Catholic in a second marriage is not living in communion with the Catholic Church, and may not receive Holy Communion.

“We must accompany the persons, not the situations,” Fr. Brachet emphasised. And with that, we see the objective state of the couple, which may radically contradict the ideal of marriage, is to no longer be the focus. Their situation and its wrongness doesn’t change, but we will be working intensely with the human beings wanting to return to God’s grace, i.e. the woman at the well.

Their objective state may be that of serious sin. *Veritatis Splendour* showed us that certain moral acts like adultery are always intrinsically evil. But the persons living a second marriage may be living in diminished freedom and/or invincible ignorance. I know I had a hard time understanding this concept until I remembered that I had lived through this state in my own life 25 years ago.

Though I went to regular confession since I was a child, I did not recognise certain sins of omission. I never confessed them, and indeed I never subjectively sinned by committing them. I lived in invincible ignorance.

Then a priest in confession told me to go home and look at all the projects I had left unfinished. I did. There were my husband's shoes waiting to be taken in for repairs, a statue I wanted to get painted, my poems collecting dust unpublished. Suddenly, I woke up and I was responsible for these actions in the future. Though my habits had been disordered before, now I could live my life in conformity with the gospel. Finish your projects or don't start them, that was the priest's advice. The truth set me free.



A Catholic married couple may live in invincible ignorance with respect to contraception. Their mothers introduced their daughters to the pill and their sons to the condom to protect them. Their teachers told them to use contraception to prevent abortion. Their boyfriends carried condoms. Their girlfriends were on the pill. It was the responsible thing to do, according to the media. Their priest said it was okay sometimes. (He was

incorrect).

Thus they are married, using contraception, and living in invincible ignorance while going to communion every Sunday. The objective sin of contraception cannot be imputed to them. They are actually living in a state of grace. What? You think the priest should tell them to stop? Yes, according to Pope Saint John Paul II, they should be led to the truth.

But in actuality, it may take a lot of time, and a lot of convincing to overcome everything they have already been taught about contraception. They may not believe their new confessor. The same is true for a second marriage. A person entering a second marriage doesn't think to himself, "Well, I am going to make my adultery formal." Who thinks that? No they think, "I am in love! Can love be wrong?"

So Pope Francis writes, "The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly mentions these factors: "imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors" (CCC 1735) In another paragraph, the Catechism refers once again to circumstances which mitigate moral responsibility, and mentions at length "affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety or other psychological or social factors that lessen or even extenuate moral culpability"(CCC 2352) For this reason, a negative judgment about an objective situation does not imply a judgment about the imputability or culpability of the person involved." (*Amoris Laetitia* 302)

Say that again? It says a couple can be living objectively in a state of serious sin, but subjectively may be living in a state of grace because of diminished freedom or knowledge. Here the bishops in Belgium become confused. If they are living in a state of grace, why can't they receive communion?

“But this is not the only criterium!” Fr. Brachet warns us.



The *objective* union of the married divorced does not model that of Christ and the Church! And "Those who are publicly unworthy are forbidden from receiving the Divine Eucharist" (Canon 712).” This is all helpfully footnoted in Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia*.

The Catholic Church cannot just lay down and let the sinner decide for himself whether he will go to communion. The Catholic Church has its own conscience! It is the Conscience of Jesus Christ led by the Holy Spirit. The Church cannot violate her own conscience by giving communion to divorced and remarried. It would amount to an admission that marriage is not indissoluble.

“In effect, the reception of the Body of Christ when one is publicly unworthy constitutes an objective harm to the ecclesial communion: it is a behavior that affects the rights of the Church and of all the faithful to live in accord with the exigencies of that communion. In the concrete case of the admission to Holy Communion of faithful who are divorced and remarried, the scandal, understood as an action that prompts others towards wrongdoing, affects at the same time both the sacrament of the Eucharist and the indissolubility of marriage. That scandal exists even if such behavior, unfortunately, no longer arouses surprise: in fact it is precisely with respect to the deformation of the conscience that it becomes more necessary for Pastors to act, with as much patience as firmness, as a protection to the sanctity of the Sacraments and a defence of Christian morality, and for the correct formation of the faithful.” (Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts [Declaration Concerning the Admission to Holy Communion of](#)

[Faithful Who Are Divorced and Remarried](#)) This is helpfully footnoted in *Amoris Laetitia*.

*Amoris Laetitia* has one controversial footnote in chapter 8. When Pope Francis writes that “it is possible that in an objective situation of sin... a person can be living in God’s grace,” that is footnoted with 351: “*In certain cases*, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, “I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 44). I would also point out that the Eucharist “is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak” (ibid., 47).(*Amoris Laetitia* 305)

“The text says ‘*in certain cases*,’ the text does not say that divorced who have entered a new union are such a case!” Fr Brachet again cautions us. Yes, and such an interpretation of footnote 351 would contradict footnotes 345 and 329 in *Amoris Laetitia*.

“In the case of divorced who have entered a new union, it can happen that there is no sin because of the absence of imputation (they don’t know they are in sin, or they not free), but the meaning of their objective situation remains (they are living in adultery),” Fr. Brachet explained. “The specific reason of their non-access to the communion is the objective meaning of their situation: their objective situation is in contradiction with the objective meaning of the (Holy) Communion” Fr. Brachet said referring to *Familiaris Consortio* 84. And also I would add giving communion to divorced and remarried objectively contradicts the meaning of marriage, which is indissoluble.

Fr. Brachet emphasised Pope Francis’ point in quoting Pope John Paul II: “They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist.”

*“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.” (1Cor 11:27)*

With respect to *Amoris Laetitia*, many are obsessed with the issue of communion for divorced and remarriage. But *Amoris Laetitia* is talking about all types of strange and irregular situations that have to be discerned. My little friend "Jane" was a “certain case.” She was 62 years old, Catholic, slightly retarded and unmarried. She dressed in a frumpy manner and she wasn’t pretty. But a 50-year-old man visited her regularly and manipulated her into having sexual relations with him. I tried my best to talk her out of letting this man into her house. But he promised someday he would take her on a date. I heard so much about this fabled date. Jane desperately needed to feel important. Someday, she would dress up and be treated like a princess. That was her dream, and so she was a victim.

I told Jane, “You need to go to confession.” She agreed. I went to my pastor, and told him "Jane" would appear in his confessional and she was slightly retarded and definitely emotionally childlike. With childlike confidence, she went to confession. LOL, according to Jane, Father wasn’t going to absolve her. Jane was pacing back and forth in the confessional, wringing her hands. The confessional definitely felt like a torture chamber! Finally, she said, “Susan Fox said you would help me!” The situation changed immediately, and Father did give her absolution. I’m sure Pope Francis would agree "Jane" was one of those “certain cases” in need of the sacrament of reconciliation.

The only situation in which *Amoris Laetitia* allows communion for divorced and remarried who are unable to separate, is in the case of Canon Law 915:

1. they are living chastely as brother and sister, and
2. the situation is not public.

If it becomes openly known that they are living together in a second marriage or cohabitating, it could cause a scandal and they may not receive Holy Communion. Hence *Amoris Laetitia* clearly does not suggest the bishops give communion to "adulterers."

Because of the misunderstanding regarding *Amoris Laetitia*, conservative bloggers and news services have created an image of Pope Francis as someone guilty of doublespeak. He gives lip service to marriage, but wiggles his eyebrows and denies it. Such a false allegation has sadly made even the most devout Catholic lay person doubt the pope.

No matter what the pope says now, they are poised to believe he means the opposite. Rather strangely, Fr Brachet, a Dominican, has the opposite opinion. He knows Jesuits. He says orthodox Jesuits do not engage in doublespeak. Our Jesuit Pope Francis says what he means, and if he says "in certain cases..." he doesn't mean he is giving communion to divorced remarried. "That is not the Jesuit way," Fr. Brachet said. Besides as Fr. Bellon points out such an interpretation of that comment "*in certain cases*" would introduce the hermeneutic of rupture and not continuity. And Pope Francis has made it clear in the text that he is following the previous magisterium completely.

When the controversy over the **false** spirit of *Amoris Laetitia* is over and people can sit down and read the wonderful text that it is, we hope that the Church is able to indeed work with troubled marriages and bring couples to Christ. Sadly, for decades, the Catholic Church has been bleeding divorced Catholics to Protestant Churches where they find the indissolubility of marriage is not so rock solid and they can relax in a new union. Now Pope Francis has given the Church a beautiful plan for calling these couples home to the Catholic Church.

If the Church is able to overcome her differences and work with the woman at the well, there will be a specific fruit eaten that Christ also enjoyed. For after Christ's encounter with the woman at the well, the apostles arrived begging Him

to eat. He refused.

It was a message to our Church in this time. *“I have food to eat of which you do not know.”*

*So the disciples said to one another, “Has any one brought him food?”*

*Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’ I tell you, lift up your eyes and see how the fields are already white for the harvest.” (John 4:31-35)*

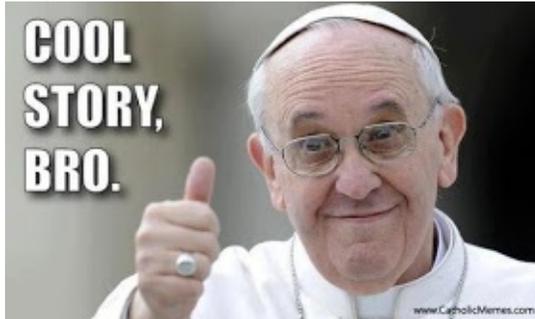
*Susan Fox is a former investigative reporter, who worked for several daily newspapers and newswire in the 1980s and 90s, including the San Francisco Examiner and the San Diego Union, under her maiden name Susan Burkhardt. She won many awards for her work then, which was in the area of economics and business reporting. Currently she is working on a master's degree in Marriage and Family at the International Theological Institute in Trumau, Austria. This is a paper she did for Catholic Marriage Theologian Rev. Dr. Jean-Yves Brachet O.P. Bishop, who approved its publication.*

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## I Kind of Hate July 16... [at Campfires and Cleats]

.....which is why I'm writing this on the 17th.

I couldn't bring myself to do it yesterday.

I really shouldn't though....

Hate that day.

That blackened square on the calendar in 1993.

Because it *is* the day a miracle happened.

The day for which our Savior suffered and died.:

It's the day my Dad entered into his Eternal Reward.

The day God invited him to come Home.

Selfishly, I so hate it - he was taken from us.

Joyfully, I recognize, of course, that Dad's suffering was

*finally, finally*, over.

And that a lifetime of living for the Lord would grant him

his hard- earned salvation.

And once home from the cemetery , Mom said....

Well that was the longest wake I hope any of us ever attend.

We came to refer to Dad's illness as a three year long vigil of waiting,  
watching and railing against God

Didn't he do enough? Give enough? Be enough?

That he should be stripped of his memories.

That he should need to search for his family in his last days,  
when we were all right there by him.

In time, our anger was assuaged. The ravages on our souls faded some,  
what with the day to day demands of life, obligations, responsibilities.

But the emptiness still remains.

And although I do hate the day that was his last here with us,

I'm in awe of the miracle that is our Faith.

The redemption that dad finally received for his worldly 77 year journey



<Erasmus Hall HS 1935>

This is a man who....

~grew up in Brooklyn, son of an Irish immigrant

whose mom gave him an Italian name so he "wouldn't stand out."

Yes, he was one of a couple of dozen "Vincent's"

on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn!

~ never went to college, but was the most intelligent,

quick thinker I ever knew.

~was abandoned by his own dad at a young age and so,

grew up to be the father he never had to his own five kids

~ enlisted in The War in December 1941, following FDR's

" A Day hat will Live in Infamy" speech..

Because that's what able bodied American men did

in defense of their country's freedoms, despite never having held a gun.



~was a member of The Greatest Generation, but hated that moniker.

Each generation is great in its own way, he'd say.

If "all" one had to do, he'd say, is fight evil and take freedom back on the world stage, well, that's a golden opportunity to achieve greatness. How easy is it step up to the challenge?

Yes, he was humble.

~Rose from the rank of Private to Captain in the US Army Infantry

within eighteen months,

forces and drive them out of The Philippines.

~ Took a short leave in October 1943 to come home and marry his girl...my mom...and drive across the US to Camp Roberts in Paso Robles, California, where he'd ship out again to the islands in the South Pacific, under attack by enemy forces.



~arrived home from the front lines in August 1945 to meet his daughter, his first born

~suffered PTSD, before it had a name and did not talk about the atrocities he witnessed, ever.

But did talk about a few scattered memories of his comrades.

40 years later.

~worked in publishing and instilled in all

of us a lifelong love of books, reading, writing.

~ was raised Catholic and practiced his faith throughout his youth, due to his Mom's fervent love of The Church.....

a convert from the Episcopalian Church.

Once returning from The War, he *attended daily mass for the rest of his life*, except when he was too ill toward the end.

~on many Sundays, challenged our young, new pastor on the intent of his homilies.

When they began thrashing out theology so much so that they blocked the church door for incoming parishioners to the following mass, their conversation was brought home and, thus, began a decades - long friendship which had Fr Kain included in most of our family Sunday events.

~always considered his children and his grandchildren his greatest accomplishments

~*always* had time for us, for anything we needed.

Despite his demanding job, which was stressful and paid him to afford us with the basics.

None of us ever felt we were lacking.

The redemption and entry to Eternal Life that Dad received..... well that's what is helping me heal.

Even 24 years later.

A deeper love and reverence of our Faith and the fundamental mystery that it simply *is*, help the cavernous emptiness become not quite so daunting.

Here's to you Dad.....

A cup of bravery and courage and selflessness.



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

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

If not, just click here to

quickly and easily so we can be in touch regularly!



While you're here.....

I've over a hundred titles---all subject areas, all grade levels  
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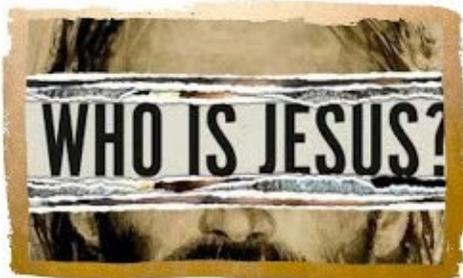
## Who Do You Say I Am? [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

Sermon by Fr. Joseph Mungai, FMH

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 27, 2017

St. John the Apostle Awasi Catholic Church, Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya

How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge...To him be all the glory. Amen!”



*Who do you say that I Am?*

It is on the note of this amazing and beautiful outburst of joy from Romans 11:33-36 that we begin our reflection on this 21st Sunday of ordinary time. In a special way the church enjoins us to recognize, reverence with

sacred awe, praise, and glorify the Sovereign, the All Powerful and Wise Lord. It is only when we know Him (as much as he chooses to reveal himself to us), that we can respect his ordinances, appreciate his greatness, burst out in amazement and declare to others who he really is as Paul and Peter did today. (Matt. 16:13-20)

A young girl was asked: “Who is your father, and how would you describe

him?” She was quiet for a couple of seconds as if she was lost in a wondering contemplation. Eventually, she mustered enough courage and

responded thus: “My Father?” She retorted. “He is that man who leaves home before I wake up in the morning; that man who comes back home when I am already asleep, at times with some bars of chocolate, ice cream, cake, peanuts, and fried potato chips; that man who punches mummy in the face whenever he returns home drunk and, he is that man who never cares or gives me a hug.” Tears rolled down her cheeks as she concludes: “That is my father, but how I wish I never knew him.” Is this little girl wrong or to blame? Not at all! Like this little girl (who was right in her case), some of us have a very pejorative view of God. Some have a wrong notion of what he stands for, and yet others are indifferent in their opinion.

Who is Jesus to you?

In the first reading of today (Isaiah 22:19-23), God exhibits his power over all sovereignty, throne and kingdom. In His wise judgment, he reduces the proud and wicked hearted while exalting the lowly and faithful. While Shebna was dethroned because of his pride, wickedness and lack of obedience to the ordinances of the Almighty God, the humble Eliakim was elevated to the throne. In this, Eliakim becomes a prophecy of the Messiah, because Jesus told us this passage spoke of himself.

In the second reading, we see Paul this Sunday bursting out in jubilant excitement and exaltation over the wisdom of God. Like a mountaineer who has reached the apex of Mt Kenya, the apostle turns and contemplates.

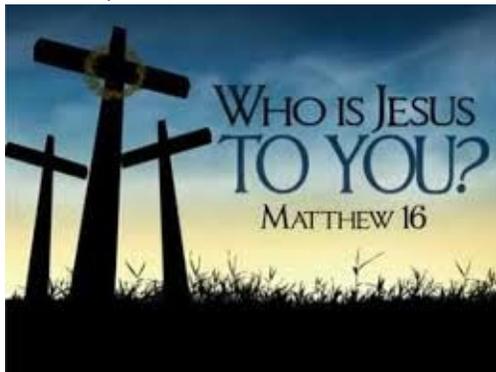


Depths are at his feet, but waves of light illumine them, and there spreads all around him an immense horizon which his eye commands.

The plan of God in the government of mankind spreads out before Paul, and he expresses the feelings of admiration and gratitude with which the prospect fills his heart. Today therefore, Paul not only presents to us the greatness of the

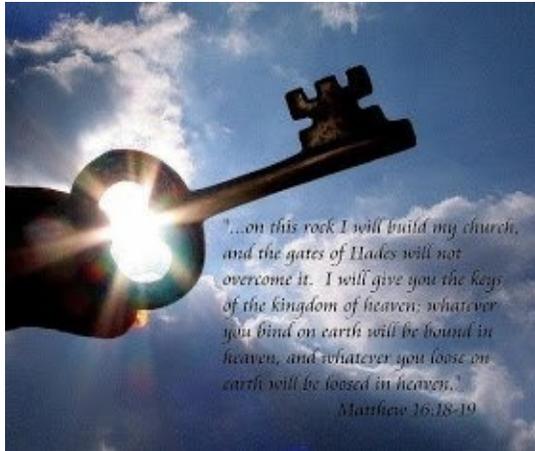
wisdom of God, but also His sovereignty over all creation. The Lord's plans are as marvelous as his wisdom, acts and justice; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast. Paul presents to us the Creator not created by any one, the Counselor not counseled by any one, and the one whose ways, methods and designs are obviously different from ours. Of course, when we realize this we cannot but burst out in jubilant praise: "How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge..." and "How great is your name O, Lord our God, through all the earth..." (Ps 8, 1). How do I see God is a pertinent question we must ask ourselves today!

For time, it suffices only, to take note of the importance of today's gospel to the Apostolic Succession and the Papacy of the Holy, One and Catholic Church. So, we leave it for the solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul or the feast of the Chair of St. Peter. In this gospel, Jesus fully aware of the on-going debate about Him and the ignorance of the people about his personality, decided to also know the mind of those close to him – His disciples: "Who do people say I am...and...You, who do you say I am?" We must not distance ourselves from this question today. Rather, we must ask



ourselves: "Who is Jesus to me? So we find Jesus in today's gospel asking: "Who do you say that I am?" And we find Simon Peter answering the question by identifying Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Evidently Peter recognized something deep within Jesus a Divine Person, Someone coming from God. Jesus in response sees something deep within Peter that Peter couldn't see for himself.

In a sense Jesus introduced Peter to himself. "Okay," Jesus said, "you told Me Who I am. Now let me tell you who you are. You are Rock!" This quality was not something that



Simon Peter recognized within himself. No doubt it was a big surprise, not only to Peter, but also to all who knew him.

Nevertheless he was previously known as Simon and now, because of Jesus, he was entering into a new self-identity. It took a long time for this new identity to be realised, however, because Peter's behavior with respect to Jesus was not solid nor rock-like until after Christ's resurrection.

All of this was typical of Jesus. We judge people by appearances... Jesus judges with penetrating insight. He went deep inside and saw the best that they could be with His grace.

St. Augustine once said: "Dig deep enough in any person and you will find something divine." That's a perfect description of how Jesus works with us. Put Jesus with any person and He will dig until He finds something divine within us.

It can happen that we have been baptized, received Holy Communion, got married in the church, ordained as a pastor, served, and in fact we are still serving in the church; yet we do not know who is Jesus. I am not kidding you brethren! A very sincere and humble priest once confessed that he never had an encounter with Jesus Christ until after he had been ordained seven years.

Many of us have a distorted view of God. So much of our lives and time is spent worshipping a figment of our own imagination. We fail to realize is that God exists independently of our views of him. Our goal as Christians should be to

bring our

understanding of God in line with the truth of Who He really is.

My dear, you cannot answer this question of

your own accord.



Therefore, like Peter and Paul, we must seek the counsel of the wise God. We must ask the Holy Spirit to help us and, we must ask God himself to reveal His Son to us as He did to Peter today, or else we will have distorted opinions about Jesus Christ as the Jews had: "...Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah..."

Who do I say Jesus is? Maybe, we think He is the "cosmic policeman" waiting at every corner for us to break the law so that He can punish us. Maybe He is the "indulgent old man" -- senile but very friendly; Or the "frantic manager," sweating profusely because the world is such a mess and He is trying to hold it all together. For some of us, He might be the "workaholic father" trying to meet the needs of his family; or the miracle worker, the healer, the problem solver, the defender, the rock of ages etc. Indeed, He is the Healer, the Defender, the Miracle Worker, the Problem Solver, the Rock of Ages. But only God in His great wisdom can make Himself fully known to us if we humble ourselves. Peter got the answer not just by his own power, but by the grace of God. It was a gift

given to him by God to prepare him for more responsibility and service. He is blessed and happy today because he knew who is Jesus.

This coming week we will all go out to face a very difficult world. Be kind to everyone you meet. Every one of them is fighting his or her own hard battle. There are many things in our world that appeal to the worst within us. That's why we must hear the words that Jesus addressed to Peter. He said to Simon: "You are rock." Jesus is finding good in each of us. Listen to what Jesus is saying to you, and then face each day remembering who it is Jesus says you are and who He meant you to be.



*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*

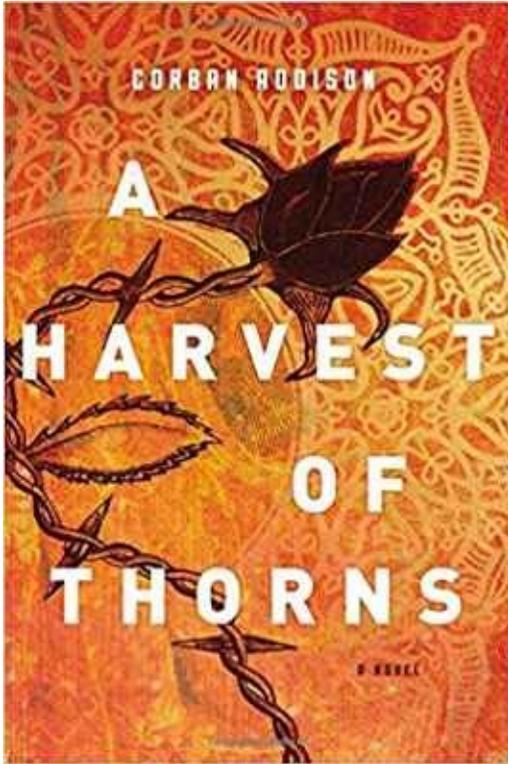
*\*Fr. Joe Mungai, FMH, is a Franciscan Missionary of Hope, a relatively new congregation started in Nairobi, Kenya in 1993. He was ordained June 7, 2014.*

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## Reading

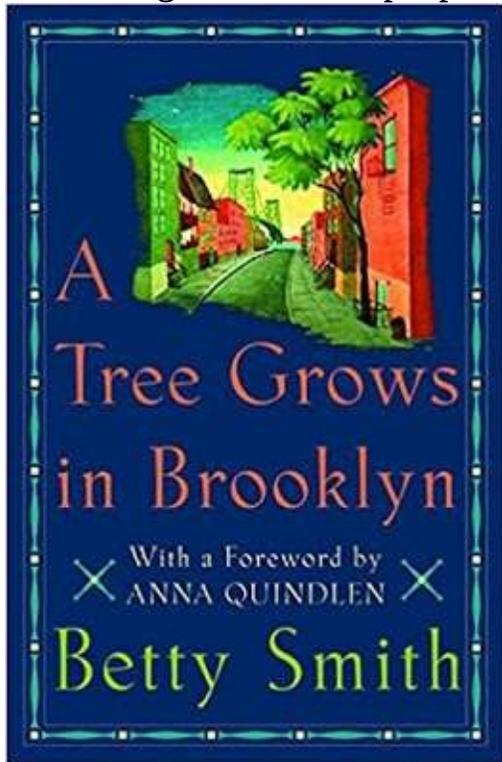


I've been remiss in posting book reviews because this summer has been a gobble-fest. So now I share the ones I really enjoyed. [A Harvest of Thorns](#) by Corban Addison exposed the clothing industry and its evils. Addison has done extensive research to show through story what it's like to work in the factories that are outsourced in poor countries, how the laborers are exploited and often abused, and the greed that makes this happen. The characters are richly drawn and each storyline is equally engrossing. How it made me want to do my own sewing because I wouldn't want to be a party to the exploitation of people in the poor countries. But I am torn--no pun intended. Having lived in India and seen what the options are, I would rather see them sewing under harsh conditions than become sexual slaves or worse. How I wish that corporations wouldn't just look at the bottom line. I don't know what the solution is. I tend to buy clothes at thrift stores because I don't like the fashions or the prices. All I can say is that thank God for divine justice. Thanks to BookLook for a review copy. I look forward to reading more from this author. I've been reading a LOT of books on [FORMED](#) on my Kindle (the best \$10/mo we spend!!!). I love snuggling up with Michael to read but he goes to bed early, so the kindle is great because I don't even have to use

the bedside lamp. Michael can sleep and I can read and snuggle. And it's funny how books come onto your radar. I've been reading a lot of conversion stories even before I knew I wanted to write mine. Isn't God so very good to us? [Something Other than God](#) by [Jennifer Fulwiler](#). I've known a bit of Jen's story through her blog and CD but it was great to read her book for all the details. She has a very logical mind and was taught to always pursue truth. And so she did in her very logical manner when she began asking the important questions about life, death, purpose. The answers led her to Jesus. I found her thought process similar to mine in that once you find the truth, there is no compromising. You have to live what you believe, otherwise there's a cognitive dissonance. [Not God's Type](#) by Holly Ordway is another story of reason leading one to Christ. Holly was an academic atheist and a fencing enthusiast. She laid down her sword for Christ. I loved the little detail of where her sword rests now. And no, I'm not spoiling it. Read the book. It's yet another example of there being no coincidences, just God-cidences. [Subverted](#) by Sue Ellen Browder was an interesting book by someone who not only bought the myths and lies about the sexual revolution but also promoted them. The women's movement didn't get taken over by the sexual revolution by accident; it was orchestrated. One can see the terrible effects of it--divorce, abortion, neglected children--and now the very breakdown between the sexes. Evil. Yet, when Sue Ellen began questioning her own values, she was, by the grace of God, able to extricate herself from the pit and begin to live a grace-filled life. [Night's Bright Darkness](#) by Sally Read is a beautifully written book. Without knowing a thing about her, I thought, she's a poet. She is, and so much more. A feminist and an atheist, she was doing research for an article on women's sexuality and she happened to interview a priest. The rest is history. I don't think she ever finished that piece on sex. I especially loved the tender friendship between her and a Catholic neighbor who seemed to have a new baby every year. How this echoes my own gratitude for the numerous Catholic friends near and far who patiently answered the thousand questions I had, who still walk and talk and laugh and cry with me. Abba vs. Allah by Scott Hahn. This was an audio lecture and the book that has much of this material is [A Father Who Keeps His Promises: Covenant Love in Scripture](#). Scott Hahn is an incredible teacher. I could sit and listen to him for hours as he breaks open Scripture. For some reason I didn't take notes so I cannot share all the beautiful details but this is definitely a lecture to listen to again. Jews, Christians, and Muslims share a belief in the God of Abraham. But how we perceive God makes all the difference in the world. We Christians call Him "Daddy" because we have an understanding of Him as a loving Father, one who forgives us, one who will do anything to bring us back home, to the



story. I look forward to reading more from Amar. When I was at my parents' place in Chicago, I raided their home library as if I didn't have enough new books to read. I discovered a gem of a book: [Gift from the Sea](#) by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. What a treasure! What wisdom! Do me a favor and get a copy for yourself and your critique partners. It's a book you will turn to again and again when you need to think about love and marriage and writing and children and creativity and silence. It's a perfect book for when you make a little writing retreat for yourself, whether at home or away. I also read [Kitchen Privileges](#) by Mary Higgins Clark, a memoir of her growing up and becoming a writer and supporting her family when she becomes a young widow. She lived during the Depression and over and over I see how the beautiful Catholic faith has sustained generations of people throughout their lives.



The book I just finished is [A Tree Grows in Brooklyn](#) by [Betty Smith](#). I've heard of this classic numerous times but never read it myself until now. What a treasure! A book that you can read again and again. And I must again say what a surprise it is to see a deeply Catholic book without being heavy handed or preachy! This is the type of fiction I long to write and read. Since it's a classic, and I'm probably the last writer on earth to read this book, I'll share some of the lines that resonated within me.

*“It doesn't take long to write things of which you know nothing. When you write of actual things, it takes longer, because you have to live them first.”*

*“Look at everything as though you were seeing it either for the first time or last time: Then your time on earth will be filled with glory.”*

*“If you ever find a man you love, don’t waste time hanging your head and simpering. Go right up to him and say, ‘I love you. How about getting married?’”*

*“People always think that happiness is a faraway thing ... something complicated and hard to get. Yet, what little things can make it up; a place of shelter when it rains – a cup of strong hot coffee when you’re blue; for a man, a cigarette for contentment; a book to read when you’re alone – just to be with someone you love. Those things make happiness.”*

*“Dear God, let me be something every minute of every hour of my life. Let me be gay; let me be sad. Let me be cold; let me be warm. Let me be hungry...have too much to eat. Let me be ragged or well-dressed. Let me be sincere— be deceitful. Let me be truthful; let me be a liar. Let me be honorable and let me sin. Only let me be something every blessed minute. And when I sleep, let me dream all the time so that not one little piece of living is ever lost.”*

As you can see, I'm rich beyond compare. Please do share in the comments the good books you are reading.

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## Tyre and Sidon [at With Us Still]

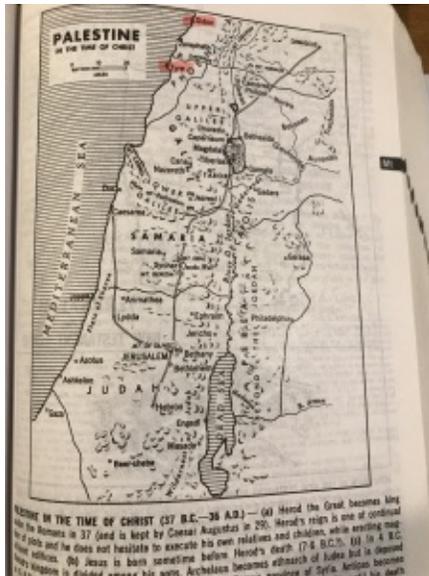
More and more often these days, I notice that I feel like a stranger in my own country.

For instance: I don't know how to make sense of the presence of neo-Nazis, even on the outer-fringes of political discourse in the US. Nor do I feel comfortable with the [rapidly growing practice of 'doxxing'](#) – the use of social media to identify, vilify and punish those with whom we happen to disagree.

There's an ugliness to America these days, particularly in the political arena. Maybe it's always been there, and I've just been oblivious. Or maybe, like the [frog-being-boiled-one-degree-at-a-time](#), the viciousness has crept in bit by bit... each new disrespectful statement diminishing our sensitivity to the next.

If the tone of American discourse tempts me to despair, however, there's this to consider: It's not a uniquely American problem, nor only a 21<sup>st</sup> century one. That much is made clear by [Sunday's scripture passages](#), each of which discloses at least some measure of intolerance and xenophobia on the part of the people of God.

In the first reading, Isaiah extends a welcome (of sorts) to *'the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD'...* as long as they *'keep the sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant.'* Those who fly right, he says, *'them I will bring to my holy mountain.'*



We're not in Galilee anymore...

In the second reading, it's St. Paul's turn. As the self-described Apostle to the Gentiles, he's happy to offer the Good News to a bunch of foreigners...but it's also pretty clear they're not his first choice: *'I glory in my ministry [to the Gentiles] in order to make my race jealous and thus save some of them.'*

But the gospel passage provides the most intriguing insight. Jesus, we're told, is traveling *'in the region of Tyre and Sidon'* with his disciples. In other words, they are the foreigners in this episode... and they're approached by one of the locals – the Canaanite woman. Even so, the traveling band seems to be treating the woman rather rudely. Jesus initially is silent towards her, and the disciples are actively engaged in driving her away. Then comes *this* troubling exchange:

*...the woman came and did Jesus homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."*

What I notice, as the story continues to unfold, is how the woman flips the situation to her advantage – using a rather simple tool: She refuses to take offense.

*She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters."*

I'm not sure if that's how I would have reacted to the Master's harsh words.

Truth is, I'm probably more inclined to retaliate – to trade insult for insult, accusation for accusation...especially when current events conspire to make me feel like a foreigner in my own land.

Even if I don't speak the words, I'm typically quick to think of opponents – all these bad-actors, from all across the political spectrum – as some breed of 'dog.' The labels come all-too-easily: *Skinhead. Internet Troll. Racist. Liberal.* Fill in the blank.

But as I travel alongside the Master and the Canaanite woman through Tyre and Sidon this weekend, I wonder if perhaps I'm being invited to try a different sort of label on for size:

*Child of God.*



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

*IHS*

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## Stain Glass Windows [at Catholic Chowder]



A few months ago I was having a conversation with one of my Capuchin Brothers. Together we were pondering how God, so abundant and giving of His love for us, has made us to be instruments of His peace. I remember us being in complete fascination at how God can make that possible. All throughout our year of formation talked about how great of an “Honor and a Privilege” it was to be apart of the Order of Capuchin Franciscans and even more so to be apart of God’s family of messengers here on earth. That day among many, we were so grateful for the vocation and for the many ways God had allowed us to be the instrument of His love and brotherhood to all. Up to that point, we had run across so many people who were in dire need of some thing, some presence, or some type of healing. We would encounter people who had lost family members, lost homes, lost jobs, lost relationships and then in our encounter, they were longing for a comfort in the midst of their suffering and chaos. But it wasn’t just the homeless that we encountered, often it was people living normal lives. Those working, those who have families, those we ministered with, even our own families and those we live with.

So as we sat there in front of the Starbucks talking and recounting all of our experiences up to that point, we were amazed at the fact that we we’re commissioned to be Instruments and messengers of God’s peace, mercy and compassion. As we were getting ready to leave, a homeless man approached us and thanked us for what we were doing. He thanked us for listening to him, he

said “*because we don’t see this everyday*” It was almost like this man was speaking on behalf of every person that had come before him and they were all thanking us. We both gave him a hug said goodbye and sat back down. That experience was so powerful that we didn’t say a word because we were both in awe at what had just happened. I remember us drying our eyes before we ever said anything to each other.



**Entrance at the front door of our friary.**

So with Christ, let us always remember that where we’ve been and what we’ve done can never define who we are. All of those things are indeed grace-filled in some way and God wants to use everything that we are, sin and all to bring people into a relationship with Him. He wants to shine His glorious light through each of us so that he can reach those in the darkness. May we be open to God’s presence in our lives, so He can shine in our hearts forever. That has been an experience that I always think back on. The overwhelming part for me is knowing that God has His hand on each of those encounters and allows us everyday to be what He needs us to be in the world. I think the natural tendency for us is to look at everything that we have done, those sins we have committed, our shortcomings and woundedness and we hold that up next to everything God has proven Himself to be in our lives and we say there’s no way that God could use me because of this. Behind the scenes, these are all colors that God wants to use. We have a God who can redirect our previous way of life and use those grace-filled colors and stains of sin to create something beautiful, just like a stained glass window. Though we are sinful in nature, our souls still have the

stained-glass window. Though we are sinful in nature, our souls still have the capacity to love without any bounds when we let Christ be our light, radiating the image of his love everywhere we go. Together we are called to be instruments of His love, to be a window that allows Christ to shine through our own sinfulness in order that we be transformed. The result is a beautiful ray of light shining in our hearts, so God can use that to speak to His people.

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## Now is the Time for Saint Joseph [at Podcast]

**WORDS MEAN THINGS.** How we speak of other people or issues reveal our underlying, true opinion of them unless of course, we are lying through our teeth, because our actions speak louder than our words.

We take the greatest care of our new cell phone, our new car, or our new team jacket. We give our old cell phone to our young child to play with, drive our old car through the snow and salt of winter and put on our old clothes to work in the yard. The new is valuable, the old is junk.

Junk refers to all items that are of little or no worth. We abandon it without a thought and freely misuse it from its original purpose because of how little value we place on it.

In today's modern lexicon, Junk has become the slang word for what was earlier referred to as our Private Parts. Previous generations knew it was not polite to talk about those areas of the body unless it was absolutely necessary. That has changed to where nearly all modern entertainment requires frequent mention and exposition of our private parts. Chastity until marriage and fidelity after marriage were the ideals held high by society, now the hookup society is lionized by magazines that sell millions of copies each month to readers who more than likely experienced the divorce of their parents or are living with the reality of multiple sexual partners.

Familiarity breeds contempt and so we have now reached the stage where our genitalia is so ill regarded that it has come to be known as JUNK. It is freely given to whoever presents a momentary opportunity for a transitory good feeling. Like a candy bar, the wrapper is removed, the product enjoyed, and then soon later, a new one is selected for an additional few moments of pleasure.

The problem though, like those poor souls known as hoarders who are buried alive in the accumulation of their stuff, their junk, those who freely give their bodies to many partners find themselves buried under the effects of their collection of encounters. Old encounters that have been left behind have a way of re-entering your life, often with negative impact.

The negative consequences are seen each day by teachers, social workers, law

The negative consequences are seen each day by teachers, social workers, law enforcement, mental health workers, medical staff, and other human service workers.

Junk, unless properly handled, pollutes the environment. Misusing our *junk* leaves a wake of struggle, sadness, and even anger in the children created by one-night stands. They are often treated poorly by the nonbiological partners currently in their parent's life and learn to model behavior that will lead down the same destructive road as their parents.

Our sexuality is not a matter of little worth. By it, we can bring forth life. A man, a woman, and their children form a family which is the basic unit of all societies. They become one flesh, complimentary to each other, share themselves exclusively, with full thought given to the act, knowing the potential it has, and ready to face all that the future brings. Less than that is akin to texting while driving, it is not a question of what can go wrong but only when.

Each person is unique and precious. The entire person is of great worth. Nothing about them is junk. Let's make sure our language reflects that. Words do have meaning and our actions tell others what we really truly mean and believe.

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Farm Harvest by Nato Pereira (Pixabay)

featured on [New Evangelians.com](http://NewEvangelians.com)

“For we are God’s co-workers, you are God’s field, God’s building.” (1 Cor. 3:9)

We are called by God to take care of his creation. Not just as stewards but as co-creators with God. His work continues with our help, in the fields of our lives.

In the spiritual realm, we are called as co-workers to evangelize those in the field of the world around us — our home base, neighborhood, workplace, and parish.

When we are partners with God, we can do anything! He provides everything we need:

- Grace.
- Wisdom.
- Opportunity.
- Charisms.
- Appropriate words.
- Perfect timing.
- Generosity.
- Courage.

- Faithfulness.

Sometimes the God of all time seems to freeze the hands of the clock, waiting for me to say that word of encouragement to someone in my field who needs the consolation someone gave me in a similar situation.

Or answer an unexpected phone call and quietly listen for a few moments without glancing at my watch and fuming.

Or write a blog post or tweet encouraging others to share their gifts.

## ***Community of believers***

Even with God as our partner, do we always have to go it alone? We are not only partners with God but with his co-workers. In the verses before Paul tells us we are co-workers with God, he talks about the community of believers. With each doing their unique part, they work together. The result? God causes the body of Christ to grow.

*“Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor” (1 Cor 3:7-8)*

## ***The mission of the seventy-two***

Jesus commissioned twelve Apostles. He then appointed seventy-two disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town he intended to visit. He said to them,

*“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. (Luke 10:2)*

Yes, he sends us out to prepare for his coming into the lives of those around us. But not alone. He is nudging someone with a complimentary gift toward the work he is equipping you to take up. Ask God and then look around and find that partner. We can join a ministry visiting shut-ins or teaching the faith. Or organize a team to carpool, clean and cook for a friend coming home from the hospital.

## *The assurance of Scripture*

We have the confident assurance of Scripture that God is the one who causes the growth of all his laborers. As laborers, we are among those who grow.

*What opportunities do you have to initiate something new or join co-workers in the fields ripe for an abundant harvest?*

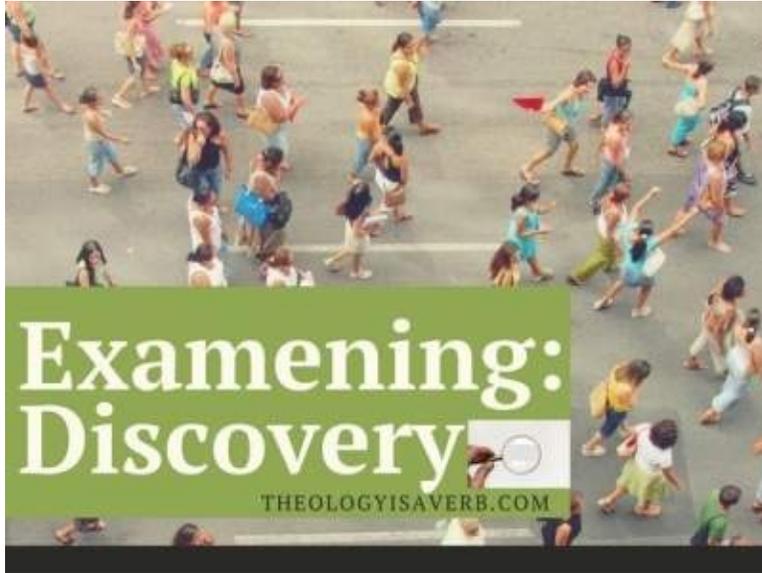
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## Examining: Discovery [at Theologyisaverb]



As a child, I reveled at the picture puzzle games that challenged each contestant with keen eyes to discover a familiar item amid a quite often cluttered larger scene. And with each object found, was a renewed sense of joy and understanding of the next step of the task at hand. Yet, somewhere between childhood and maturity the thrill and purpose of the search can time and again allude us and at times even eclipse the delight of discovery.

Such was the course of a day that was to be experienced quite recently. Waking up late, and feeling “behind the 8 ball”, I had literally jumped feet first into a scene not of my own design or desire. With limited movement, either physically or spiritually, all that could initially be seen was the clutter. Misplaced item here, piles of unattended objects there, I longed for clarity of purpose- at the very least, for the frustration and confusion to leave me be. In this life sized puzzle of sorts it became suddenly obvious that the first hidden object of my search was indeed Christ himself. He, and only he, was the hingepin to finding my next piece of my day and the surest course of making sense of it all. So began my prayer- an inner groan, offered up for peace of spirit and discernment in the way God wanted me to move in my day.

**“Where are YOU, Jesus, in this jumbled scene?”**

A prayerful guide to mindful reflection, the daily Examen prayer, is at its heart a path to awareness and renewed discovery. Just what exactly are we discovering? Perhaps simply our way back to God and his will in our daily walk. Sometimes, we may not have strayed far but have just lost sight of Christ within the daily tasks we tend to for family and work. How long till we see the results? That too cannot be rushed, as we well know that God's timing is not our own. I will say, however, that I have yet to be disappointed to discover that whatever I am going through, that God is there in the midst of it all.

Discovery then, in Ignatian spirituality, is the fruit of prayer directed towards the good desire. It could be the answer to a life altering decision, or an awareness that we are exactly where we need to be. If you are facing a difficulty today that you cannot see through, or need clarity of purpose or direction, ask yourself these as you begin the Examen:

**Would this decision lead me or others on a life affirming course? Am I filled with confusion, doubt, fear or instead, encouraged and invited gently to consider the next step?**

### ***5 Steps of a Daily Examen***

- 1. Become aware of God's presence.**
- 2. Review the day with gratitude.**
- 3. Pay attention to your emotions.**
- 4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.**
- 5. Look toward tomorrow.**

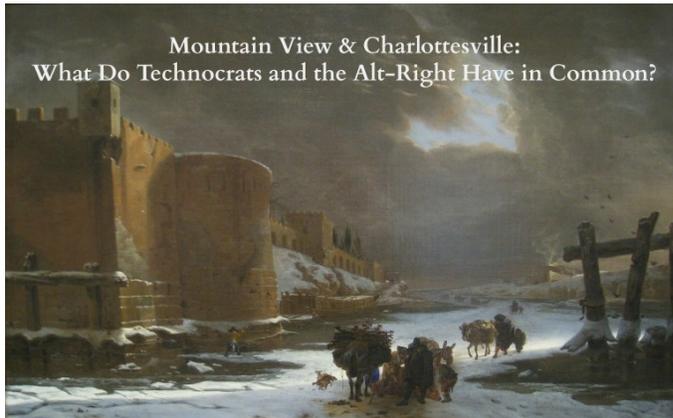
Peace,



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## Mountain View & Charlottesville: What Do Technocrats and the Alt-Right Have in Common?



Everyone who doesn't live under a rock knows that James Damore was fired from his job as at Google because of a critical memo he wrote and circulated internally, and that white nationalist neo-Nazis held a rally in Charlottesville, VA that turned violent and deadly.

The offices of Google and a white nationalist rally don't seem to have much in common; they appear to be the precise inverse of one another. We have the highly educated, left-leaning technocrats of the Bay Area and the largely rural, working-class members of the "alt-right." But last week's events in both Mountain View and Charlottesville are the posterity of the same ideological culture.

For the last century, Americans have relegated morality to the personal, private domain where individuals are free to choose their values and speak their truth. (Cue the rise of identity politics.) Value judgments are no more than private opinion. Dismissing morality to the private domain is not value neutral. The decision to eliminate debate around moral values from the public square is a value judgment. It is the dogma of anti-dogmatism, and dissenting heretics are cast out into the darkness for their offenses.

Google fired James Damore from his job as a software engineer after he dared

claim, in an internal memo, that gender differences are somewhat deeper than minor variations in plumbing, and that these biological differences may play a role in the professional lives of men and women. As such, said Damore, many of Google's initiatives such as coaching in salary negotiation, which are currently open only to women, ought to be open to all employees who want to benefit from them.

Whether one agrees with Damore is not the point. In fact, the people who most strongly believe he is wrong ought to be the first to engage him in meaningful debate and dialogue. But debate and dissent are simply unacceptable in Google's "ideological echo chamber," where employees are required to assent to what Damore calls, "[the diversity creed—that all differences in outcome are due to differential treatment](#)," or face public scourging and expulsion.

What lessons do those who don't conform learn from someone like Damore? To be (publicly and temporarily) silent. To hide. To retreat to the hidden, dark corners where they may lick their wounds with others like themselves. The outsiders, the dissenters, the skeptics—they commiserate and find fellowship together outside the walls of postmodern orthodoxy.

But often, that isn't the end of the story. Relativism is not the great protector of tolerance and mutual respect. Rather, it is a tool of totalitarianism which hallows as law the biases and preferences of socially acceptable groupthink. It's the darkness in which evil takes root and grows. And evil is never content to remain outside the walls, merely "tolerated" as it lurks. It wants to infiltrate, to be recognized, and enshrined.

As we shove morality further from the public sphere and into the outer darkness, young Muslims become radicalized terrorists in far-flung corners of the Internet. The disenfranchised in small, economically depressed towns seize on the scapegoating rhetoric of white supremacists and vow to "take back" a nation that never actually existed. The use of violence to exterminate people is not a personal value. It is not someone's truth. It is evil, and it is pushing down the walls, demanding not just to be let in, but to rule with an iron fist.

Perhaps, had we not cast out the undesirables in the first place, evil would not find so large and enthusiastic an army to serve it. History teaches lessons about what happens when we confine people to ghettos—ideological or physical—and those lessons don't inspire hope.

Contemporary moral debates are endless and circular. They are also unsolvable. Why? There is no shared language by which to discuss moral issues and no shared first principles by which to come to moral agreement. We are finding that this is not freedom, but rather slavery to ever changing and shifting popular opinion. One minute, we're hoping and changing; the next we're making America great again.

In his masterwork, [After Virtue](#), philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre presents an imaginary world in which the natural sciences have suffered massive catastrophe. Scientists are blamed for natural disasters and their labs, records, and tools are destroyed. Science may no longer be taught in schools. Many years later, prudent members of this society revive the natural sciences, but they themselves know little and have limited access to the scientific knowledge of previous eras, most of it having been destroyed. They argue about this and that theory, but lack an understanding of what such theories really mean. Their children are taught to memorize unrelated factoids and scraps of information, but there is no context for any of it. It is not, in any meaningful sense, science.

According to MacIntyre, this is precisely the situation in which we find ourselves with respect to morality. Though “the language and the appearances of morality persist...the integral substance of morality has...been...destroyed,” he says. Thus, a tech company can laud the virtues of diversity while excommunicating dissenters. Thus, neo-Nazis can speak of restoration while advocating for the extermination of whole peoples.

The question for Americans is not if the relocation of morality from the public to the private sphere has been a boon for freedom and pluralism. It has most assuredly not. The question is how we begin to recover a corporate understanding of morality, a collective moral language, and shared first principles.

SaveSave

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This contribution is available at <http://www.julia-harrell.com/2017/08/17/mountain-view-charlottesville-technocrats-alt-right-common/>  
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## Self-Awareness

The Carmelite life and spirituality is about transformation, a transformation in Christ. The first necessary step in the journey of transformation is self-awareness. A person needs to be self-aware of the chaos of his or her life, and how they are affected by it. Christ is the bringer and giver of peace. Chaos works against His peace. Peace He wishes to give to every soul. Carmelite spirituality sees chaos as something located on the fringes of our being not at our core. The journey from our chaos to the peace of Christ is a movement through darkness.

## Our Darkness

Darkness, for St. John of the Cross, is the place where God meets us, to heal and transform us. However, a person could never think of leaving his or her chaos, if it something that has been normalized in her or his life. Noise can take on a veneer of silence if suffered long enough. Normalizing our chaos (whether inner or outer) points to the reason why self-awareness is the necessary first step of the spiritual journey. Self-awareness works to expose the chaos we have created, making the peace of Christ possible in our lives.

## The Holy Spirit

It is important to note our journey is not taken alone. This spiritual journey is always done with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the whisper that wakes us up to God and the wind that drives us along a path that leads us into our inner self, where Christ dwells. St. John of the Cross points to this self-awareness in *The Dark Night of the Soul* where he wrote “One dark night, fired with love’s urgent longings — ah, the sheer grace! — I went out unseen, my house being now all stilled.” The fire of love is of course the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (and in us) and is drawing him (and us) forth at the same time. Furthermore, his words about the house point to his self-awareness and the need for him (and us) to leave the house, i.e. the fringe area of the mountain.

## Flames of Love

In order, too, take that first step of transformation, which is self-awareness, a person needs to be open to the love of the Spirit. If you are reading this blog, I recommend that you begin by asking for the Holy Spirit to set your heart on fire with His love. It is in the light of those flames that you can see your inner and outer world clearly, and become self-aware to the things, people, ideas, or places that need to be healed and changed in your life. I hope that the prayer below may help you. Know I am praying for you and may God continue to bless you!

***Come Holy Spirit engulf my heart with Your flames of love, so I may begin to see myself with the eyes of Christ!***

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This contribution is available at <http://thefrankfriar.com/2017/08/22/thefirststep/>  
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I'm so excited about this new project! I started my own **Bullet Journal** a few months ago and I love how it works. I have brainstorming lists for projects and posts, a running log, a confession/spiritual direction log and lots of pages for tracking habits, gratitude, goals, prayer intentions, scripture to memorize, house projects, social media stats...and so much more!



...but *what I'm really excited about* is how the **Bullet Journal** format can be used SO well for a special type of **Prayer Journal**...and I just can't believe I didn't think of this sooner!

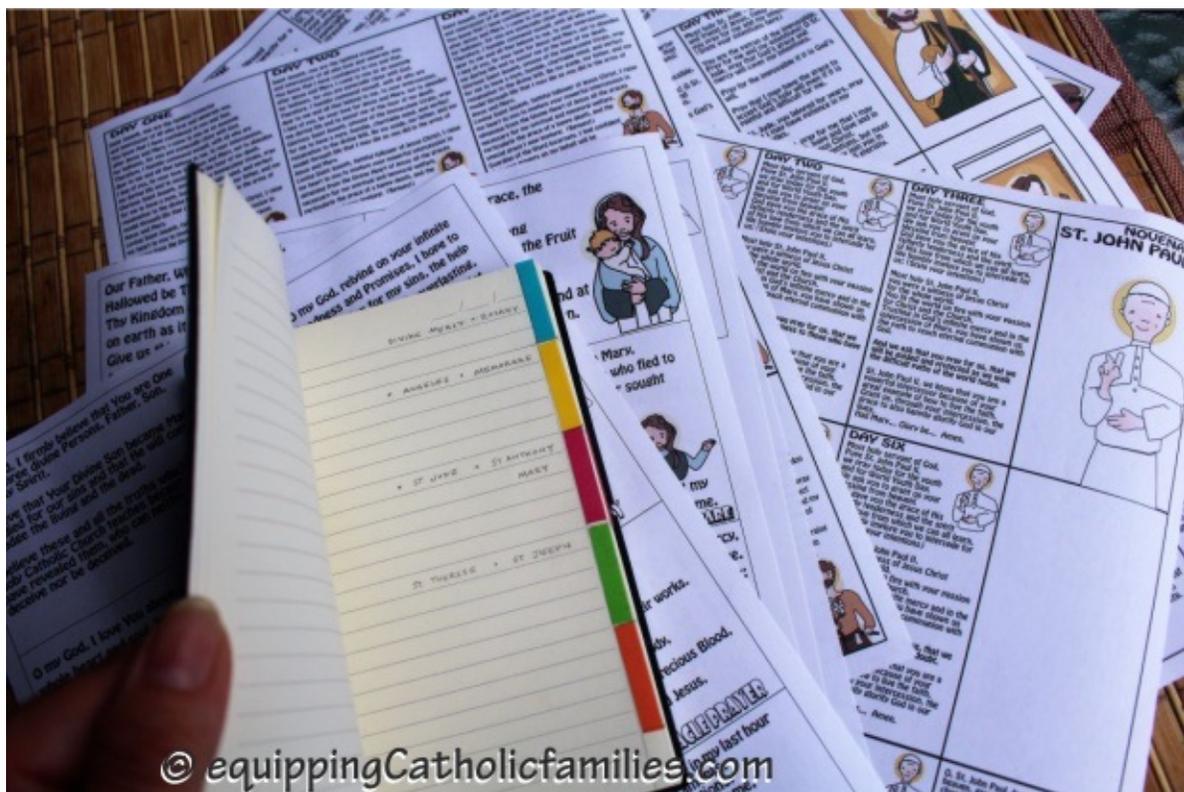
Recently, I finished an awesome St Anthony Novena (*thank you, St Anthony for answering my prayer!*) but I found it difficult at times to remember to say the prayers even though I had them copied in my prayer journal, on my ipad *and* printed out on hard copies. That was the problem, I think...

I felt so scattered and while I could usually grab the prayers wherever I was, it felt a little haphazard

and I might have missed a day once...but continued on.

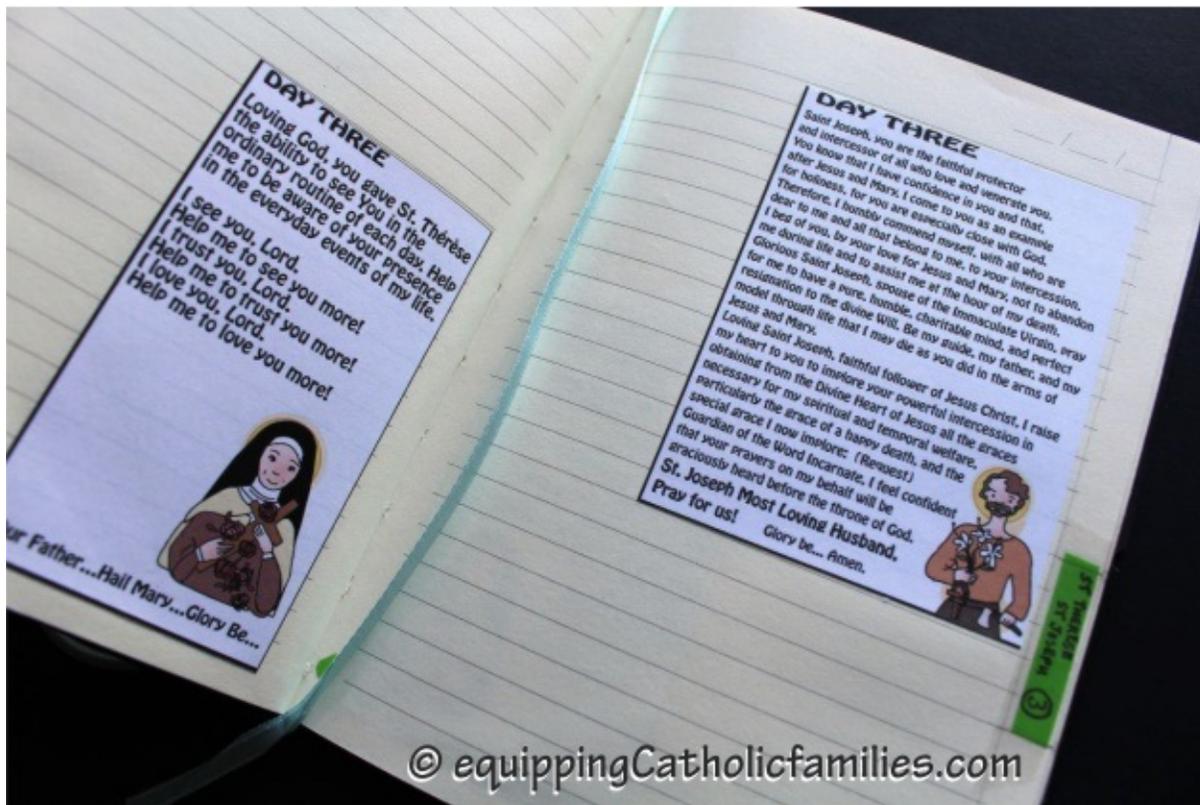
At the same time, I had a request for my new Prayer Impressions [Rosary stamp](#) to be converted into labels for a friend in Australia...

so I did what I often do. I created a NEW Craft Kit!

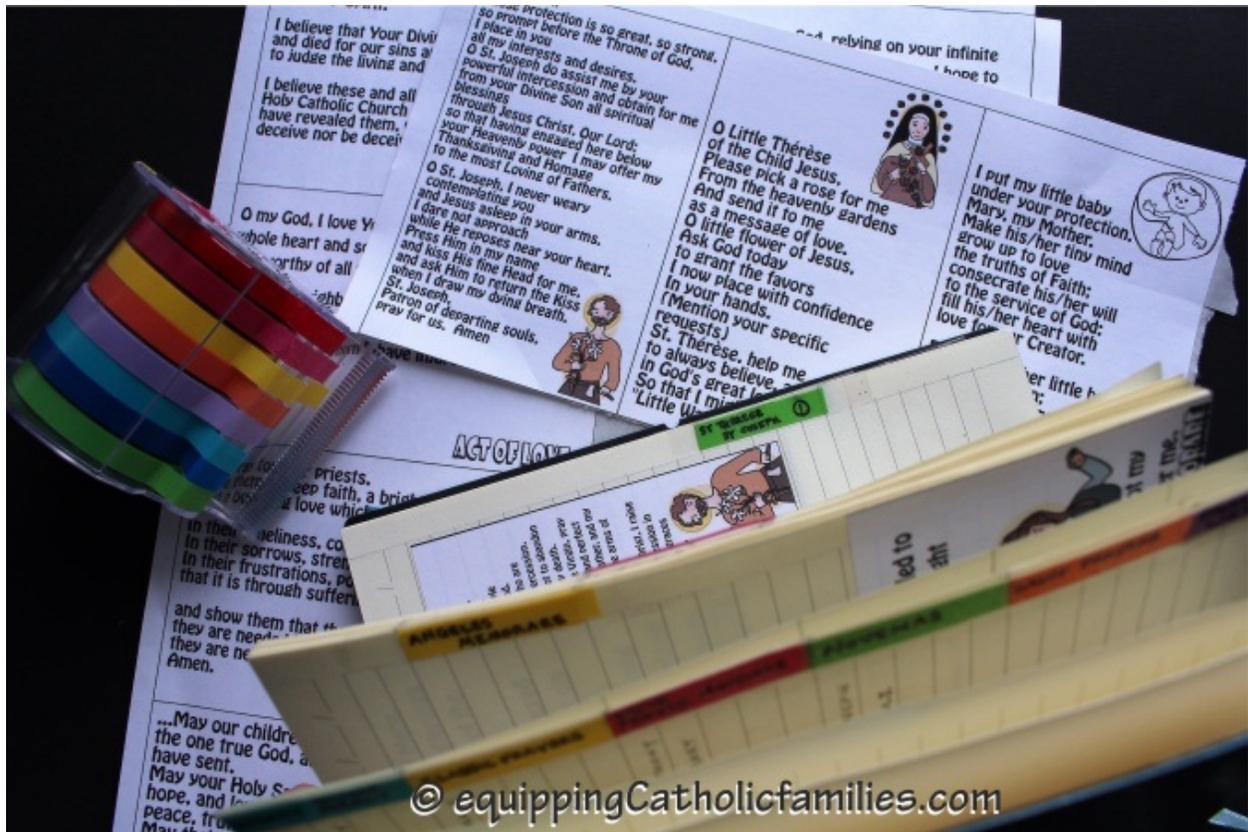


**and it's an AWESOME Craft Kit!**

It builds on the [Prayer Journal Prompts Craft Kit](#) and (and the [Workshop Kit](#)) but it offers templates to collect and organize your favorite classic prayers *and most popular Novenas!*



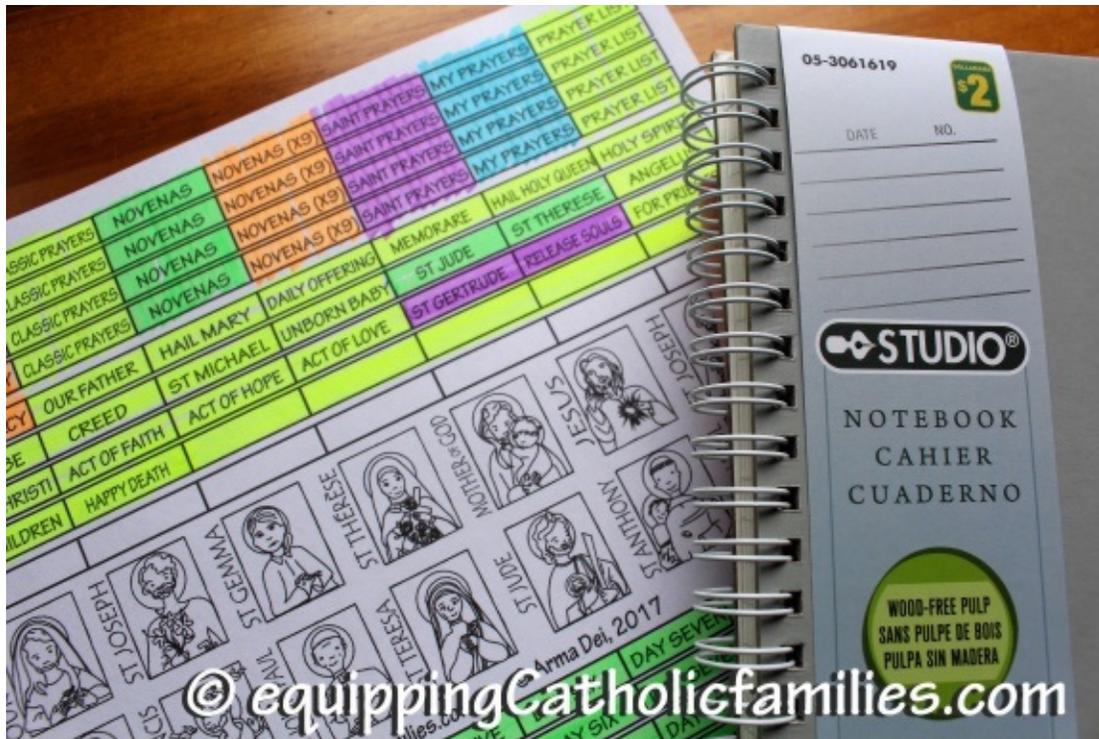
It even offers a cool system to organize the 9 different prayers of your favorite novenas...and a logical place just for your running list of prayer requests.



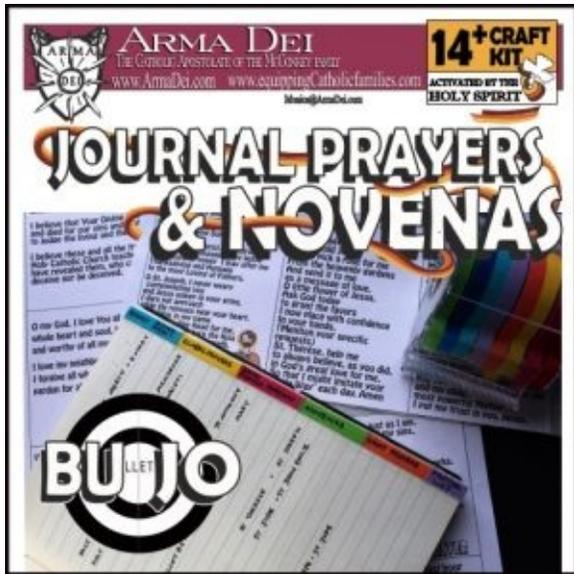
I added a little washi tape for the different tabs...and I love how it turned out!



Making a Catholic Prayer Bullet Journal for a friend of mine, I used the templates from the craft kit to make the bullet journal tabs. Printing the tabs on full page label paper, I discovered that a set of highlighter pens can easily be used to color code the different tabs...before the tab labels are cut! This saves a lot of time and the printing is neater and more consistent!



The 18 pages of prayer templates are super handy for ANY prayer journal or even planner or calendar. Novenas include St. Anthony, Mother Mary, St. Jude, St. Monica, St. Anne, St. John Paul II, St. Joseph, St. Peregrine and St. Therese. The Kelly Saints™ clipart make the templates even more fun to use!



## Journal Prayers and Novenas Craft Kit

with BuJo (Bullet Journal) Tips and Tabs!

PDF Download: \$15

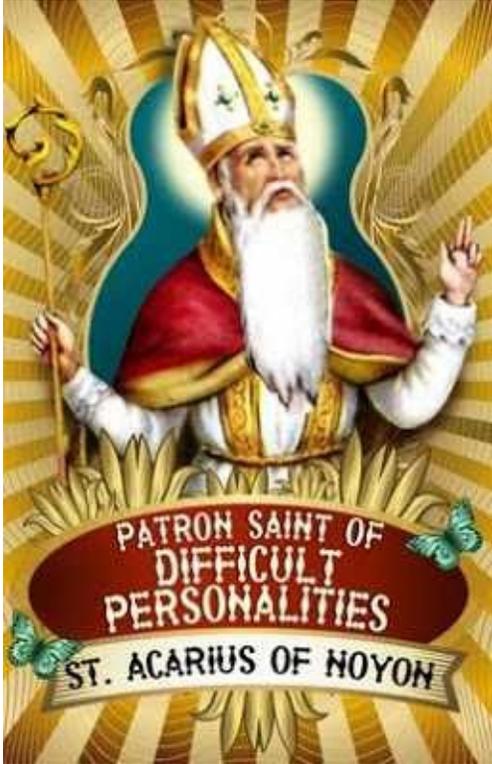


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This contribution is available at <http://equippingcatholicfamilies.com/2017/08/catholic-prayer-bullet-journal/>  
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## Holy Acarius, Pray for Us [at Pauca Verba]



**O Holy Acarius,**

how wonderful to discover your patronage,

living as I do in a world of

\*difficult personalities -

people who are irksome, tiresome,

annoying, irritating.

And so I pray...

For the people who are always

critical of others, complaining, negative, boastful, meddlesome, troublemaking, overbearing, tale-carrying, *Holy Acarius, pray for us.*

For the power grabbing, snobbish, pretending, manipulating, ignorant (but know-it-all), partisan, foolish, name dropping people. *Holy Acarius, pray for us.*  
For those who play the victim, the big-mouthed. the dirty-mouthed, the social climbing, bullying, aggressive, dangerous, scheming. money-grubbing people. *Holy Acarius, pray for us.*

For those who are ungrateful, entitled, lazy, lying, hypochondriac, inauthentic, ideological, bossy, nose, too-good-to-be-true cheery. *Holy Acarius, pray for us.*

But really, Holy Acarius,

while I ask for help in this world of difficult personalities -

that I would love people as I find them

or as they may become -

I pray all the more for *myself*,

who is undoubtedly irksome in some way to someone else,

for God to change me in ways that are presently

unknown to me -

even unimaginable. *Amen*

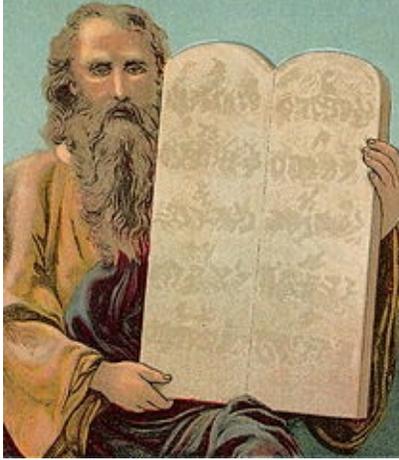
*\*I put this litany prayer together after having asked a half dozen people, "What comes to mind when you hear the words 'difficult personalities?'"*

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This contribution is available at <http://paucaverba.blogspot.com/2017/08/holy-acarius-pray-for-us.html>

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## Are you a moral relativist? [at Catholicism and Adventism]



Some time ago I wrote this on [Catholic Answers Forums](#), and thought it would make a nice post here.

My view on the Old Testament atrocities is that human history, and especially the activities and rules in the Old Testament, are a play laid out by God to teach us something at the end. The Old Testament in particular is a play that is fulfilled and understood in the New Testament. E.g. unclean animals not suitable for eating existed to symbolise the difference between God's chosen people and the Gentiles (Leviticus 20:23-26), and is no longer relevant now that there is no longer such a distinction and the Church is open to all.

Likewise with the killing of entire cities, women and babies included. It fits into the play, and has a purpose in the bigger picture (I don't always know what).

Is it immoral for God to decree such annihilation? I'd say no – God decides when everyone will live and die; some die peacefully, some die in natural accidents, some die in war.

Was it immoral for the Israelites to perform such killings? I would say yes. Killing innocents is always wrong, now and then. God's action is legitimate, his use of Israel as a tool to perform the action is legitimate, but the hearts of those killing babies were black with sin, perhaps with mitigating factors (see later).

Abraham agreeing to sacrifice Isaac – same thing. He lived in a different culture, and that culture made it easier for him to think human sacrifice might please God, so when told to sacrifice Isaac, he could do so with greater ease than we could today. If someone today got a message from God saying they should sacrifice their children on an altar, we'd rightly lock them away. For them, and for Abraham, killing their child would be a terrible act. Abraham was rescued at the last minute, but I think agreeing to it was a huge moral error on his part in terms of absolute morality. But I think there were mitigating factors.

Mitigating factors:



The Sacrificial Lamb – Josefa de Ayala, ca 1670

Abraham was told to do this by God, and believed it was God telling him to do this. As misguided he may have been regarding the appropriateness of human sacrifice, he still trusted God fully. Perhaps he expected God to raise Isaac to life again, perhaps immediately or in the future. But that faith and trust of God, in his context and warped environment, outweighed, morally, the evil of human sacrifice, and so he is credited with having faith. Had he killed Isaac, it would have been an evil act on his part, and a sin, but the culpability for his sin would have been diminished by his circumstances. As would the culpability of someone today trying the same thing.

Imagine three people amongst the Israelites who went and killed babies in 1 Samuel 13.

Person 1 – they believe God has instructed them to do this, and they get great joy from the killing. I don't believe that someone who experiences joy in a situation like that has a good heart. Whether or not their specific act of killing is a mortal sin (see below) or, due to their belief, only a venial sin, I would think their state

is mortally sinful.

Side note: CCC 1857: For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: *“Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.”*

Person 2 – they believe God has instructed them to do this, but they experience it as terrible, spend months recovering from the emotional trauma, and saying to God, *“You asked me to do this, but why???”* Their state is one of confused repentance, despising what they did, mingled with faith in God’s will. Their hearts are much purer than Person 1’s.

Person 3 – they reject the instruction as abominable. God zaps them dead for refusing to obey (similar to the guy who, in apparent good faith, touched the Ark of the Covenant when he tried to prevent it from falling over). They arrive in the afterlife, and God says to them, *“1. I zapped you for not obeying, because that will show people a bigger part of my plan. 2. Welcome to heaven, your heart is pure and your love and compassion great.”*

This is one of the ways I think one can approach this without moral relativism (there may well be better ways to do that).

### **Further reading:**

[Catholic Answers Forums – Are you a moral relativist?](#)

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## Liturgy and the totus Christus [at Catholic Deacon]

Showing a picture he took of a Lutheran chapel in Denmark, where he was participating in a conference of the European Hymn Society, Benedictine priest, musician and liturgical scholar, Fr Anthony Ruff (who I had the pleasure of meeting more than 20 years ago), where he celebrated Mass, noted that while "the Lutherans still use the medieval high altar of the former Cistercian monastery," he, a Catholic monk, "set up an altar/table facing the people."

In a further comment he noted something that strikes me as tremendously important:

If ad or[i]entem reinforces a sense of community - we're all facing the same direction and the priest is one of us - it's a good thing. If, however, it reinforces that the priest is doing Mass FOR the people or ON BEHALF OF the people - which can easily be the impression, then we have a major theological problem. Not denying at all the indispensable [sic] and irreplacea[b]le role of the ordained priest in the (communal) offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass, it is a distortion to think that the ordained priest is the mediator. He ain't. Christ is. It's also a distortion to think that only he shares in Christ's priesthood - which is a very widespread misconception. This is totally false - just look at the rite of baptism - all share in the priesthood through baptism

All I can say is, I agree. This is an important point to be discussed among those of us who care deeply about the sacred liturgy.

In my experience in pastoral ministry and on-line, the "major theological problem" Fr Ruff identifies is usually the crux of the matter. This ties very much into the reception, or non-reception, of the Second Vatican Council. It has to do with something far more fundamental than the liturgical reforms that followed the Council. It goes to those things on which the reform is based: a renewed and restored ecclesiology and theology of the Council as expressed in the Dogmatic Constitutions and the Pastoral Constitution. As it pertains to the liturgy, this results in the importance for all to fully, actively, and consciously participate.



## **Lutheran Church in Logumkloster, Denmark, by Fr Anthony Ruff, OSB**

I have heard/read a number of people lately speak/write about wanting to worship in the Extraordinary Form precisely so as not to participate. I read one piece in the

*Catholic Herald*

yesterday, by a U.S. blogger, (not sure how they settled on him, retrograde and crosswise would be kind ways of describing his stance) who was lamenting things like formation for marriage and having children baptized. The whole concept of and our need for Christian

*koinonia*

, which is rooted in our participation in the Eucharist, seems lost on many people.

Do we need silence, space and quiet time for recollection and contemplation? Yes! I am an advocate for more silence than we often have at Mass: a pause before the

*Confiteor*

or penitential litany at least long enough to silently recite an Act of Contrition, some silence after the first reading, Psalm, and second reading, a few moments of reflection after the homily, a pause between the end of the Communion Rite and the Prayer After Communion. But we should have a prayer life outside of Mass, too, one that brings us to the Eucharist and enhances our participation in the Mass.

A dilemma someone posed to me about whether the liturgy is the work of God or work of the people strikes me as utterly misguided. It seems to me a classic

of work of the people strikes me as utterly misguided. It seems to me a classic false dilemma. If one chooses to impale him/herself on either horn of this dilemma I can't help but see that s/he runs the risk of rendering the liturgy practically meaningless- it would result in a fatal disconnection or dysfunction in one's conception of what is happening, which impacts how one engages at Mass. Therefore, it seems to me the only Christian approach is to grasp that the liturgy is at one and the same time the work of God and the work of God's people, the Church, who together constitute the

*totus Christus*

- the total or complete Christ. Stated simply, Baptism and Confirmation matter for Eucharist.

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This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2017/08/liturgy-and-totus-christus.html>  
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## Two Small Kindnesses [at FranciscanMom]



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Yesterday was quite a day.

My daughter had her wisdom teeth out. That was a 4-hour chunk of the day, almost half of which was devoted to driving. All went well and she's sore but not sick, so we are grateful. That's the part of the day that went right.

As for the rest of it:

TheKid found a dead bunny in the backyard when he was mowing the lawn.

I'd been up since 4:30 AM getting the hang of my new job and trying mightily to stay caught up on my first job. ("Just keep swimming ...")

My daughter is dog-sitting and since she's not allowed to drive until tomorrow because she had anesthesia, I had to drive her 4 miles each way two times to take care of the dog.

TheKid had soccer practice from 5 to 7:30.

I was supposed to sing at Mass at 7 PM with the folk group, but Hubs was in

New York for the day for training, so he wasn't going to be home in time for the end of soccer practice, and my daughter can't drive. So ... no church for me. I'll have to go tomorrow and take my chances on the music.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaand ... the dryer is broken.

My daughter's boyfriend arrived, milkshake in hand, while I was getting TheKid after practice. He drove an hour each way after working all day to bring her a vanilla shake.

It was well after 8 PM by the time I'd cooked, we'd eaten, and I got things put away, then headed out to the laundromat with two heavy loads of wet laundry and the pots and pans still in the sink.

I bundled all the socks and towels into two big dryers and settled in with my Kindle to wait for it to be done.

My daughter texted me to ask if I wanted her to finish the dishes. I told her not to worry about it; she was hurting and I was giving her the day off from chores. Then, a few minutes later: "My boyfriend washed the dishes."

He's a keeper.

Then the dryers buzzed and I started the foldathon before heading home. I was one sock short, but figured it had just gotten separated out at home. As I piled everything into my basket, a lady unloading her washing machines turned around with my other sock in her hand to ask if it was mine.

Then she went and held the door open for me as I carried my overloaded basket outside.

Earlier, I had almost been reduced to tears by the small erosions of things going wrong. The tears finally came as I slid my laundry basket into the back seat of my car. Gratitude. Relief. And, yes, exhaustion.

Two small kindnesses, when the day had very nearly gotten the best of me.

They might not seem like a very big deal, but when the day is full of little things that go wrong, two little kindnesses mean a very great deal.

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## Authentic Christians are in fact edgy folks, more than a bit dangerous. [at Boldly Catholic]

[MontStMichel](#)

[Bishop Robert Barron and his team are back home from visiting Mont Saint-Michel after filming the next installment of his Pivotal Players series](#) and he's written a beautiful piece about that intriguing place. Here's an excerpt:

*To grasp the religious significance of the Mount, we have to remember that it was built on the edge. Like the Irish monks who constructed their simple dwellings off the harsh western coast of their homeland, the religious who gave rise to Mont Saint-Michel felt that they were doing their work, quite literally, at the ends of the earth. Jesus told his disciples to proclaim the Gospel everywhere and not to stop until they had gone all the way. Cardinal Francis George loved to relate the story of his brothers in the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who, taking Jesus at his word, declared the resurrection to every village and hamlet in the Yukon, until they came finally to the people who said, "There's no one beyond us." Mont Saint-Michel was intended to be a monument to the thoroughness of the Christian missionary effort. Hence it was, to me, a vivid reminder that we need to pick up our game today and to go to what Pope Francis has famously termed the periferia, a border country more existential than geographical.*

*I have discovered now through direct experience, though I had certainly sensed it through photographs, that it is practically impossible to gaze at Mont Saint-Michel without falling into mystical reverie. I would challenge anyone to come here and walk the causeway leading up to the mount and not find himself beguiled into thinking of things higher and more eternal. The mountain itself, and then the architecture piled so exquisitely on top of it, draw the viewer's eyes up and up, beyond this world. And when you climb to the top, you look out on the trackless and seemingly endless sea. From Plato, through Dante, to James Joyce, the trope of the open sea has been used to evoke the transcendent goal of the searching heart. The art, the sacraments, the doctrine, and the saints of the church are meant to lure us to the edge of the ordinary and to allow us at least a glimpse of that open*

*sea of God's eternity. They are, accordingly, the enemies of Charles Taylor's "buffered self," the modern person so thoroughly shaped by secularist ideology that she no longer hears the rumors of angels. It has always struck me as curious that a religious person is seen as somehow conventional and non-threatening, a little fussy Ned Flanders. Authentic Christians are in fact edgy folks, more than a bit dangerous. Mont Saint-Michel, standing on the border between heaven and earth, is just the kind of place those dangerous types like to go.*

Do read [the entire piece](#), it's fascinating. And on my bucket list goes Mont Saint-Michel.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.boldlycatholic.com/2017/08/authentic-christians-are-in-fact-edgy-folks-more-than-a-bit-dangerous.html>  
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**Saint Isaac Jogues was a Jesuit missionary to the Huron and Iroquois of New France.** He can inspire modern-day children and parents who are facing judgement and bullying. St. Isaac was tortured by the Iroquois people for his faith, but he loved them so much he learned their language and returned to serve them. While his example of turning the other cheek may not always been the best way to deal with bullies, his life can still encourage us to pray for our enemies and those who mistreat us.

After studying under the Jesuits for twelve years, Isaac Jogues was [ordained as a priest](#). He traveled to New France in 1636 to serve as a missionary to the Huron. There, he spent six years serving at Ste. Marie with Fr. Jean de Brebeuf and other Jesuits, despite constant dangers and great difficulties.

Saint

# Isaac Jogues:

A Great Love for  
the Iroquois of  
New France

## The Iroquois Capture Isaac Jogues

In the summer of 1642, the mission at Ste. Marie was again faced with a bad harvest and much sickness, among both the priests and the Huron. Fr. Jogues went to Quebec to meet with his superiors and pick up supplies, despite the fact that the Iroquois were once again on the war path.

Historian John J. Wynne explains that the “Iroquois were the fiercest Indian tribes in the east . . . bitterly opposed to the French, implacable to the Hurons, hateful of the Black Robe, as the missionary was called on account of his clerical garment” (*The Jesuit Martyrs of North America*).

Fr. Jogues made it safely to Quebec and was returning with [Rene Goupil](#), a layman and several Huron when the Iroquois attacked on August 2. Most of the Huron fled into the forest and Goupil was captured, but several of the Huron converts tried to defend themselves.

Fr. Jogues had opportunity to escape, but says in a letter to his superior (written a year after the event), “I, who was barefoot, would not and could not flee,—not willing, moreover, to forsake a Frenchman and the Hurons, who were partly captured without baptism.”

The Iroquois tortured their French prisoners, biting off their fingers and tearing out their nails. Fr. Jogues continued to instruct the Huron captives (who were for a time spared the torture) and baptized many of them. The Iroquois then conducted their prisoners back to their villages.

## Isaac Jogues Among the Iroquois

Over the next month, Fr. Jogues and Goupil were subject to various tortures as they were led from village to village. [O’Sullivan](#) says of these tortures, “The details of these torments are too revolting for description. Some measure of their horror may be gauged from the fact that, when they were over, only two fingernails remained to Fr. Jogues; all his fingers were crushed, his left index finger was a stump, his left thumb was gone.”

Fr. Jogues spent thirteen months as a prisoner and slave of the Iroquois. Despite this, he continued to secretly minister to other Huron prisoners. He even learned

the Iroquois language so that he could preach to his captors. Finally, after much prayer, Fr. Jogues took an opportunity of escape offered by Dutch traders at Fort Orange (Albany).

On Christmas Day in 1643, he landed back in France, and returned to the Jesuits in Rennes and then to his mother in Orleans. She must have been overjoyed at seeing him again, for he hadn't expected to leave his missionary work.

## Isaac Jogues Returns to New France

In France, Fr. Jogues received a hero's welcome. [The Catholic Encyclopedia](#) records that he was even "allowed by Pope Urban VII the very exceptional privilege of celebrating Mass, which the mutilated condition of his hands had made canonically impossible; several of his fingers having been eaten or burned off." He was also called a martyr by the pope.

However, Fr Jogues found himself homesick for New France. In the spring of 1644, he returned to New France and was stationed in Quebec and Montreal, but requested to be sent to the Iroquois. Two years later, he went back briefly as a peace ambassador. Then, since the "Iroquois had promised to bury the hatchet" (O'Sullivan), he was given permission to return. Along with [Jean de Lalande](#), a layperson, he traveled into Iroquois territory in September.

## Isaac Jogues's Death

After Fr. Jogues' peaceful visit to the Iroquois, the tribe fell ill and their crops failed. Campbell explains, "This double calamity was ascribed to Jogues whom the Indians always regarded as a sorcerer." Warriors were sent to capture and kill Fr. Jogues. He received news of this, but continued on his journey. He was deserted by everyone except Lalande.

He met the Iroquois near Lake George and was captured. On October 18, 1646, Fr. Jogues was murdered while entering an Iroquois cabin for a feast. Lalande was murdered the next day when he tried to retrieve Jogues' body. Both their heads were stuck on poles and their bodies were thrown into the river.

Isaac Jogues was canonized, along with the [other seven Canadian martyrs](#), in 1930. His feast day is celebrated on September 26 in Canada.

*Saint Isaac Jogues, pray that I may love my enemies as you did. Help me to live the love of God for them. May your life inspire me and my children to face those who treat us badly and to seek reconciliation and renewed relationships with them. Amen.*



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This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2017/08/st-isaac-jogues-iroquois/>  
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## Not So Hard to Understand [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

At times, I wonder if the book of Revelation is difficult for some to understand because they choose to reject the idea that God is not only “Love,” but also of judgment and wrath. It is as if they cling unknowingly to the Marcion heresy.

But for those who acknowledge judgment and wrath as also part of God's character, the Book of Revelation, despite its symbolism, is not difficult to decipher – certainly not its central message.

Indeed, if the central message of Revelation was hard to understand then Jesus’ warning in 1:3 makes no sense: *“Blessed is the one who reads aloud and blessed are those who listen to this prophetic message and heed what is written in it, for the appointed time is near.”* Neither does His warning in 22:7: *“Behold, I am coming soon.” Blessed is the one who keeps the prophetic message of this book.”*

God would not command us to heed or keep something we cannot understand.

However, when we acknowledge that God’s patience has its limits, and that He will indeed judge His creation at a final and eternally definitive judgment, then the central message of Revelation takes on a very weighty exhortation:

Everyone on planet earth must meet Jesus as either the Lamb of God who takes away their sin, or they will meet him as He warns in chapter 19 of the book:

*11 “Then I saw the heavens opened, and there was a white horse; its rider was called “Faithful and True.” He judges and wages war in righteousness. 12 His eyes were like a fiery flame, and on his head were many diadems. He had a name inscribed that no one knows except himself. 13 He wore a cloak that had been dipped in blood, and his name was called the Word of God. . . .”*

*15 “Out of his mouth came a sharp sword to strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod, and he himself will tread out in the wine press the wine of the fury and wrath of God the almighty. 16 He has a name written on his cloak and on his thigh, “King of kings and Lord of lords.”*

*17 "Then I saw an angel standing on the sun. He cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying high overhead, "Come here. Gather for God's great feast, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of military officers, and the flesh of warriors, the flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh of all, free and slave, small and great."*

Symbolism aside, the message is not shrouded in mystery.

Please do not ignore God's requirement to repentance and conversion, and to a life of obedience toward God who would rather be your gentle Savior than your wrathful Judge.

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This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2017/08/not-so-hard-to-understand.html>  
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## New Every Morning [at Making It In Vermont]

This summer living in our house are 2 adults, 2 teens, 2 tweens, 1 elementary schooler, 1 preschooler, and a toddler. Can you see how many different “agendas” that might create? Yeah half way through summer I am laying to rest my quest for balance. As much as I have striven for it, life is just having none of it.

These are our daylilies right behind the adorable children... (one of my favorite pictures from when we had just 4 little Lavery's.) The previous owners of our home planted these bulbs and they grow into a little natural rail to our front porch in the summer. They start blooming around the 4th of July and keep going all through the month of July and into the beginning of August.:



Kevin has been known to share the interesting fact that they are edible and as evidence plop an entire bloom into his mouth and then chew and swallow it in front of our visitors (*only the bright orange daylilies are edible by the way, not any other kind*). We've stuffed daylily blooms with chicken salad for the occasional “tea time”. It looks so fancy and our humble little flowers turn into an elegant and tasty treat!

But what I've learned to love the very most about this beautiful, fiery colored summer flower this last month is that just like their name says, they are "day" lilies. They bloom for just one day. By the time the day is done they are closed up, wilted, and done. And then like magic, the next day another bud on the stalk takes it place and breaks out in bloom. This pattern continues day after day after day for about 6 weeks.

I usually don't pick the daylilies to put in vases because they don't last long. I'd prefer to put together a nice bouquet that will last for at least a week, but this summer the zinnias I usually rely on for picking flowers didn't get planted till much later, so I didn't have a lot of choice about what to cut and bring in.

Desperate for a little color and freshness one day, I decided to try the daylilies.

I went outside, clipped 3 fresh blooms off the stalk and put them in water in this little blue canning jar/vase:



Then the next morning when they were instead 3 drooping spent flowers I threw them out and started again.

There is something about enjoying the blooms each day on our kitchen table and

knowing that by end of day they will be done. It reminds me to enjoy the present and that things don't last forever, even bad things (like cranky kids x7 who want what they want right now or my own sometimes irritated/overwhelmed moods), and most importantly that I too can be "new" every morning.

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is thy faithfulness. ~Lamentations 3:22-23*

Here's to a new day friends!

With love from mid-summer in Vermont,

~Lisa

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## Sane Environmentalism [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

I think being concerned about air quality, recycling, and other environmental issues, makes sense.

But I don't think **only** being concerned about the environment is a good idea. People matter, too.

I don't think it's an either/or thing.

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## Kerosene Lamps to Smartphones in Four Generations

My father remembers living on a farm where a horse pulled the plow, wagon, or anything else too heavy for humans.

His father may have been as interested in new technology as I am. They got a kerosene lamp when such things became available in their area.

I probably also got my understanding that no technology is “safe” in the sense of being absolutely idiot-proof, from them. By way of my father, of course.



He told me that they tested the new lamp by clearing a firebreak around a stump. Then, setting the lamp on the now-isolated stump, they carefully lit the lamp.

Satisfied that it would produce light and some heat, and was not a serious safety hazard, they started using it. They later moved to an area which had been more obviously affected by the [Industrial Revolution](#).

I remember my parent's first television set, the hoopla over color television, and hand-wringing op-eds over the dreadful effect telephones had on the young. 'Kids these days! They don't communicate any more. They just sit for hours, talking on the telephone.'

My wife and I didn't have Internet connections in the first years of our marriage, but our youngest kids don't remember a world that wasn't 'connected.' On the whole, I like living in the [Information Age](#).

Today's computers, smartphones, and data networks, won't solve all our problems, but I don't see information tech as a threat. They're tools we can use to help **or** hurt each other. How we use them is our choice.

### **The Industrial Revolution: Good News, Partly**



England was at the leading edge of the Industrial Revolution, starting somewhere between 1760 and 1840. That was good news, and not-so-good news.

On the 'up' side, we don't have nearly as many famines these days.

I suspect we'll be cleaning up effects of the 'down' side for centuries.

But I certainly don't miss the days of frequent famines. That would make about as much sense as assuming that growing crops, instead of hunting and gathering, is a bad idea. ([October 21, 2016](#); [July 22, 2016](#); [August 26, 2016](#))

I think disciples of Malthus owe their credibility partly to historical amnesia. ([May 12, 2017](#); [April 7, 2017](#); [August 12, 2016](#))

I still run into other folks who talk as if they think Earth's resources are literally infinite.

I don't agree.

But I don't think we'll all starve, or drown when the icecaps melt, or perish of some calamity wrought by "tampering with things man was not supposed to know," as the mercurial Mr. Squibbs said. I'll get back to that.

While the Industrial Revolution was starting in England, settlers from former English colonies in North America were moving into land west of the Appalachians.

"...Many mills are already built on this stream, some of which are represented in the map, and will have a plentiful supply of water in the dryest seasons. ... Here is great plenty of fine cane, on which the cattle feed, and grow fat...."

(["The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke,"](#) John Filson (1784) via [Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#))

His expressed attitude is understandable. He'd acquired large land claims there, and was encouraging folks to buy parcels of his investment.

We see the same sort of thing in today's real estate ads.

I think quite a few folks shared the optimism shown in Filson's publication. But not all.

## **Doom, Gloom, and Lovecraft**



Not quite two decades later, back in England, [Thomas Robert Malthus](#) assured himself a place of honor in the hallowed halls of doomsayers.

His 1798 “[An Essay on the Principle of Population](#)” set the standard for many later prognostications of grim futures.

He was a clergyman, and concerned about the poor. I think that’s reasonable. What he considered beneficial for the poor is — debatably charitable.

He thought, for example, that [English Poor Laws](#) encouraged the lower classes to have too many kids.



His work inspired terms like [Malthusian catastrophe](#).

And, likely enough, Ebenezer Scrooge’s attitude regarding the “[surplus population](#).” Indirectly. ([April 30, 2017](#))

Malthus wasn’t the only one who wasn’t thrilled about the Industrial Revolution.

“...And was Jerusalem builded here,  
Among these dark Satanic Mills?...”  
(“[And did those feet in ancient time](#),” William Blake (1804))

William Blake’s poem may or may not involve his [personal mythology](#). He’s been seen as colorful, eccentric, and — during his life — crazy. Also very talented. The “Jerusalem” he talks about in the poem has, I think, more to do with English folklore than history.

I take Blake’s work seriously: as poetry and literature. The same goes for works by Yeats and Lovecraft:

“...And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”  
(“[The Second Coming](#),” W. B. Yeats (1919))

“...hillfolk will tell you that it is indeed a spot transplanted from his Satanic Majesty’s front yard....”

(“[The Tree on the Hill](#),” H. P. Lovecraft and Duane W. Rimel (1934))

I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t use religious jargon that way, partly because I take my faith seriously. Also because I appreciate the capacity some folks have for mistaking poetry and metaphor for literal fact.

## Still Learning

Like I said, I don’t think Earth’s resources are infinite. Not literally. Our planet’s a big place, but not even the biggest planet.

Scary environmental news items go back at least to an 1898 article warning that we were running out of oxygen.

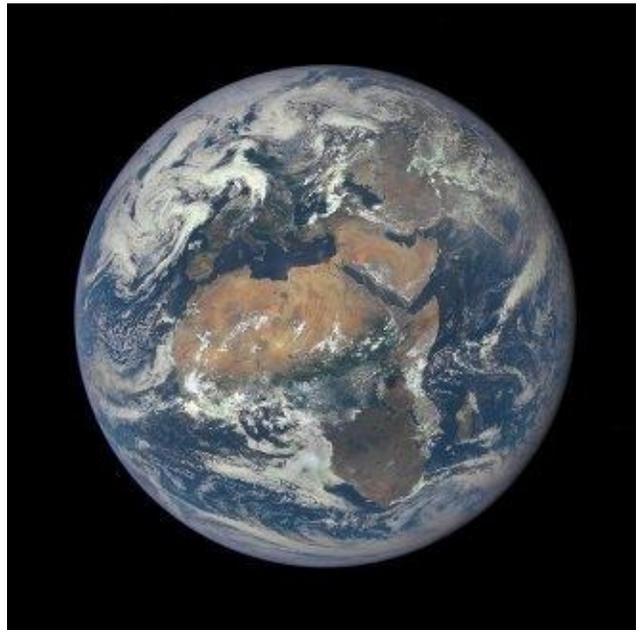
I do not think we are burning the last of Earth’s oxygen and will asphyxiate in a few centuries. Lord Kelvin’s math was accurate, but his assumptions weren’t.

We’ve learned quite a bit about Earth’s [oxygen cycle](#) since then, although I’m pretty sure we still don’t have the full picture. ([April 14, 2017](#))

I’m also confident that we’ll sort out today’s environmental issues: and that the solution is improving technology, not fearing it. ([February 10, 2017](#))

The lesson of the Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894 is not that irresponsibility is okay because future generations will develop tech that fixes our blunders. We can, and should, deal with today’s issues: within reason. ([May 26, 2017](#); [February 10, 2017](#))

I don’t know why some Christians, including some Catholics, seem so angry about — just about everything, and that’s another topic.



My guess is that some Catholics dislike “[Laudato si](#)” because Pope Francis wrote it. Maybe I’m being unfair. I’m still studying his ‘environmental encyclical,’ but what I’ve found so far is consistent with what the Church has been saying.

Bear in mind that my first impulse, on hearing that a Pope has said something that seems odd, is **not** assuming that I’m right and the Pope is wrong.

I start by finding out what the Pope actually said, not what some guy thought he heard someone say the Pope said. ([July 30, 2017](#))

## Doing Our Job



(From Johnhart Studios, used w/o permission.)

I was pleased, but not surprised, when I learned that the Catholic versions of environmental awareness and social justice make sense. That was years ago now. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, [307](#), [339](#), [952](#), [1928–1942](#), [2415](#))

Using natural resources, within reason, is okay. So is private ownership. Again, within reason. But humanity’s “dominion” is not ownership. I must remember that future generations will live here, too. (Catechism, [2401–2405](#), [2415](#), [2456](#))

Part of our job is keeping this world in good working order. Science and technology aren’t problems. They’re part of being human. Like I said, using our tools wisely is up to us. ([Genesis 1:26–29](#), [2:15](#); Catechism, [339](#), [2292–2295](#))

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## 1. Trustworthy Information



(From Jungfrauoch, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)

(“The air monitoring station at Jungfrauoch, in Switzerland, has detected the Italian emissions for nine years”

(BBC News))

“[‘Dodgy’ greenhouse gas data threatens Paris accord](#)”

Matt McGrath, BBC News (August 8, 2017)

**“Potent, climate-warming gases are being emitted into the atmosphere but are not being recorded in official inventories, a BBC investigation has found.**

“Air monitors in Switzerland have detected large quantities of one gas coming from a location in Italy.

“However, the Italian submission to the UN records just a tiny amount of the substance being emitted....”

The “greenhouse gas” scientists detected is HFC-23, or CHF<sub>3</sub>, a form of [Fluoroform](#) used in plasma etching and as a refrigerant. It’s also a byproduct of making Teflon.

It’s not ‘green’ in a ‘save the whatever’ sense, but it is natural in the sense that some cells produce small amounts.

I figure BBC is right. The HFC-23 detected in Switzerland was almost certainly unreported industrial effluvia.

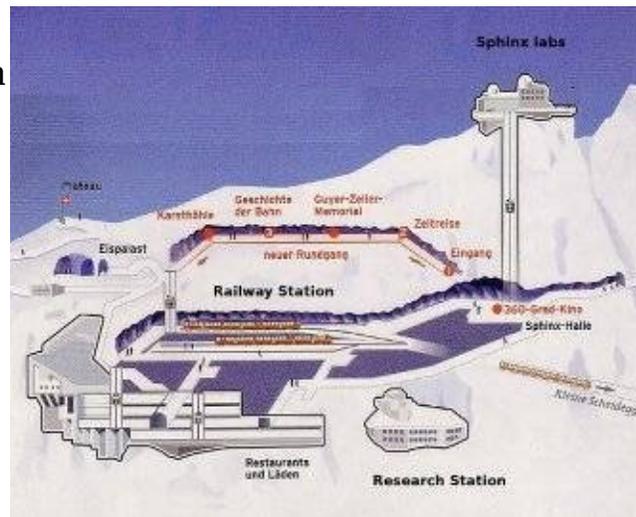
The photo’s caption isn’t strictly accurate, however. The structure is the [Sphinx Observatory](#). There is an air monitoring station there, but it’s not “at”

Jungfrauoch. It's close, though.

[Jungfrauoch](#) is the name of a [saddle](#) in the [Bernese Alps](#). The Jungfrauoch saddle is between [Jungfrau](#) and [Mönch](#), two peaks. They're between [Interlaken](#) and [Fiesch](#) in Switzerland. Scientists have been using the Jungfrauoch area for almost a century.

In the [1920s](#), Swiss scientists started building a “meteorological pavilion” on a Jungfrauoch glacier. [Daniel Chalonge](#) measured ozone levels there in 1928.

[Walter Rudolf Hess](#) and others started the International Foundation High Alpine Research Station Jungfrauoch in 1930.



Scientists were working at the station a year later. They were studying weather, glaciers, and physiology.

Astronomers came, too, including some who were studying cosmic rays.

The Sphinx Observatory building was finished in 1937, except for parts that got added later. Lots of parts.

By now it's got two laboratories, two terraces for science experiments, a weather observing station, a workshop, and living quarters for the two couples who keep the place running.

Researchers sleep and eat on site, too, but not tourists. Folks who aren't working there can visit, though, arriving at a railway station that's the highest one in Europe. The research facility is a **big** place, but maybe not as famous as the Piz Gloria.<sup>1</sup>

I'm not surprised that folks at the Sphinx research station detected gas that doesn't officially exist.

Folks don't always share what they know. Lapses in judgment during the summer of 1953, and spring of 1986, aren't unique; but I think they're good —

or bad — examples.

## Stormy Weather, 1953

A high-pressure air mass tangled with its low-pressure counterpart over Nebraska on [June 7, 1953](#). The June 7th storms weren't particularly memorable.

But one tornado on June 8th killed 116 folks. The body count was 247 by day's end.

That photo shows part of [Flint-Beecher](#), Michigan, after the storm passed.



What's sad is that many of those deaths were most likely avoidable.

Officials at the National Weather Service knew that tornadoes were likely when the storm started ripping through New York state.

Folks in the New England area aren't accustomed to twisters, though, so the powers that be didn't issue a warning.

The official decision was, apparently, well-intentioned. Decision-makers at the Weather Service didn't want common folks to panic. They did, however, issue the first severe thunderstorm watch in Massachusetts history.

Buildings and people are a lot closer together, on average, in Massachusetts: compared to much of Tornado Alley, anyway.

Several dozen abrupt deaths later, quite a few folks started wondering why nobody had given them a 'heads up.'

Starting June 17, 1953, The Storm Prediction Center got reorganized. Since then, we've set up a nationwide radar/storm spotter system, and developed tech that helps us collect, analyze, and broadcast information.<sup>2</sup>

On the whole, I greatly prefer knowing that potentially-lethal weather is headed my way to being sheltered from scary facts 'for my own good.'

I strongly suspect that many folks have a great deal more sense than our 'betters' assume.

## Radiation, 1986

I remember reading and hearing about unusually high radiation levels in northern Europe in 1986.

The Soviet Union, England, and America had been building nuclear power plants since the 1950s.

The 1979 Three Mile Island meltdown encouraged concerns, reasonable and otherwise, about radiation.

That made alarms going off at Sweden's Forsmark power plant international news.

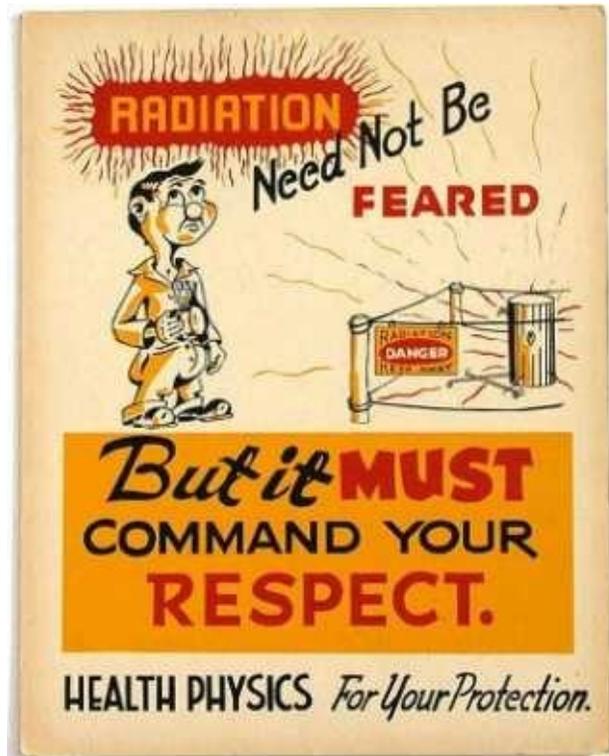
Sweden's government wasn't particularly vocal in denying their guilt, partly because radiation levels were rising all over northern Europe. Radioactive particles were spreading; and nobody seemed to know where the stuff was coming from.

Some scientists said weather conditions and radiation readings strongly suggested that the source was somewhere between the Baltic and Black Seas.<sup>3</sup>

Folks running the Soviet Union finally acknowledged that things were not entirely fine somewhere, and that everyone should stop asking so many questions. The statements were in diplomatese, of course.

Apparently Soviet leadership had a bit of difficulty with public trust after that. Americans went through the same sort of thing after the 1953 storms and 1979 radiation leak.

For someone at the 'public' end of society, I think the trick is learning how to be



reasonably cautious, not hysterical. ([July 28, 2017](#))

## Babylon and Home Decor

Babylonians predicted weather by analyzing cloud patterns and astrological data.

We still study cloud patterns. Around the 1700s, more precise data and improved analysis methods led to today's astronomical science and relegated astrology to newspaper columns. ([June 23, 2017](#))

Galileo didn't invent the [Galileo thermometer](#), an early sort of thermometer that's now more of a home decor item than scientific instrument. The [Accademia del Cimento](#) released details of their invention in 1666.

[Evangelista Torricelli](#) was a member of that group, and had been a pupil of Galileo. Maybe "Galileo thermometer" sounds cooler than "Accademia del Cimento thermometer."

Galileo probably did invent a [thermoscope](#), which isn't quite the same thing. Some folks say he was the first to make that sort of thermometer. A whole lot of folks in Europe were making the "first" thermoscope around that time: independently, I suspect.

Galileo did, however, rewrite the book on weather forecasting by measuring temperatures in 1607. Up to that time, European scholars assumed that heat and cold were qualities of Aristotle's four [elements](#).

As far as I know, folks generally didn't get conniptions over Galileo's temperature research, and that's yet another topic. ([March 24, 2017](#))

I was going somewhere with this. Let me think. Swiss laboratories, tourism, astrology, interior design. Right.

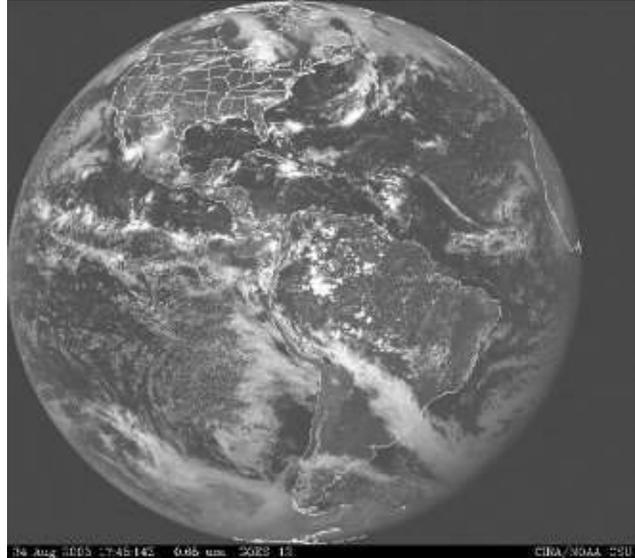
## Scientific Weather Forecasting



The next big jump happened in 1835, when the electric telegraph cut transmission speed of weather data from a maximum of about 100 miles per day to nearly-instantaneous.

That made meteorology less a study of past weather, and more a predictive science.

The first weather satellite went into orbit in 1960. Today we've got a network of geostationary and other satellites monitoring atmospheric data, including cloud patterns like the ones Babylon's experts watched.<sup>4</sup>



I've noticed that weather forecasts are more accurate than a half-century back, at least for the next 24 hours. And America's weather service is, if anything, a bit over-eager about issuing severe weather warnings.

Maybe it's because nobody wants to get reassigned to the [Barrow Climate Monitoring Lab](#).

I don't know why Italy's official numbers for HFC-23 emissions don't match what scientists detected in Switzerland.

Maybe everyone's telling the truth, as far as they know, and numbers got accidentally scrambled somewhere between Italy's monitors and bureaucrats who were handing the Paris Agreement's paperwork.

But I won't be surprised if we eventually learn that someone in Italy adjusted their reports of HFC-23 inventories to reflect what folks higher up wanted to read.

Assuming that nobody would notice the discrepancy might be easy for someone who didn't keep up with science news.

It's even possible that all six scientists who put their names on the 2011 report decided that they'd try fooling the BBC and UN.<sup>5</sup>

That seems a bit extreme for a practical joke, though.

Whatever the reason for the discrepancy between official numbers and what I assume are real observations, I think having someone other than officials and industries collecting data is a good idea.

My preference would be making raw data from satellites available to anyone who is interested. That would give us data on all of Earth's atmosphere, not just a few spots near monitoring stations.

Having someone coordinating efforts like the Paris Agreement makes sense. But so does keeping an eye on data being collected, and seeing if it matches official summaries. Even if everybody's being completely honest, mistakes do happen.

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## 2. Green Energy: Seeking a Balance



(From SPL, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)

“The UK's improved record of recycling in recent years means there is less waste for burning”

(BBC News))

[“Burning policy puts pressure on recycling targets”](#)

Roger Harrabin, BBC environment analyst; BBC News (August 7, 2017)

**“A boom in incinerator-building could make it impossible for the UK to meet future targets for recycling, a report says.**

“The consultancy Eunomia says waste companies constructing new incinerators will need waste to feed them.

“And that could reduce Britain’s stated ambition to recycle more waste.

“A government spokesman said ‘great progress’ had been made in boosting recycling rates....”

That shiny structure is the Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility (ERF). Depending on who’s talking, it’s a generating plant turning household waste into electricity — or an incinerator that will bring doom upon East Sussex.<sup>6</sup>

ERF started operations five years back. East Sussex is still there. Some locals have probably gotten used to increased traffic around the plant, and others may still be protesting.

I also think that recycling is a good idea. But I’m pretty sure it isn’t the **only** good idea being tried these days. Also that it’s not a perfect solution to environmental issues.

The problem — if that’s what it is — seems to be that folks in England who like recycling have less municipal waste to recycle. That’s because power plants like the ERF are using it to generate electricity.

I don’t think either system is perfect, but both are better than dumping the stuff in a landfill. We’re also learning how to [mine landfills](#) for recyclable waste. I’m quite sure that it won’t a perfect solution, either.

Happily, I don’t live in the UK, and don’t have a recycling quota to meet.

There’s almost certainly a political angle to this, since folks from one party did more than their counterparts in another to start burning waste instead of coal to generate electricity.

Phasing out coal-burning generators was almost certainly a good idea. I’m not sure that protesting in fancy dress is the best way to keep folks reminded of London’s killer fog, and that’s yet again another topic. ([July 28, 2017](#); [July 14, 2017](#))

I think biofuels are a good idea, too: which is what the next article is about.

## **Biofuels**



(From Getty Images, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)  
("The report recommends a cap on crop based biofuels"  
(BBC News))

["Waste products, not crops, key to boosting UK biofuels"](#)

Matt McGrath, BBC News (July 14, 2017)

**"The UK should focus on using waste products like chip fat if it wants to double production of biofuels according a new study.**

"The [report from the Royal Academy of Engineering](#) says that making fuel from crops like wheat should be restricted.

"Incentives should be given to farmers to increase production of fuel crops like Miscanthus on marginal land.

"Even with electric vehicles, biofuels will still be needed for aviation and heavy goods say the authors...."

I've been driving vehicles using a biofuel for years: a mix of gasoline and ethanol. Nothing unusual about that. Americans started using gasoline with 10% ethanol in the 1970s.

In 2005 the United States was producing more 'ethanol fuel' than any other country.

Biofuel for internal combustion engines goes back at least to the early 1800s. Samuel Morey developed and patented an engine that used turpentine vapor as fuel.

Steam power was the hot new tech of the day, though, so his little two-cylinder

Steam power was the not new tech of the day, though, so his little two-cylinder engine wasn't well known. The 1836 patent office fire, one of several over our history, destroyed the official patent records; but not his family's copies.

I think the lesson from Mr. Morey's experience is that making and keeping backups is a good idea: not that someone's burning government records. and that's still another topic.<sup>7</sup> ([July 21, 2017](#); [December 23, 2016](#))

I also think finding replacements for petroleum products is a good idea, but wasn't surprised when folks learned that ethanol isn't a panacea.<sup>8</sup>

The issue raised by the Royal Academy of Engineering should have been obvious.

Ethanol is made with [ethyl alcohol](#). Some of the easier ways to make ethyl alcohol involve fermenting grain.

We can decide that part of a corn crop, for example, can be used to feed us directly. It's also good for hog chow, and can be distilled into drinks like [whiskey](#). But using a larger fraction of the crop for one use means smaller portions for other purposes.

That seemed obvious to me, back in the '70s. Maybe it helped that I grew up in an area where agribusiness was an important part of the regional economy.

The good news here is that we can make ethanol from a wide range of organic stuff, not just crops we eat or use for livestock feed.

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### 3. Dead Activists



(From Goldman Environmental Prize, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)  
("Berta Caceres successfully fought against the building of a massive hydroelectric power dam"  
(BBC News))

["Record number of environmental activists killed around the world"](#)

Matt McGrath, BBC News (July 13, 2017)

**"Growing competition for land and natural resources saw a record number of environmental activists killed in 2016, says Global Witness.**

"The [green group's report](#) details at least 200 murders across 24 countries, up significantly from 2015.

"Disputes over mining were the cause of the greatest number of killings, followed by logging and agribusiness.

"Brazil saw the most deaths overall, but there were big increases in Colombia and India.

"Global Witness has been publishing annual reports on the threats to activists since 2012, although it has data going back to 2002...."

I think it's well to remember that not all "environmental activists" are like the folks who get their pictures taken at high-profile events like the G20 summit and Paris climate talks. ([July 14, 2017](#))



Some, like [Berta Cáceres](#), are interested in more than purely environmental issues.

She founded the [Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras](#) in 1993. The organization started with another name.

These days her group focuses on issues affecting the [Lenca](#), folks whose ancestors lived in what's now [Honduras](#) when European explorers arrived. They've maintained their culture, but not their language.

Many apparently don't think folks running Honduras care what they say.

Considering how many Lenca, including Berta Cáceres, have been killed after expressing their displeasure, I think they may have a point.

It's not the sort of response I expect from folks who are willing to listen.

**Consulting: But Not With Everyone**

One of the environmental issues in Honduras isn't, I think, entirely environmental.

Starting in 2006, [Sinohydro](#), a Chinese hydropower engineering and construction company, and the Honduran company Desarrollos Energéticos, made plans to build four hydroelectric plants on the [Río Gualcarque](#).

They apparently consulted with all the right officials, including the [International Finance Corporation](#) and Honduran government.

On-site work began in 2012.

That, apparently, is when folks who lived in the construction zone learned about the project.

They complained. I think that's understandable. The land isn't just their home. They depend on the river for their livelihood.

Nobody had asked them about taking their land and building power plants on their river.

Engineers who designed the dams may have taken local and regional needs into account. I don't think they're responsible for the mess. The power plants would have been [run-of-the-river](#) weirs, generating electricity without creating large reservoirs.

I suspect that at least some Lenca would have wanted their river left entirely alone. Their attitude toward it reminds me how folks in one of my wife's ancestral homelands saw [Donar's Oak](#).

Some troublesome Lenca were tortured, others were killed. When folks outside Honduras started hearing about the issue, some of the project's financial backers pulled out.



It's possible that the Río Gualcarque power project will continue anyway.

But after the shameful way they have been treated, I think Lenca cooperation will be grudging, at best.

The good news is that apparently only one bothersome person was killed in Honduras so far this year. That's an enormous improvement. But it's still not good.

### **Power to (Some of) the People**

Many Honduran households might have benefited from the Sinohydro and Desarrollos Energéticos roject.

Roughly two thirds have access to [electric power](#): mostly in urban areas. Most folks in rural areas get by without power.

Uneven electrical power coverage isn't the only problem.



Honduras is among the [poorest](#) countries in the western hemisphere. Exactly how the nation ranks depends on which statistics are counted.

One of the issues they're dealing with is not having a well-developed market for export goods. My guess is that a habit of killing Hondurans who complain isn't helping.

But I like to think that at least some folks responsible for planning those power plants meant well.

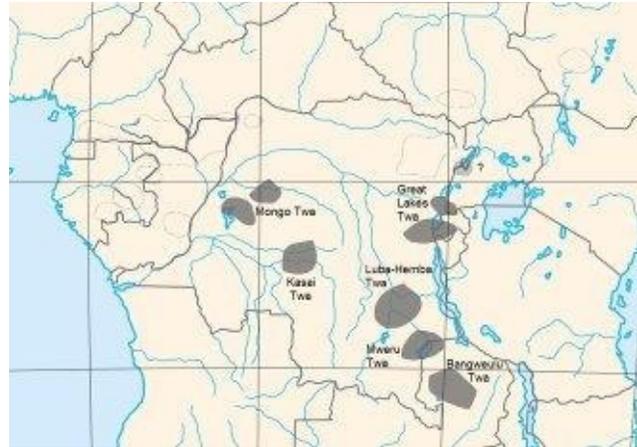
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### **Respect**

Honduras isn't the only country where apparently well-meaning efforts had unpleasant effects.

[Twa](#), folks in central Africa who inspired tales of the [Abatwa](#), had unwritten agreements with their neighbors.

Twa were hunters, not farmers. They traded game for agricultural products.



Trouble started in [1992](#). Twa land was also home to [mountain gorillas](#).

Mountain gorillas are endangered, humans aren't, so the Twa were evicted from most of their land. What was left got taken by other folks.

With no documents proving their land rights, there was no legal reason to pay them. The good news is that they're occasionally allowed to make and sell pottery. ([May 19, 2017](#))

Authorities recognized them as human, which is an improvement over some earlier eras. ([August 26, 2016](#))

What happened to the Twa wasn't a total loss, though. There are now nearly a [thousand](#) gorillas living in what was Twa land.

I think it's nice that folks want to maintain a wild population of mountain gorillas.

I think it would also have been nice to treat the Twa with more respect: even if their rights had been defined by oral, not written, agreements.

**Love**

I don't think the Lenca, Twa, English, or anyone else, live in perfect societies. Nobody does, and we never did.

There's no one 'correct' culture. But the basics would be the same, no matter what era I lived in, or where I was born. (Catechism, [1202](#), [1204](#), [1957](#))



I should love God, love my neighbor, and see everybody as my neighbor. Treating others the way I'd like them to treat me seems like a logical extension of those principles, but our Lord added it to the list. ([Matthew 5:43–44](#), [7:12](#), [22:36–40](#); [Mark 12:28–31](#); [Luke 6:31 10:25–27](#), [29–37](#); Catechism, [1789](#))

Acting as if love matters makes sense, I think.

There isn't much I can do to correct past injustices, or sort out today's tangled mess.

But I can talk about what's gone wrong, and — at least as important, I think — what's going right. That includes the American weather service's habit of issuing storm watches and warnings, and efforts to improve how we deal with waste.

Actually, compared to America in my youth, just being **aware** that reducing waste makes sense is a huge improvement.

But as I said, we don't have a perfect society today. I don't think we will. But I am quite certain that we can do better.

I can't fix the world, but I must do what I can to make tomorrow better. (Catechism, [1913–1916](#), [2239](#))

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

Where it ends is up to each and all of us.

I think that if we work with all people of good will, keep what is good in each of our cultures, and correct what is not, we can make this world better for everyone.

“...The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the twentieth century is the common effort **to build the civilization of love**, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty....”  
(“[To the United Nations Organization](#),”<sup>9</sup> Pope St. John Paul II (October 5, 1995))

It will be a long, hard, job. But I think we can succeed, and am sure we must try:

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<sup>1</sup> More than you need, or maybe want, to know about:

<sup>2</sup> Not making the same mistake twice:

<sup>3</sup> New tech and two incidents:

<sup>4</sup> Astronomy isn't astrology, and weather forecasting is something else:

<sup>5</sup> More:

<sup>6</sup> Recycling, green energy, and impending doom:

<sup>7</sup> Some conspiracies have been real, which gave one physicist data to work with:

<sup>8</sup> Biofuels:

<sup>9</sup> A civilization of love:

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This contribution is available at <http://brendans-island.com/catholic-citizen/sane-environmentalism/>  
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## 12 Quotes by Saint Augustine of Hippo

Today we celebrate the memorial of Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the great Doctors of the Church and one of the most popular canonized saints of the Catholic Church. He has been influencing Catholics to study their faith for over 1600 years, as well as bringing many sinners to Jesus Christ through his amazing conversion story.

Since he has influenced many with his writings over the centuries, I wanted to provide you with some quotes of his, which focus on a wide range of theological topics. Although there are countless writings and I could give you hundreds of quotes, here are 12 solid quotes from the Doctor of Grace himself –

1. “This is what you should think, if you wish to see God: ‘God is Love,’ What has love? What form has it? What height? What feet? What hands? No one can say. Yet it has feet, for they lead to the Church; it has hands for they care for the poor; it has eyes, for through them the needy one is known.”
2. “Too late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new, too late have I loved you! You were with me, but I was not with you. You cried out and pierced my deafness. You enlightened my blindness. I tasted you and I am hungry for you. You touched me, and I am afire with longing for your embrace.”
3. “Understanding is the reward given by faith. Do not try to understand in order to believe, but believe in order to understand.”
4. “If you should ask me what are the ways of God, I would tell you that the first is humility, the second is humility, and the third is still humility. Not that there are not other precepts to give, but if humility does not precede all that we do, our efforts are fruitless.” (Wow...this one makes you think!)
5. “God has no need of money, but the poor have. You give it to the poor, and God receives it.”



6. “Do not grieve or complain that you were born in a time when you can no longer see God in the flesh. He did not in fact take that privilege from you. As He says: ‘Whatever you have done to the least of my brothers, you did to me.’”

7. “Men go abroad to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and they pass by themselves without wondering.”  
(How true is this in the modern age!)

8. “Out of the forward will lust had sprung; and lust pampered had become custom; and custom indulged had become necessity. These were the links of the chain; this is the bondage in which I was bound.”

9. “Christ martyrs feared neither death nor pain. He triumphed in them who lived in them; and they, who lived not for themselves but for him, found in death itself the way to life.”

10. “If they, why not I? – If these men and women could become saints, why cannot I with the help of Him who is all-powerful?”

11. “If a man wishes to take your coat, give him also whatever other articles of clothes you may have.”

12. “Imagine a man in whom the tumult of the flesh goes silent, in whom the images of earth, of water, of air, and of the skies cease to resound. His soul turns quiet and, self-reflecting no longer, it transcends itself. Dreams and visions end.

So too does all speech and every gesture, everything in fact which comes to be only to pass away. All these things cry out: ‘We did not make ourselves. It is the Eternal One who made us.’”

## **St. Augustine of Hippo...Pray for Us**

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## Tristan and Isolde and the Three in One

I found myself placed next to a high powered High Court Judge at a dinner party in one of the most exclusive clubs in London. What on earth was I going to talk to her about I was thinking when, discovering that I was a Catholic writer, she made everything simple for me. She asked me to explain to her the mystery of the Holy Trinity!



Fortunately I had just heard my parish priest avoiding a similar question on Trinity Sunday by telling the story of St Augustine at the seaside.

There were no funfairs in those days. no amusement arcades to waste your

money in, and no piers to walk along, so St Augustine settled down on a sand dune and started thinking about the Church Council that had pronounced that there were three persons in one God. He was having great difficulty understanding this profound mystery of God's love when he was distracted by a little boy who was filling a little bucket with water from the sea and pouring it into a hole that he had dug only a few yards away. "What are you trying to do?" saint Augustine asked. "I'm trying to put the sea into that little hole." said the boy. "You will never be able to put the mighty sea into that little hole," said the saint. "Neither will you be able to fill your little head with the mystery of God's love." said the little boy, who promptly vanished leaving the great theologian wondering whether or not the little boy had been an angel or a figment of his imagination.

Sadly the Judge wasn't impressed and turned to talk to someone else. When she turned back to me again to ask me to pass the salt I tried to retrieve the situation. I explained that not even Jesus tried to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Jesus was not a Greek who was primarily interested in what a thing is in itself, but a Jew, who is always more practical, more existential, more interested in explaining what a thing can do. He was far more concerned with telling us how to enter into the life of the Holy Trinity, than in giving the sort of theoretical explanations that came later. In order to understand what it means to enter into what St Paul called, "the love that surpasses the understanding," the Fathers of the Church, up to and including St Bernard, used the human analogy in the commentaries on the Song of Songs, and I decided to do the same for my friend the judge. To my surprise my explanation seemed to satisfy her, so much so that she said she would come to my book launch, so let me repeat what I said to her so you might decide to come too.

You may remember that in *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Linton's love for Heathcliff was so great that she said, "*I don't love Heathcliff, I am Heathcliff.*" In other words, she wanted to enter into him more fully and more completely than their human bodies allowed, and remain there forever. She was not so much saying what had happened, but what she desired to happen more than anything else. She wanted to lose herself in him and wanted him to lose himself in her. You find the same idea in the story of *Tristan and Isolde*. When the two reached the heights of human love, their union was so sublime that at one moment Tristan actually calls Isolde, Tristan and Isolde calls Tristan, Isolde. You find exactly the same thing in the gospels. At one moment Jesus calls himself the Son of God and at another moment, God. Although the love of Tristan and Isolde is

as close as any human mind can imagine, not even Wagner, whose music describes their love more perfectly than any words, suggests that they merge to become a new single identity. Genuine love is between two. Just as there are always two separate persons in human love, so there must surely be two separate persons in divine love. Although Jesus insists time and time again that, “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30), and that, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:11), it is perfectly evident that their individual identity is never lost, no matter how close their union. However, the Gospels go one step further. The love that binds them together is not a blind impersonal force, but a separate personal love in its own right. Returning to the human analogy to try and explain what this means, in *Wuthering Heights* Catherine and Heathcliff see that the mutual love that binds them together seems to have something of an identity of its own, that is equal to the love that each has for the other. If anything, it is greater because it appears to have a personality that can unite them, even when they are separated by time and place, and even by death. In God alone, the love that can in this life be experienced in some measure, can be found in its most complete form, and experienced in an endless ecstasy and to all eternity.

Jesus does not tell us these profound truths because he wants to exercise our minds with dry abstract truths about the inner nature of what was later called the Holy Trinity, but because he wants to inspire us with the truth. The truth is that the Father and the Son have chosen to make their home within us, so that the most sublime love affair imaginable actually takes place within our inmost being. The reason for this is even more incredible. It is for no other reason than that the love which is the Holy Spirit that binds the Father to the Son, can bind us too into this love, so that we can experience it as it penetrates us more and more. The ultimate experience of God on earth, that is only known to those who arrive at Divinisation or Mystical Marriage, is Trinitarian. In other words, they become clearly aware that they are caught up in, and experience in some measure, “the love without measure” that endlessly revolves between the Father and the Son within their own inner being. This realisation is in fact the sign that a mystic is a true Christian mystic, and not some Neoplatonic hybrid.

Read, reread, and reflect on all Jesus said and did in St John’s account of the Last Supper, and these profound truths will come alive in a way that nothing I can say ever will. Then you’ll receive far more than mere words, through the Spirit who inspired them, and what you will receive will bring you to your knees in thanksgiving and in adoration.

But all has not been said, for in this profound mystical vortex of loving that

But all has not been said, for in this profound mystical vortex of loving that revolves between the Father and the Son in which we are caught up, we are not alone. We are at one too, with all who have chosen to enter into this ecstatic joy, with relatives who have chosen the same path, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, friends and lovers, children and grandchildren, and not just our extended family but the whole extended human family, living and dead. They are not just living with us in Jesus, but travelling with us too into eternity. Our own personal joy and satisfaction is enhanced beyond our wildest dreams by re-meeting our own families and in knowing and loving them as never before. Even in the best of families, the pernicious cancer of selfishness prevented us loving each other as we would have wished. But now that the cancer has been spirited away and we have been transfused with pure love, there is nothing to prevent us from becoming the genuine loving families that we never really were on earth. This supernatural homecoming is however, the prelude to joining together for the last time, in order to set out upon our final and unending journey into eternal life and loving. And we, together with all who we love and hold dear, are bonded ever closer together, as we draw ever nearer to the blissful union with the pure unadulterated and infinite loving and goodness, that resides in Our Father who is in heaven.

Just in case you do decide to come to the launch yourself, my book is called *Wisdom from the Christian Mystics*. It will be launched in London on Thursday 8th February 2018. If you can't make it I'm sure Amazon.com will help you out.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.davidtorkington.com/tristan-and-isolde-and-the-three-in-one/>  
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## How Few There Really Are [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

We often forget that Jesus told His disciples: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mt. 16:24). The next time we try to run away from this command, let us recall the following reflection:

"...There is no health of soul nor hope of eternal life but in the Cross. The more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace. We are not exhorted to pray *for* the Cross, but we *may* and *ought* to pray for a *love* of the Cross. The price of great graces is humiliation - The Royal Way of the Cross. Humiliations are precious drops from the chalice of our Lord's Blood.

When our Lord loves anyone, He presses him to His Heart as a tender friend would do; but round Jesus' Heart there is a crown of thorns, and the more He presses us to His Heart, the more these thorns enter into ours. How many - even Religious - there are who only seek the shadow of the Cross, how many who lean against it, how few who climb up and are fastened to it!"

(From *Meditation on The Passion*)

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2017/08/how-few-there-really-are.html>  
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## The Pain & Fruit of Investing [at Sunflower Sojourn]

Currently my life is in a season of pruning, and what I am also learning to refer to



Pixabay.com

as “**investment.**” Investing is painful. It involves risk. **Investing requires giving up something in hopes of a greater return down the road.** At the very outset, it requires some sort of sacrifice. **It may be a very long time before you see any gain or fruit from that sacrifice.** For example, investing money is painful. The money is placed into an account where it cannot be touched until a certain point. The goal is that the amount of money will grow. **But what if an emergency arises and you need that money? Painful, and risky.** Other forms of investment are financing a wedding, buying a house, starting a business, or investing in an education. These are different types of investment that we hope will bear fruit in some way.

**An investment that we are all called to make is purity.** Living in purity is an investment for a future marriage. It is even an investment in yourself. Living a chaste life protects you from disease and unhealthy emotional attachments. **It requires the daily surrender of one’s desires for the good of one’s self, future spouse, and consideration of the good of a child.** Choosing to forgo suitors who are not God’s best for you is a related form of investment. It is easy

to settle and may be easy to find multiple people who want to be with you.

**Taking the time to wait for the right spouse and for sex is an investment in your future joy, your future spouse's joy, and even the joy of your children.**

Many people have not made this investment, and have brought suffering onto themselves and others.

**Plain and simple: investing equals sacrifice.** Sometimes these investments involve *very difficult* sacrifices. Many choose not to make these sacrifices simply because they are so arduous and involve (sometimes very delayed) gratification.

**Yet investing creates wealth. It creates an abundance that could not have come without the sacrifice.** It is like when a tree is pruned. The tree appears bare after the pruning. A person who doesn't know about horticulture will scoff and think the tree is ruined. But after some time, the tree will be bursting with fruit. This is our hope with our investments. **In some way, at some time we do not know, they will bear great fruit.**

**I trust that this difficult and painful investing process will one day pay off.**

So can you. I have planted my seeds in the ground, sacrificed much that is dear. I will wait for the sun and rain to grow them. I can only trust the One who has called me. **Let us eagerly await the day when we can harvest the fruit from these decisions to invest.**

***“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” 2 Corinthians 9:6***

***“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9***



Photo by [Jelleke V.](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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## Human Dignity [at Quiet Consecration]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraph 1931: Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that "everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity."

**<sup>37</sup> No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a "neighbor," a brother.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Current events have been centered around Confederate Statues in the United States. Sides are once again drawn. On the one are those people who see these monuments as honoring a system of government that enslaved and exploited people based on their skin color. On the other is a weird mixture of people; some state removing these statues is trying to erase history, others claim the statues are there to honor the heroism of those men and women who died trying to defend the Confederacy of the United States and others are unabashedly members of the Klu Klux Klan or other White Supremacy Groups.

I have read tons of posts online about this current fight. I have read posts from friends of mine who are of African descent, from friends who have deep Southern and Confederate roots, who are Catholics on the Left and Catholics on the Right. I have listened to the President of the United States stumble big time when he had a chance to totally reject the political ambitions of people like David Duke because he could not seem to properly express the sentiment that White Supremacy AND the thugs showing up in black shirts with ax handles claiming to be members of AntiFa are demonstrating anti-American ideals. Once again we have been unable to be reasonable about the whole issue. Once again we cannot seem to ask a question like this:

"Can we remove objects glorifying people who committed treason while preserving an important part of our history? Can we do it so people do not forget that not so long ago we thought it was perfectly okay to buy and sell

people who have skin a different color than our own?".

I do not understand why it is so difficult to teach the truth of history, why we have to pick a side and make one group bad and another good. The reality of the slave trade out of Africa is ugly and dark and messy - let's tell the story. Let's tell the truth. Let's talk about African Tribal leaders selling members of tribes they had conquered to the Dutch and the Portuguese. Let's talk about how people in power - White, Black, Catholic, Protestant - misused their power and hurt people. Why do we shy away from this? Why can't we, in the words of my late Texan born father, tell the truth and shame the devil? No side is clean - no race, no religion, no tribe - when it comes to the Slave Trade. Certainly the United States cannot pretend it never happened and certainly it is not unreasonable to question whether it is appropriate that statues erected to honor men who lead an armed revolt against the government in order to preserve a system of slavery should be allowed to remain in the public square?

I think this is difficult to talk about and discuss for one reason:

I think it is because we cannot explain slavery in this country unless we talk about God.

We can talk about wars and economics and the imposition of power but as we drill down deeper what cannot be ignored that slavery is a sin...and sin does not exist in the absence of God.

Slavery exists because of sin. Man is cruel to others, to animals and to himself because of sin. If there was no sin, if Adam had refused his wife's request and stood firm for God we would not be battling today over pieces of granite. We would not be calling each other horrific names. We would not be begging the people of Planned Parenthood to help young girls brought into their abortion mill by their 'boyfriend' rather than just kill the baby and return the child to one of the many forms of slavery that exist today.

Those people who regularly demand to know what is wrong with the opposition miss the point. Much of what divides us today is a result of our willingness to let concupiscence rule our lives. We refuse to acknowledge there is a God and it is not us. We refuse to worship God in the manner He requests of us, demanding our freedom to live and love and worship as we please. We refuse to even believe there is a God.

And we wonder why people run cars into crowds over a statue.

Some of you think this is a simplistic argument. You point to all the piles of research done by sociologists and psychologists to prove that the reason we are at each other's throats is the result of a much deeper issue than a refusal to love God.

Others will state I am delusional because there is not God to worship and love.

What I know today is that Right and Wrong would not be so difficult to determine if we used our eyes in the manner the Church teaches us: we need to see our neighbor as an 'other self'. We need to acknowledge that every human being, from the moment of its conception to its natural death, is worthy of dignity and respect simply by virtue of BEING a human.

When I take the time to look at you, really look at you, in order to see myself I won't need to attack you on social media or call you names because you have a different idea from my own. I am able to actually stop, think, consider and respond. I can participate in a dialogue. I can learn. I can grow.

I take the time to see you as an 'other self' because God teaches me, through His Church, to do just that ...without Him I can't seem to make the right decision. Quite frankly, I have yet to meet anyone who can...though I have met a lot of people who THINK they are functioning quite well without God.

They are wrong.

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2017/08/human-dignity.html>  
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## Bye Ash [at Catholic365]

On Monday, August 14, we said goodbye to Ash, our dog. It was heartbreaking.

12 years ago, on Ash Wednesday (thus the name), I took the kids to the Dog Pound to get a dog (what else, right). Although I had promised my wife that we would never have another pet, yet I felt it necessary to get a puppy, because our youngest son was developing an irrational fear of dogs. So, I thought the remedy might be to get a pup that our children could raise. And it worked!

The moment that I told my kids that we were getting a puppy, they were so excited. It's all they could talk about. So, we got to the pound and there he was. A majestic, black pup showing a great deal of confidence and looking very strong. I looked him in the eye and he looked right back at me. He stood out all the more because his kennel was right next to a sickly looking puppy that couldn't even hold his head without shaking. So, I told the kids, "we'll take the black one."

But they weren't looking at the dogs with a critical eye, like I was. They were looking at the dogs through the eyes of their hearts. And they said, "can we have the other one?" Of course, I objected. I said, "He looks sick. He'll probably die and then what?" But they looked at me with their Betsy Clark faces and said, "But he's so cute." Well, what could I say? When they look at me like that, I'm putty.

So, we went home with a sickly dog. But, I was encouraged, because my youngest held him all the way home.

We named him on the way home. They were all throwing out names. But I suggested Ash. He was white with a bunch of dirty spots. Not like a dalmation. More like someone had spilled an ash tray on a white dog. I said, "Well, you guys like Ash Ketchum (of Pokeman fame) and today is Ash Wednesday, why don't we name him Ash?" And they loved it. So, it stuck.

At first, he just laid around. I was afraid that he wouldn't make it. But after a couple of days, the sickly pup was jumping around acting like any other pup. The only fear I had left was that my kids would love him to death. At the Pound, they told us that Ash was a "German Shepherd mix". But, as he grew up, he looked more and more like a Catahoula.

It was a match made in heaven. My kids slept on him and he slept on them. If he was on the floor, they slept with him on the floor. If they were on the bed, he got into the bed. They slept on top of him. He slept on top of them. I'm surprised the little pup that fit into the palm of my hand when we got him, survived. But he did. And he thrived. Ash grew to be 40 pounds of sleek muscle. He was fast and he was gentle. And he was quiet. He wasn't a barky dog. He would bark occasionally, to be let out. And to be let back in. And when strangers knocked at the door. He played with the kids and slept with the kids and they grew up together.

There were the usual growing pains. "Dad! Ash is biting us!" "Dad! Ash is scratching us!" They ran together, they wrestled. It was awesome!

He never did get the hang of "fetch" though. He'd go get that first one. But then, it was like, "Look, if you insist on throwing that, you'll have to get it yourself. I'll be here when you get back."

And, of course, if he wasn't playing or eating, he was sleeping. He loved to find a sunbeam and curl up under it, as he's doing in the photo.

As for me, he was my eating companion. On my midnight sojourns to the fridge, or whenever we were alone in the house together, he would sit with me as I ate and tossed him some of my food. He always caught it in the air and swallowed it without chewing. We used to go on walks and I loved to let him go when we got to an area where he had room to run. He loved to run. And, oh man! Could he run. When I went to work, he would chase my car to the end of the block. Then the kids, who were trying to keep up, would call him back. When I came home from work, he would run down the stairs to greet me as soon as I walked in the door.

But then came a day, about a year or so ago, when I tossed him some food and he missed it. And then came a day when I took him for a walk and let him go, but he didn't run. Then came a day when he just watched me drive away. And a day when he didn't run down to greet me.

Sometimes we would jokingly say, "Ash is getting lazier and lazier." Sometimes we would realize that he was getting older.

But we never thought this day would come.

The day when he couldn't get up. When he couldn't raise his head. He could barely wag his tail. The day when he would leave us.

On Tuesday, August 15th, whether it was a dream or what, I don't know, but Ash woke me up this morning. It was 5:00 a.m. and I heard him bark the way he would when he wanted someone to let him out, I threw my blanket off,... then I remembered. I smiled and I said, "Good morning, Ash."

Thank you, Lord, for this wonderful blessing you bestowed upon us, in the form of a little sickly dog. Ash enlarged all of our hearts and gave all of us a greater capacity to love. I can never thank you enough for the grace of our lovely little dog, Ash.

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## "Decisive strategies" needed, says Fr. Imbarrato [at Leaven for the Loaf]



Father Stephen Imbarrato (at left, in black) leads prayer vigil outside Planned Parenthood in Manchester NH. Photo by Phyllis Woods.

Father Stephen Imbarrato of Priests for Life paid a visit to New Hampshire recently, leading a prayer vigil outside Manchester's Planned Parenthood office before speaking to an attentive audience about effective pro-life action. "We aren't doing enough: that has to be our starting point."

Fr. Imbarrato, an EWTN television personality and longtime pro-life activist, was a guest of New Hampshire Right to Life. About 25 people joined him for prayer outside PP, at midday on a workday. A larger group attended his presentation afterward at a nearby retreat center.

I was drawn by Fr. Imbarrato's story, and despite my differences with Priests for Life – more about that below – I found his message worth hearing.

### **The Foundation for His Work**

He has a unique personal story, with an astounding array of experiences that leave each listener with something with which to identify. A priest who's an adoptive father, grandfather, and father of an aborted child – thereby hangs a story, to which he referred only in passing in his New Hampshire appearance. We're left with YouTube to lay the foundation for Fr. Imbarrato's work.

### **Basics: "We're Not Doing Enough"**

In New Hampshire, Fr. Imbarrato began his presentation by referring to his Priests for Life colleague, Fr. Frank Pavone. “As he says, our work should begin with repentance. The biggest obstacles [to a culture of life] are within ourselves. We aren’t doing enough; that has to be our starting point.”

“Enough” starts with prayer, with Fr. Imbarrato recommending that activists – and those Catholics who *should be* activists – pray to God daily, with this petition: “What can I do, through Your grace, to save a child today?”

He is not a supporter of the “faithful citizenship” or “consistent life ethic” model advocated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, fearing that it dilutes opposition to abortion and euthanasia by introducing other issues including immigration and the environment to a list of topics for the faithful to consider when casting a vote. Politically, he said, this is “pandering to Catholic Democrats.” He called the split Catholic vote in the United States “a scandal.”

“Abortion and euthanasia are foundational. You can’t be wrong on those. These are the pre-eminent issues of our time.” He recommended Pope St. John Paul II’s [\*Gospel of Life\*](#) (1995) and the USCCB’s [\*Living the Gospel of Life\*](#) (1998) as documents that clearly affirmed this. “Read and share them.”



Fr. Stephen Imbarrato speaking in New Hampshire. Phyllis Woods photo.

### **At the Ballot Box**

The leader of Priests for Life, Fr. Frank Pavone, was NHRTL’s featured speaker at their 2016 banquet. The point he pressed the most in his speech, aside from opposition to abortion, was the imperative of electing Donald Trump to the presidency, and the evils of not doing so. (The election was only a few weeks away at that time.) I was repelled by both major candidates, and I eventually voted accordingly. In his NHRTL speech, Fr. Pavone pretty much ordered voters like me off the island, so to speak. Fr. Imbarrato, without mentioning the 2016 election directly, was obviously on the same page.

Every general election candidate choice is easy, he said: “is a candidate pro-abortion or not? There’s one issue and one issue only.”

(Indeed – and I was skeptical last fall of a presidential candidate who made pro-life noises but had no pro-life roots. But I digress.)

He is optimistic about the pro-life possibilities under President Trump. He called the prospect of presidential personhood proclamation part of a “decisive strategy” toward changing a pro-abortion culture. As for urging the President to take such a step, he said, “we have direct access to this President” via social media, an avenue never exploited to such an extent by previous presidents.

### **Pro-life Leadership in the Catholic Church: “Not United”**

Fr. Imbarrato was unsparing in his indictment of American bishops as factors both cultural and electoral tolerance of abortion. “The bishops aren’t united” in recognizing abortion as the foundational pro-life issue. Further, “We’re not hearing our shepherds talk about chastity. That has repercussions.”

How can Catholics respond to this? He suggested three ways to “up our efforts.” First, “pray inconveniently” – meaning in front of abortion facilities, in season and out of season. With that, “fast – that’s always inconvenient.” Finally, “almsgiving – acts of charity and mercy.” They add up to witness, he advised, that can move even bishops.

He added this to the list later in his talk: “invite people to Mass.”

### **“Decisive Strategies”**

Fr. Imbarrato urged his listeners to embrace “decisive strategies to end abortion,” ranging from political to spiritual.

- “Heartbeat bills,” which would make abortion illegal once a fetal heartbeat is detectable, early in pregnancy. “All our efforts” – presumably he meant political ones – “should be toward that.” He cited Ohio’s heartbeat bill as an example. Perhaps due to time constraints, he did not mention that Ohio governor and former presidential candidate [John Kasich vetoed the bill](#) last December, citing concerns that it would lead to unwindable litigation. At the same time, Kasich signed a 20-week ban without exceptions for rape or incest.
- Resisting the use of tax dollars to support abortion. He mentioned a proposal for a “national tax strike,” advanced by Mark Harrington of the Center for Bioethical Reform.
- Sustained peaceful, prayerful protest outside abortion facilities. He said he

has no problem with the use of what he called “abortion victim imagery,” a longtime point of contention within the pro-life movement. (40 Days for Life, for example, does not employ that tactic, and I personally consider the bloody-baby photos counterproductive.) No apologies for that from Fr. Imbarrato: “let’s start upsetting people.”

- A personhood proclamation from the President. “Start talking it up. Personhood is the right strategy.”

His New Hampshire audience was appreciative, all too aware that in our state, abortion is legal throughout pregnancy with nearly no regulation. (While New Hampshire has in place good cultural markers like parental notification and a partial-birth ban, neither one addresses a preborn child’s fundamental right to life.) The people around me, without exception, seemed to be refreshed by Fr. Imbarrato’s bracing words.

Whatever my differences with him, I recognize that anyone who energizes people to peaceful action in defense of life has something of value to offer. Anyone who challenges Catholics to take their civic responsibilities seriously is doing important work. Any man with Fr. Imbarrato’s experience speaks with an authority that must be respected.

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This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2017/08/24/decisive-strategies-needed-says-fr-imbarrato/>  
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## **Are you Living God's Love? [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]**

*Are you Living God's Love?*

<> *Letting God's Divine Love work in us and through us.*



***“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*** (John 13:35)

My fellow pilgrims ...

In walking the narrow path of discipleship with our Savior and Master, Jesus the Son of the Living God, we must remember that the utmost characteristic of a disciple is “Love”. Not just a brotherly type of love, but a God-ordained type of Love, “agape” or selfless Love. This type of love is the “Love” that characterized Jesus; it is the Divine Love of the Father Himself that is in us through our immersion in His Spirit, through baptism (cf., Rom. 5:5).

This is the “Love” defined by Jesus: ***“As the Father has loved me so I have loved you”*** (John 15:9) and ***“Love one another as I have loved you”*** (John 13:34). It is the manifestation of this type of love, in us and through us, that distinguishes us as true disciples. It is NOT a love that we can release out of our own human efforts. It is a love that must flow from the Spirit of God that is in all baptized believers. But the problem being, that not all believers have come to the point in their faith-lives where they have released that spirit of God’s love into their everyday lives.

Unless we can place the love of our brothers and sisters in Christ above our own lives we cannot lay claim to that kind of love as guiding our everyday lives. As an aspiring disciple, the most I can say is that, on certain special occasions, the Spirit of God working in me has unexpectedly brought me to that point, but upon realizing it I become aware that it was not me, so much as the Spirit of Christ working in me and through me, that manifested in a particular instance. I constantly struggle against my flesh to bring Christ into every moment of my everyday life so that His Kingdom of Love may manifest itself continuously through me.

It helps me to understand that Peter, the apostle, had to struggle with this as well. Before Jesus’ Passion and Crucifixion, Peter, out of his inflated ego and pride, attempted to stake out his love for Jesus by saying that he would defend Him to the end. To which Jesus, knowing Peter full well, responded, ***“... Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.”*** (Mark 14:30)

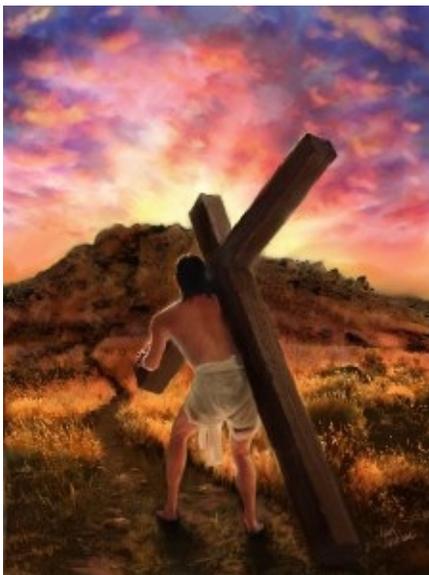
Later, after Jesus’ resurrection when he appeared to the disciples as they were

fishing, He took Peter aside, to help him overcome his self-guilt, and asked him, **“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”**(John 21: 15). Note that here, Jesus addresses Peter as, “Simon”, and uses a verb derived from the Greek word “agape” for “love”.

Peter, now humbled from His prior denials and recognizing that Jesus was inviting him to restore fellowship, responded ... **“Lord, you know that I love you”**, but using a derivative of the Greek word “phileo” (ie., brotherly love) for the word “love”. Thus now indicating that he could not, at this point, overextend himself by stating that he, in his human weakness, was able to commit himself to the divine level of “agape love”.

Jesus, after asking again, then asked the third time **“... do you love me?”**(John 21”17), but this last time He used the verb “phileo” for ‘love” thus indicating to Peter that He was accepting His response at the level he could offer because he was being sincere and placing the level of love he could genuinely muster. However, Jesus also, at the end of that conversation, told Peter that at the end of His Life his “love” for Jesus would, by the Spirit be brought to the ‘agape” level because he also would be crucified as a manifestation of that “Love”.

As it was for Peter so it shall be for us, if we also respond sincerely to begin our walk with Jesus at the level of love that we are confident we can offer. It is with that level of love, then, that we begin our consecration to our master, with the door of our spirit open to the work of the Holy Spirit in us to conform us to the image of Christ and move us into the “agape” level of love.



Yes, just as in Peter's case, personal suffering will ensue. Because 'agape' love always means carrying our cross of denying our own self-will and ripping off our attachments to the "world" and to "self". This is part of the cost of discipleship. For as Jesus said...

***"If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."*** (Luke 14:26-27)

and ...

***"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."*** (John 15:19)

<> ***If we abide not in His Love we can do nothing***

Jesus made it clear that if we do not abide in Him and His Love we will not be able to bear fruit for His Kingdom ...

***"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."*** (John 15:4-8)

Of course the inherent interpretation is that without the empowerment of His Spirit of Love abiding within us, and obedience to His Word, nothing of spiritual value for His Kingdom can be accomplished. We may be very pious and religious, but if we are not acting out of selfless Love they will not be of service to the Lord and His Kingdom. In other words, in order to serve the Lord, our will must be submitted to Him and not our own ambitions and purposes.

But the saying may also be understood to indicate that we, as believers, are only branches of His Vine of His Love, and, if we do not maintain an intimate

relationship with Jesus, who is the Vine, nothing of spiritual value for His Kingdom can be accomplished since He alone is the source of Divine Love.

St. Paul reiterates this principle of the need for a disciple to abide in “agape Love” in his first letter to the Corinthians (Chap. 1 vs.1-3) ...

***“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*** (1 Cor. 13: 1-3)

Since it is clear that agape Love is essential to discipleship, the question remains as to how is this type of Love manifested in a believer that distinguishes him/her from those in the “world” ?.

Again, Paul tells us how the fruit of true Love is manifested through those who maintain their attachment to the Vine...

***“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude.***

***Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.***

***Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

***Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.***

***For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.***

***So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”***

(1 Cor. 13:4-13)

<> ***Activating the Divine Love that is in us***

Now, being made aware of the Father's purpose regarding abiding His Love, we come to the challenge of assessing whether we are living our lives in accord with His purpose for us.

First of all, we must ask ourselves if we are in an intimate personal relationship with Jesus and are we submitting ourselves in love to His Love so that the Father's will may be done in our lives as it is in Heaven. Are we walking in such a spiritual commitment and are we involved with a constant dialogue with Jesus as we perform our daily activities in this world. If not, then the first thing we must do is enter into such a consecration.

The consecration that I refer to is termed by St. Paul as that of dedicating ourselves as a "living sacrifice" to the Father, we do this by a total surrender of ourselves to the Spirit of God in us. Paul describes this consecration as follows:

***"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him."*** (Rom. 12:1-3)

If we are already walking in such a relationship, then we need to test ourselves daily regarding these virtues, so that we can, through repentance and communion, maintain our connection to the Vine and thus bear fruit for the Kingdom.

However, if we are unsure of exactly where we stand in our relationship and commitment then I would recommend that you click on the following link for instructions as to how to make such a commitment to Christ.

# **[PRAYER OF COMMITMENT](#)**



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## The Back-To-School Battle Plan [at Shifting My Perspective]

**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the desires of the flesh. Romans 13:14**



School begins for us next Wednesday. It's been a great summer, but it's time to transition, and prepare my kids and myself.

Like any mom out there, I worry a bit about Zack going into eighth grade and Mason going into sixth. We all remember how difficult Middle School can be with cliques, peer pressure, and bullying. Even though Jocelyn's only going into second grade, I have similar concerns for her too. Sadly enough, in my entitled

town, the “mean girl syndrome” starts early. I was shocked when we experienced it in kindergarten. No lie!

The harsh reality is: I can only do so much. From the moment they step on that bus in the morning, until the moment they step off in the afternoon, I am not there to protect them. That’s a very difficult thing to come to terms with.

But I recently read something in

[Living Faith Magazine](#)

that gives me great hope and peace.

In her reflection on August 19th, Deborah Meister taught me something about St. John Eudes. Above all else, he believed the most important thing we can do is teach our children the Sign of the Cross. It struck me as so simple, yet so profound. The more I worried about my kids, the more I realized God had just handed me an answer on a silver platter.

Sure, my kids do the Sign of the Cross before we pray in the car or before meals, but I never thought of having them make the Sign of the Cross before they stepped out into the world. If they do that, they’ll be surrounding themselves with the Father, the Son AND the Holy Spirit. What better amour or protection could I ever possibly equip them with?

My kids and I are all about visual reminders. So now, both doors we exit through to catch the kids’ respective buses are now labeled with big [crosses](#). Hopefully, each day, that will prompt them to bless themselves with the Sign of the Cross before leaving our home.

I’m so relieved that what takes three seconds to do will mean they’ll never be alone. They will now be watched over, protected, and rightly guided, all day long.

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

***\* Do I worry about my kids when they are at school, or out in the world?***

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## God's Love [at Bible Meditations]



*How beautiful you are, my love; how your eyes shine with love!* Song of Songs 1:15

What's a romantic love poem doing in the Bible? The passionate exchange between 'the man' and 'the woman' found in Song of Songs (also called Song of Solomon) is often interpreted as an exchange between God and his people. With this in mind, the poem not only paints beautiful images of human love, but also gives us deeper insight into our own relationship with God. We are cherished. God calls you and me his 'love.' God thinks we're beautiful.

"Beauty's only skin deep" may be true for those who don't look any deeper, but there's another adage that says, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." What does God find beautiful when He beholds us? We get a glimpse in the quote from Song of Songs. "How beautiful you are...how your eyes shine with love."

When God looks at us, he sees past the blemishes and wrinkles on our faces and on our souls. One thing that makes us beautiful in God's eyes is the love he sees reflected in us. Maybe it's the spontaneous response of love we feel when we realize He loves us exactly as we are. Maybe it's the love He sees when we are genuinely concerned about or reach out to help someone else who is also His beloved, whether or not that person seems lovable to us.

God loves us – just as we are. Always. When we pause long enough to wallow in that awareness, how can we help but shine with love?

Prayer: I love you, Lord. May I grow in love.

Reflection for sharing: How does it feel to be cherished by God?

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Posted by: **Thomas Richard** | August 26, 2017

## Foundations of Marian Devotion in the Early Church



This is the oldest known image of the Virgin Mary (seen apparently nursing the infant Jesus on her lap). It is located in the Catacomb of Priscilla on the Via Salaria in Rome. It is dated circa A.D. 150.

I was recently startled to hear a Catholic telling me that, in the Catholic Church, devotion to Mary is “optional,” and that besides, devotion to Mary did not even start in the Church until the AD 431 Council of Ephesus, when Mary was officially designated Theotokos (God-bearer, or Mother of God)! (1) Before that, she asserted, “there was no Marian devotion”! She continued to assert the optional character of any devotion to Mary with this, “Saying the Rosary is not a requirement for salvation.” Well, that part is correct, but what hardness must

requirement for salvation. Well, that part is correct, but what hardness must there be in her heart, that she would close herself so legalistically against the Mother of Our Lord? I have heard some anti-Catholic evangelicals say such things before – but this was the first time I heard them from a Catholic.

Some research that I have gathered and passed on below shows that, in fact, Marian devotion – and solid reason for it – is very old in the Church. There is much more that could be said, but I'll focus on two early Church fathers, in whom we find very early foundational insights into the special place God gave to Mary in salvation history – honor that calls forth the devotion of the faithful. This is not counting direct, obvious New Testament Scriptural evidence itself – earlier still – that reveals the honor due to Mary! She is His mother, after all! But sadly, it is amazing how the New Testament itself can be “interpreted” to say almost anything the unbeliever wants it to say.

### **1) Justin Martyr**

Justin Martyr (born ~100-110, died ~165) left us a record of theological insights in the early Church into Scriptural foundations for the personal role, and significance, of Mary the virgin mother of Jesus. In such insights we can see, beginning in or before Justin's time, the theological foundation – and basis, or explanation – for Marian devotion in the early Church. Of course Mary deserves honor! But there is more. More than “mere” human respect because she is His biological mother, certainly more than mere sentimentalism, Christians were beginning to see and understand, very early in Church history, God's intended personal significance of the Virgin Mary in His holy work of redemption among men.

We will see in Justin's teaching, the perspective of God's work of salvation as one of a second act in creation, to correct the fall into sin and darkness: a new genesis, a new life for humanity. Thus he points us back to the Scriptural Book of Genesis, to Adam and Eve, and entry of sin into mankind. Justin immediately sees a significance in the virginity of Mary, in parallel to the virginity of Eve while she and Adam were still in the Garden. Important to notice, in this writing is his vision of Mary's place in God's work – that it was so much more than a mere bridge for the Son, from heaven to earth, from divinity to God-man. Mary was to be more than a mere “vessel” for the Incarnation – she was to be a new Eve, a second Eve as Jesus would be the second Adam in Paul's witness in Scripture. Let us listen to this, from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (2):

.. [Christ Jesus, Son of God] became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, 'Be it unto me according to your word.' (Luke 1:38) And by her has He been born, to whom we have proved so many Scriptures refer, and by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him.

Note the many parallels with Genesis, concerning Mary and Eve:  
Eve believed the lie of the serpent; Mary believed the word of God from the Angel Gabriel.

Eve conceived death following her freely chosen disobedience to God; Mary conceived Life following her submissive obedience to God.

Eve the virgin mother of human death; Mary the virgin mother of eternal Life.

Mary will give new meaning to Eve's given name as "mother of all living" (3), as Jesus will give new meaning to the significance of Adam (that is, "Man"), in His title as "Son of Man," the second and the last Adam. That is, Mary's personal free act of faith, in the grace she received from God, was instituting His re-creation, His new genesis of humanity, His new beginning with the Virgin Mary replacing and correcting Eve as the second virgin "mother of all living."

1 Cor 15:21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being.

22 For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life,

....

45 So, too, it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being," the last Adam a life-giving spirit.

46 But the spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the spiritual.

47 The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven.

48 As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly.

49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

the image of the heavenly one.

## 2) *Irenaeus of Lyons*

Mary's role as the new Eve, mother of the new creation, was further developed a few decades later by Irenaeus of Lyons (born ~140-160, died ~202). Irenaeus personally was linked with apostolic testimony, hence giving a special weight to his theological understandings. As a young man he had been in contact with Polycarp, and with others who had known the apostles directly. Irenaeus himself wrote (4), "As I heard from a certain presbyter, who had heard it from men who had seen the apostles, and from others who had heard them..."

Irenaeus continued the view of Justin, of God's correction of the first creation of man, fallen into darkness and sin, that "we might recover" what was lost with a new creation in Christ. He wrote (5):

... when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam— namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God— that we might recover in Christ Jesus.

For as it was not possible that the man who had once for all been conquered, and who had been destroyed through disobedience, could reform himself, and obtain the prize of victory; and as it was also impossible that he could attain to salvation who had fallen under the power of sin—the Son effected both these things, being the Word of God, descending from the Father, becoming incarnate, stooping low, even to death, and consummating the arranged plan of our salvation....

Mary's part and role in this work was also amplified by Irenaeus, including his teaching of the correspondence of Mary with Eve, in a Chapter entitled, "Christ assumed actual flesh, conceived and born of the Virgin." (6) Here, he noted the essential singular role of Mary – that is, her virginal motherhood – in the Incarnation: from her He received to Himself a human body. Here, Irenaeus continues the theme of recovery: what was lost by Eve would be restored by Jesus, but through Mary (7):

In accordance with this design, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word." (Lk 1:38) But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey when as yet she

was a virgin. And even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin (for in Paradise “they were both naked, and were not ashamed,” ((Gen 2:25) inasmuch as they, having been created a short time previously, had no understanding of the procreation of children: for it was necessary that they should first come to adult age, and then multiply from that time onward), having become disobedient, was made the cause of death [causa mortis], both to herself and to the entire human race; so also did Mary, having a man betrothed [to her], and being nevertheless a virgin, by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation [causa salutis], both to herself and the whole human race.

And on this account does the law term a woman betrothed to a man, the wife of him who had betrothed her, although she was as yet a virgin; thus indicating the back-reference from Mary to Eve... And thus also it was that the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.

The positive role that Irenaeus sees in Mary is remarkable, and significant. God’s work in Christ is primary, of course, in the Incarnation, in the work of the salvation of man – yet Mary has a crucial though always secondary role, in the making right of man’s history. We can hear, here, the foundational nature of her personal place in God’s plan – again, correcting and replacing Eve as mother of the living:

[Jesus] was making a recapitulation of that disobedience which had occurred in connection with a tree [in the Garden], through the obedience which was [exhibited by Himself when He hung] upon a tree, [the effects] also of that deception being done away with, by which that virgin Eve, who was already espoused to a man, was unhappily misled—was happily announced, through means of the truth [spoken] by the angel to the Virgin Mary, who was [also espoused] to a man. For just as the former was led astray by the word of an angel [of Satan, a serpent], so that she fled from God when she had transgressed His word; so did the latter, by an angelic communication [Gabriel to Mary], receive the glad tidings that she should sustain God, being obedient to His word.

And if the former did disobey God, yet the latter was persuaded to be obedient to God, in order that the Virgin Mary might become the patroness (*advocata*) of the virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage

(advocacy) of the virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin; virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience. For in the same way the sin of the first created man receives amendment by the correction of the First-begotten [Son], and the coming of the serpent is conquered by the harmlessness of the dove, those bonds being unloosed by which we had been fast bound to death.

Irenaeus, in a concise summary, makes explicit the dual recapitulation in God's plan: Jesus repairing the fall of Adam for all humanity, and secondarily Mary, the Virgin repairing the disobedience of the virgin Eve (8):

And just as through a disobedient virgin man was stricken down and fell into death, so through the Virgin who was obedient to the Word of God man was reanimated and received life. For the Lord came to seek again the sheep that was lost; and man it was that was lost: and for this cause there was not made some other formation, but in that same which had its descent from Adam He preserved the likeness of the (first) formation. For it was necessary that Adam should be summed up in Christ, that mortality might be swallowed up and overwhelmed by immortality; and Eve summed up in Mary, that a virgin should be a virgin's intercessor, and by a virgin's obedience undo and put away the disobedience of a virgin.

An excellent work on Marian devotion in the early Church, now published in English, is *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*. (9) I am greatly indebted to the author of this work, Luigi Gambero, for his research into the contributions of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons in the development of Marian devotion in the early Church, the subject of this article. Mr. Gambero sees clearly the positive personal role of the Virgin Mary in God's work of salvation in Christ, particularly in the faith of Irenaeus, which he has summarized below:

In this perspective we can understand why Irenaeus calls Mary *causa salutis* ["cause of salvation"], precisely because she is the antitype of Eve, who was *causa mortis* ["cause of death"]. Her role is not limited to her purely biological and negative status as Virgin Mother; no, her cooperation includes moral and spiritual motives. For example, her obedience to the word of God was conscious and voluntary; her consent to the plan of salvation had a soteriological character, since she knew that the Incarnation of God's Son was happening for the sake of human redemption.

This last sentence clearly seen in the early Church writings cited here

This last sentence, clearly seen in the early Church writings cited here, demonstrate the recognized causes in Scripture for the honor and devotion due to Mary. She was given a part of crucial importance to the redemption – not merely her “biological” role, but her moral and spiritual cooperation as well, and her part in the undoing of the fall in Genesis. Mary is indeed, and was seen to be so, very early in Church history, the New Eve – “mother of the living” in the New Creation in Christ.

In closing, we pray the “*Sub Tuum Praesidium*,” an ancient prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is the oldest known prayer to Mary for her intercession, the oldest known version of which is found on a 3rd century Egyptian papyrus. The Greek texts clearly show the term “Theotokos” – “Mother of God”- in the prayer. It is still prayed today.

*Latin (10)*

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus,  
Sancta Dei Genetrix.  
Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus,  
sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper,  
Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.  
Amen.

*English*

We fly to thy patronage,  
O holy Mother of God;  
despise not our petitions in our necessities,  
but deliver us always from all dangers,  
O glorious and blessed Virgin.  
Amen.

**Notes:**

- (1) Note, however, the use of that term is found in the prayer to Mary – the “*Sub Tuum Praesidium*” – dated back at least to the 200’s. See the prayer at the end of this article.
- (2) St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* Ch. 100,  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01287.htm>
- (3) Gen 3:20 – The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.
- (4) Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Bk 4, Ch. 27, #1 –  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103427.htm>

- (5) *Against Heresies*, Bk 3, Ch. 18, #1-2,  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103318.htm>
- (6) *Against Heresies*, Bk 3, Ch. 22 –  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103322.htm>
- (7) *Against Heresies*, Bk 3, Ch. 22, #4 –  
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103322.htm>
- (8) Irenaeus of Lyons, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 33 –  
<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/irenaeus/demonstr.iv.html>
- (9) Luigi Gambero, S.M. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco, Ignatius Press 1999) p. 56
- (10) This Latin version, and the English, is found on  
<http://www.ucatholic.com/catholicprayers/sub-tuum-praesidium/Notes:>

## Categories

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## Liturgical Fiscal Year: A Thought Experiment [at God-Haunted Lunatic]



*Blessed are you poor ([Lk 6.20](#)).*

**Earlier this month, I heard Rush Limbaugh** make [reference](#) to some kind of economic forecasting related to Apple’s market value. It was a bit confusing, but I gather the corporation is doing quite well, and it was making predictions related to its fourth-quarter earnings – although we’d call them “third-quarter” earnings. “Apple is like the United States,” Rush explained. “Their fiscal year begins October 1, so their fourth quarter is the September quarter.”

“So New Year’s Day for the U.S. Government and some big corporations is October 1 – the feast of the Little Flower,” I thought to myself. “What if everybody’s new year started with her feast?”

What indeed.

As it is, our secular new year begins with an even more significant and propitious feast on January 1: The [Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God](#). It marks the last day of the Christmas Octave, and it focuses our attention on Mary’s unique role in our salvation, but also her role as our heavenly mother and advocate. Moreover, since 1968, our Popes have designated January 1 as the World Day of Peace. We’re asked to offer special prayers that day for an end to war and violence, and to reflect on how we can all help bring that about.

**But let's say, just as a thought experiment,** that the Church decided to align its fiscal timetable with the timetables of the world's mightiest powers, both political and corporate. That is, what if the Church's financial calendar started in October instead of January? What lessons could we learn from such a shift, especially if the underlying liturgical calendar was left intact.

Considering the wealth of feasts in the first week of October, I'd say there'd be plenty to chew on – particularly with regards to how differently the [Church views money matters](#) relative to how the world views them.

Anyway, with regards to my little experiment, here's what I came up with.

- *October 1 (Fiscal New Year):* [St. Thérèse of Lisieux](#). What better saint to ring in the new financial year than this youthful Carmelite and Doctor of the Church. Her whole life was dedicated to self-denial, hiddenness, and her Little Way – the total opposite of the world's obsession with consumption, self-aggrandizement, and bigger-is-better. As [E.F. Schumacher](#) said, and St. Thérèse lived, “small is beautiful,” and we'd do well to imitate her example according to our abilities and state of life.
- *October 2:* [Guardian Angels](#). The second day of our Catholic fiscal new year coincides with our annual reminder that we each have a spiritual being assigned to us by God – and that on Jesus' own authority ([Mt 18.10](#)). As with other angels, our guardian angels are God's messengers, but they also can act on our behalf, protect us, and promote our welfare. In other words, their whole purpose is to serve us – to serve others, not themselves. Would that we held a similar perspective with regards to our wealth, and that we strove to increase our selflessness in our generosity and giving.
- *October 4:* [St. Francis of Assisi](#). Here's the showstopper for my Catholic fiscal new year: The patron saint of voluntary poverty. His rejection of worldly wealth and prestige in exchange for temporal deprivation and derision was considered madness in his day, but he sparked a revolution of love. Not everyone is called to live his radical life of [downward mobility](#) – someone has to pay the bills, after all, and have enough left over to pass along to those who beg alms – but his appearance at the start of our imagined financial calendar would set a spiritually profitable tone for the whole year.

In the interest of brevity, I'll have to skip over other relevant saints in that first week of October – like [Bl. Francis Seelos](#), a Redemptorist missionary to the

U.S., on October 5, or the founder of the Carthusians, [St. Bruno](#), on October 6. Besides, we don't want to stretch this idea too far.

**However, there is one more coincidental date** that makes this thought experiment especially timely now. Our next would-be fiscal new year's day, October 1, 2017, will fall on a Sunday – [Respect Life](#) Sunday, in fact. It's a fortuitous confluence of observances that comes every seven years or so, and if it were to also mark financial day #1, think of the unmistakable message it would transmit regarding what the Church truly holds dear: not market share or stock price, balanced books or cash reserves, but the intrinsic and absolute value of every human life.

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

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## Our Dream Existence [at A Spiritual Journey]

God can do so many things for us. He can forgive our sins. He can save us and lead us to heaven. He can guide us and teach us. And he can ultimately become our most intimate friend and one with us. All these things we can desire and they are ours. In the parable of the lost son, the father said to the son who was always with him, "Everything I have is yours." Let us wake up to the reality that we are so blessed and in such a dream position to gain everything from God our most loving Father.

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This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2017/08/our-dream-existence.html>

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# Honoring our Dead: Catholic Funeral Rites and the Consolation Ministry [at It Makes Sense to Me]

## *IT MAKES SENSE TO ME*

By Larry Peterson

***"Come to me, all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest" Matt: 11:28***

The Catholic Church has a rich history of respecting and honoring all human life. From conception until death the church considers each person as God's individual creation and therefore, sacred in His eyes. The funeral rites set in place by the church reflect the church's beliefs in these principles.

There are distinct affirmations in the

[funeral process](#)

. The steps taken from the death of a loved one until final committal are all tied together so that besides honoring the departed, we who remain behind, can acknowledge the sacredness and dignity of not only the deceased but of all human life.



The entire Catholic funeral rite is divided into several parts: the Vigil Service (known as the Viewing or Wake); the Funeral Mass; and the Rite of Committal. The Vigil Service is usually at a funeral home of the family's choosing or in the parish church prior to the funeral Mass. During the Vigil, family and friends gather together to honor the deceased by praying (the Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, reading Scripture, etc) and remembering the deceased in quiet conversation among the mourners.

The Funeral Mass is the second part of the process. Church tradition has always involved the celebration of the Mass with the body present. This reflects the honor and respect for the deceased who, during their life, had become temples of the Holy Spirit upon being baptized.

The Funeral Mass begins with the body being received at the church entrance by the priest and ministers. The body is brought into the church and the Mass begins. Select readings and songs, usually chosen by family members, are used during the liturgy. Finally, the body is escorted from the church. (Funeral Masses can now be celebrated in the presence of

[cremated remains](#)

).

The Rite of Committal follows the Mass. The general practice has always been to escort the body to the place of burial at the cemetery. This might be a gravesite, a mausoleum or a columbarium,

which is a place cremated remains are laid to rest. (This is a smaller version of a mausoleum). The Rite of Committal is celebrated at all of these sites and we all follow along as the priest leads us in prayer letting us know that our loved has "gone before us marked with the sign of faith". We acknowledge that the deceased is now awaiting their resurrection, just as all of us will be doing one day.

Finally, there is the

### [Consolation Ministry](#)

. This ministry is not available in many parishes but if yours has one, you are blessed. This is the ministry that will provide immediate outreach to a family and/or spouse upon the death of their loved one. My parish (Sacred Heart; Pinellas Park, FL) does have a Consolation Ministry.

When my wife, Marty died, the parish Consolation Ministry immediately reached out to us. They helped us pick out the readings and music for the funeral. They were at the church (maybe 25 people) an hour before the service and they prayed the Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy for Marty. They greeted friends and family when they arrived at the church and some even traveled over to the cemetery with us. They organized a reception that was held after the funeral at a local hall. The spread was fantastic. They stayed in touch via phone calls and email. This Ministry provided an unexpected support system and it demonstrated the family presence that exists in a Catholic parish.

Interestingly, our parish Consolation Ministry was the result of one parishioner's desire to start something that grew and blossomed into a beautiful thing. Rita Belcastro took it upon herself to ask our pastor if she could organize this ministry (there was none). He gave the go ahead and today, several years later, her actions have now grown into a ministry that has managed to affect the lives of countless, grieving people over the years bringing them a semblance of peace and love during very bleak times in their lives. KUDOS Rita--well done.

Rita's initiative is a fine example how one person can change things for so many. You might consider talking to some friends about starting one and then ask your pastor if he will support you. There are pamphlets and booklets available to guide you. (Check with your Diocese office) You may also become

available to guide you. (Check with your Diocesan office) You may also become an active part of your Catholic parish family.

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## Even On Water [at bukas palad]



Year A / Ordinary Time / Week 19 / Sunday

Readings: 1 Kings 19.9a, 11-13. / Psalm 85.9ab-10, 11-12, 13-14 (R/v 8) /  
Romans 9.1-5 / Matthew 14.22-33

Sisters and brothers, do you realise that you and I sometimes walk on water? I suspect we don't because our experiences of sinking like a stone in the water overwhelm us more.

Walking on water is a helpful metaphor to make sense of everyday life. Don't we feel like we are above the waterline, walking, when our studies or work is going well, when family life and friendships are happy, when life is good and hope-filled? But when disappointments multiply, when family is broken or friendships are lost, when life is painful and hopeless, don't we sense we are going under and drowning?

These same ups and downs of life are also part of our faith life. For the spiritual writer Ron Rolheiser, faith is not something we can ever simply achieve. Rather, we have faith that gives way to doubt before we recover it more confidently, only to lose it, then to realise the cycle repeats. This is why our experiences of faith can be like walking on water on some days and sinking like a stone on other days.

Today's gospel story of Peter walking on the water challenges us to consider how **our faith must lead us to walk on water—to walk like this often and happily.**

We can better appreciate this challenge by recognising the scenes before and after today's gospel. The scene before is the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. The apostles experience God's presence in this miracle. Their faith in Jesus is strong. The scene after is the miracle of Jesus healing the sick, including many who touched his cloak. The apostles see God's power. Their faith in Jesus grows stronger.

In today's gospel, we find the apostles on a boat, being tossed and battered by a fierce storm. They are frightened and panicking. Jesus is not with them. They are struggling. They have little faith. Jesus comes to them in the storm. He enters their boat. The storm dies down. Their faith is restored. Apostles having faith, losing faith, and finding it again. Sounds familiar?

I particularly wonder if we see ourselves in Peter who wants to walk on water to Jesus. The storms challenged Peter's faith. Jesus' coming on turbulent waters renews and strengthens it. "Come," Jesus says. More confident, Peter steps onto the water. He begins walking towards Jesus. Then realizing what he is doing and the incredulous nature of approaching Jesus on the very waters that threaten him, he immediately starts to sink. He cries for help and Jesus reaches out and saves him.

Doesn't our own faith experience echo Peter's? At times, it lets us walk on water towards Jesus. At other times we sink like a stone.

Baptism gives us faith to walk on water. But we often sink. Why? Because we doubt our worthiness for God's love. Many of us struggle to accept that God really love us as we are, striving always to be saintly yet acting often sinfully. When our struggles becomes too tough, our faith becomes weak and we would rather let it go.

Jesus is not prepared however to stand aside and let us do this. He keeps coming repeatedly into our lives, especially into all our raging storms and sinful struggles, to call us to faith and to live in faith. **"Take courage; be not afraid". His words are his mandate that we can indeed walk on water, and walk towards him always.**

We can make this walk if we keep in mind what Jesus sees in us when we struggle, sin and sink—not fear, doubt or worthlessness, but the goodness of our hearts. He saw this in Peter as he struggled. This is the goodness every disciple has. It moves us to want to be with Jesus, to follow him, and to know and serve his Father. Isn't this why we sometimes imagine what walking on water to Jesus would look like, even if the world calls it crazy?

So, how can we let Jesus help us to walk on water? **By being attentive to God. In particular, to God's faithful presence in the smallest details of our lives.**

This attention is our permission for Jesus to empower us to walk on water like him. He empowers us with the same divine life he has to walk towards God and the same divine love to save all. He does this by saturating us all of us, including

the smallest details of our lives, in God.

I love walking through Central Park in New York City. Many green benches dot the park. On my first few visits, I did not look at the silver plates on them. On later visits, I began reading them. They bear inscriptions like these: “Emily who I’d rather sit beside. Will you marry me?’ Tom”; “Celebrating Phoebe’s Favorite Playground. Love Mom, Dad and Carter”; “Now baby makes three. Katherine Anne, born 2 August 2013” and “For Greg Myers on his retirement. With gratitude from Greenbridge Partners.” Most visitors miss these small details of people’s lives. They are lost amidst the splendour and activity of the park. Paying attention to them taught me about the immense richness of this city, its people, and their seasons of life.

Our first reading is about paying attention. God instructs Elijah to listen for God’s word. Many of us, like Elijah, expect to hear God speak loudly, and so proclaims clearly, “I am here.” But God does not come and speak to Elijah in strong wind, earthquake and fire. Instead, God comes in “a tiny whispering sound”, in this smallest of details.

Elijah’s experience demands that we pay more attention to God in the small details of our lives. Like knowing God in being alive each morning. Like finding God in one’s good health to care for family, to study in school, to serve the poor. Like celebrating God upon arriving home safe at day’s end to love ones. Like relishing God in a friend’s laughter or an enemy’s forgiveness. God is more than just present in these small, ordinary moments; God is labouring for our wellbeing and happiness.

I can imagine God’s excitement that we find him in each small, ordinary moment. Are we equally excited about finding God in every detail of our life, however messy or bright it is? When did you find God recently?

*God's goodness in the small details of life.* Paying attention to this helps us appreciate the depth of God's fidelity in the larger details of our lives. Like discerning a significant marriage or religious life. Like making a moral decision when a loved one nears death. Like reconciling our conscience with the God's ways in trying times.

**God's fidelity in small things imbues us with trust and hope that He will be ever more faithful in the bigger details of our lives.**

"We are what we do with our attention" (John Ciardi). Paying attention to God's faithfulness in the storm transformed Peter into the confident believer who chose to walk towards Jesus on turbulent waters. We can be equally confident believers by paying attention to God in small things.

This attention we make deepens, broadens, and enriches our understanding that Jesus always comes to us when we are troubled. He comes to offer his guiding hand. His help enables us step out and walk. To step out of our fears and pains, our troubles and struggles, even our daily ordinariness and spiritual mediocrity. And then, walk towards God and fullness of life. In him we have faith and we can believe.

Indeed, in the grasp of Jesus' hand and with him leading us onward, you and I can always walk towards God—yes, even on water.

*Preached at St Ignatius Parish, Singapore*

Painting by youngsung kim on [www.thegingersnapblog.com](http://www.thegingersnapblog.com)

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# Paperwhites Await [at Grace to Paint]



6×8" oil paint on primed canvas sheet; use 'comment' below to inquire.

Streaming light on white

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Universal Utterings  
for May 16, 2017

Feet washed by Jesus model to live sublime

So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:12-15

The LORD supports all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look hopefully to you; you give them their food in due season. You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Psalm 145:14-16

John 13:12-15 & Psalm 145:14-16

Even though we see God in every aspect of life from the hanging fruit in the backyard of friends or neighbors to the whisking smells from flowers galore understanding they come from a powerful God WHO decided to give us Life no matter if we believe it or not. To be like your master and your teacher you have to do more than be served asking others to follow ways that situate a deep desire to live humble willing to do for anyone what Jesus would do for you. Once you realize Jesus is your Savior, you live forgiven seeking only the joy of a complete surrender being obedient to living Redeemed.

The narrow and straight line of a walk in Christ seems impossible to accomplish because many believe they could never live as a model of one living saved. The model is so simple though because god forgives all atrocities no matter your fling no matter the sting god will remove all obstacles my living as a family unified in love, faith and hope of Salvation’s Charity; Jesus! You see the lord will support you no matter how many times you raised to the top or fall to the

bottom as long as you get down on your knees gone will look noperully to you satisfying your hunger by living God First. It is hard. Amen.

Join us in our daily prayer of forgiveness. I am sorry Lord. I believe You died and Rose for me. Prayers for all who have asked us to pray for them or we said we'd pray for. Prayers for JSRW. IN Jesus Name. Amen.

I am a poet obedient to Christ,  
Evangelist Thomas Cruz†Wiggins  
†Spirit led God inspired Christ fed†  
Ephesians 6:17-20

John 13 12 thru 15

Feet washed by Jesus model to live sublime

Feet washed on garments table reclined  
Realized deed Jesus said will stand the test of time  
Indeed am I Master or Teacher rightly defined  
Feet washed by Jesus model to live sublime

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May 16, 2017 @ 5:54 AM EST

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\*\*Can somebody say, "Amen!\*\*

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This contribution is available at <http://purelycatholic.com/feet-washed-by-jesus-model-to-live-sublime/>  
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## Padre Pio's Tribute to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin [at The Shield of Faith]

Translated in English for the first time, with permission, from the Italian of the fourth book of the Letters of Padre Pio; see at bottom for details.

Great events merit great commemorations; we see that this constantly occurs. The anniversary of the coronation of a prince is celebrated, that of an important victory, and unfortunately sometimes dates are remembered that are tragic for the Church, the memory of which cannot do other than further sadden the hearts of humble Catholics. But for the most affectionate children, the most beautiful dates are those which record the triumphs and glories of their Mother. We Catholics who venerate in Most Holy Mary the most tender and affectionate of Mothers that one can speak of, can do no less than rejoice on that day sacred to the memory of her greatest victory, that is, her Assumption into Heaven and her Coronation as Queen of the angels and of all the saints. Therefore let us pause here somewhat to consider the power and the glory of Most Holy Mary assumed into Heaven, to better arouse our devotion and confidence towards her.



After the Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven, Mary was continually on fire with a most intense desire to be reunited to Him. And Oh! The burning sighs, the pitiful moans that she addressed to Him constantly, that He would call her to Himself. Without her divine Son, it seemed that she found herself in a most hard exile. Those years in which she had to be separated from Him were for her a most slow and painful martyrdom, a martyrdom of love that consumed

her little by little. But behold, finally the longed-for hour arrived, and Mary heard the voice of her beloved, which called her from on high. “Come sister, my delight, my spouse, come! [cf. Cant. 4, 8ff.] Come O beloved of my heart, the time of your groans on earth is finished; come O spouse, and receive from the Father, from the Son, and from the Holy Spirit the crown that has been prepared for you in Heaven!”

This loving invitation was manifested to Most Holy Mary by means of the burning love that made her desire ever more ardently to see her Son and be united to Him. Her heart told her that her longings were finally to be satisfied, and totally happy she prepared herself to leave this earth. Already it seemed she could hear the angelic harmonies coming towards her. However, her heart was torn between her divine Son who was in Heaven, and her other adopted sons still on earth – the apostles. As a tender Mother, she wished to bless them before departing this world. God, in order to render her passage completely blissful, wanted to satisfy her desire - and in a short time the apostles, who were dispersed in various parts of the world in order to preach the Gospel, were carried by invisible hands to the humble house of Mary. She was greatly pleased by their arrival, and revealed to them that she was soon to be united with her son Jesus.

The apostles, upon hearing that Mary would soon leave them, reacted like children who stood to become orphans, and they burst forth in sorrowful lamentations. She took steps to console them, assuring them that she would not completely abandon them, but would continue to assist and help them from Heaven. They did not leave her alone even for a moment, and Mary in response to the sighs that they were raising up to Heaven, braided wise counsels with words of comfort as she addressed the desolated apostles.



The divine love in the heart of Mary burned with such great intensity, that it could no longer be contained within a mortal creature. And so the blessed soul of Mary, as a tied dove that had broken its bonds, separated itself from her holy body, and flew into the bosom of her beloved. But Jesus who ruled in Heaven with His most holy Humanity, which He had taken from the womb of the Virgin, desired that His Mother, not only with her soul but also with her body, be reunited with him and share fully in His glory. And this was truly just and right. Her body which was never for an instant the slave of the demon or of sin, should rightly never be subject to corruption.

Now what tongue can fittingly describe the triumphant entrance of Mary into Heaven? If the celebrations that are prepared here down below arouse such admiration and great enthusiasm as to move and attract the thoughts of so many people, what can possibly be said of the triumphs prepared by God Himself for His very own Mother? Saint Anselm affirms that the Redeemer wished to ascend into Heaven before His Mother not only to prepare a throne worthy of her Queenship, but also to render more triumphant and glorious her entrance into Heaven, to arrive there and encounter Himself along with all the angels and the blessed of Paradise. Thus, Saint Peter Damian does not hesitate to affirm that the Assumption of Mary into Heaven was more glorious than the Ascension of Jesus Christ, since only the angels came to greet Him, but with Most Holy Mary, not only the angels came to meet her, but also the saints and at the head of all, that same Jesus Christ.



Mary shook off the sleep of death which had deprived her of the angelic melodies. The celestial spirits burst open the tomb which had received her body; her divine Son stretched forth His hand, and Mary followed Him, all majestic and bright like the rising sun. Sweetly and calmly she rose from the earth, up towards the clouds and the celestial spheres, to the boundaries of the home of the Blessed. The gates of Heaven opened and the Mother of God entered in. As soon as the saints in Heaven saw her arrayed in the splendor of her beauty, with great festivity and joy they surrounded her, greeting her and honoring her with lofty titles. Offering their homage by prostrating themselves at her feet, by mutual consent they proclaimed her as their Queen. The heavenly celebration was joined by the Most Holy Trinity; the Father welcomed her as His favored one, inviting her to partake of His power.

Translated in English with permission, from the Italian of the fourth book of the Letters of Padre Pio, *Epistolario IV*, pp 1123-1126, Edizioni Padre Pio da Pietrelcina, San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, 2002. This is my personal translation and is not to be considered official. The Friary is currently working on an English translation for book IV.

Fra Angelico (1395 - 1455): Dormition, Assumption, Coronation

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This contribution is available at <http://divinefiat.blogspot.com/2017/08/padre-pios-tribute-to-assumption-of.html>  
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# Refusing Obedience is Disobedience [at If I Might Interject]

## Introduction

In my morning Bible reading, I'm at the point of 2 Chronicles where Asa and Ahab, in two separate incidents, consider the prophets' speaking a warning from God as treason on the part of the prophet. While Ahab was an evil king, Asa, up to that point was considered a good king who walked with God. It's a reminder that such behavior is not just from the godless. Despite how we have lived up to this point, we can still fall away from right relation with God if we put our own preferences first. It's not just this one instance. The New Testament tells us of the Pharisees—Men who desired to live holy lives in the way they thought best—found themselves in opposition to God. Not because they chose to spurn God. Rather, they thought that Jesus had to be wrong because what He taught was in conflict to what they thought it meant to be faithful.

I think these examples should stand as a warning for us. The Old Testament Kings responded to prophets warning them about their wrongdoing by imprisoning the prophets. The Pharisees responded to Jesus warning them about their wrongdoing by plotting to have Him executed. In losing sight of the fact that we can go wrong, we risk being opposed to God while believing we are in the right.

## The Danger for Catholics

This is not something limited to Biblical times. Nor is it limited to one faction within the Church. The danger exists when one of us decides that he doesn't like how the Church handles something. It might be a dissent associated with "liberalism" like sexual moral teachings. It might be a dissent associated with "conservatism" like social justice teachings. In both cases, the person believes the Church has gone wrong, and will remain wrong until she agrees with them.

Blessed John Henry Newman saw the danger, and described it this way [†]:

I will take one more instance. A man is converted to the Catholic Church from his admiration of its religious system, and his disgust with

Protestantism. That admiration remains; but, after a time, he leaves his new faith, perhaps returns to his old. The reason, if we may conjecture, may sometimes be this: he has never believed in the Church's infallibility; in her doctrinal truth he has believed, but in her infallibility, no. He was asked, before he was received, whether he held all that the Church taught, he replied he did; but he understood the question to mean, whether he held those particular doctrines "which at that time the Church in matter of fact formally taught," whereas it really meant "whatever the Church then or at any future time should teach." Thus, he never had the indispensable and elementary faith of a Catholic, and was simply no subject for reception into the fold of the Church. This being the case, when the Immaculate Conception is defined, he feels that it is something more than he bargained for when he became a Catholic, and accordingly he gives up his religious profession. The world will say that he has lost his certitude of the divinity of the Catholic Faith, but he never had it.

John Henry Newman, [\*An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent\*](#) (London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1870), 240.

We believe the Church is infallible because we believe she was established by Our Lord, given authority by Our Lord, and protected from error by Our Lord. The individual Churchman or layman can be sinful and be led into error. So, when the Pope teaches, we must decide. Do we believe that God protects him from teaching error? Or do we merely happen to agree with the Church up to a certain point and then reject whatever seems different?

Unfortunately, the lack of certitude seems to be growing. People who assumed that their personal view of the Church was all the Church could be, grew angry when the Church affirmed something they viewed as a political view or error. But, when the Church teaches, we are obliged to recognize her authority as from God. Dr. Peter Kreeft points out:

A "cafeteria Catholic" or a half Catholic or a 95 percent Catholic is a contradiction in terms. If the Catholic Church does not have the divine authority and infallibility she claims, then she is not half right or 95 percent right, but the most arrogant and blasphemous of all churches, a false

prophet claiming “thus says the Lord” for mere human opinions. It must be either / or, as with Christ himself: if Christ is not God, as he claims, then he is not 95 percent right or half right or merely one of many good human prophets or teachers, but the most arrogant and blasphemous false prophet who ever lived. Just as a mere man who claims to be God is not a fairly good man but a very bad man, a merely human church that claims divine authority and infallibility is not a fairly good church but a very bad church.

The only honest reason to be a Christian is because you believe Christ’s claim to be God incarnate. The only honest reason to be a Catholic is because you believe the Church’s claim to be the divinely authorized Body of this Christ.

Peter Kreeft, [\*Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church\*](#) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 105.

If the Church was created by Our Lord and given the authority to teach with His authority, then we must obey the Church teaching if we would obey Him (John 14:15, Luke 10:16, Matthew 18:17). If one rejects *Humanae Vitae* while accepting *Laudato Si*, or if one rejects *Laudato Si* while accepting *Humanae Vitae*, one is a cafeteria Catholic.

## **Refusing Obedience is Disobedience**

But, instead of accepting the authority of the Church to teach, people prefer to attack. They might attack the entire Church as “being against God,” invoking “mercy” and saying the Church is “judgmental.” Or, they might accuse the Pope and bishops of being in error. In both examples, the assumption is whatever they dislike is error to be rejected. Such a view makes the individual the judge of the

Church—changing the Church from Mother and Teacher to Child and Student who must be taught by *us*.

But under such a view, it makes no sense to *be* a Catholic because it rejects (overtly, or through failing to think things through) what the Church professes to be. As Dr. Kreeft pointed out, if the Church claims to be what she is not, then the anti-Catholics are right and the Church is a monstrosity. But if the Church *is what she claims to be*, then we must give assent when she teaches, not offer explanations as to why we can ignore a teaching we dislike.

Be aware that this is not the fault of one faction. During the pontificates of St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, it was easier to see this disobedience among “liberal Catholics.” Under the pontificate of Pope Francis, the dissent of “conservative Catholics” is more obvious. But both kinds of dissent were present in both cases—it was just harder to notice the dissent of conservatives against Popes before 2013, while after 2013 liberal dissent against the Pope does not get reported.

The thing to remember is, while some sins are more deadly than others, the deadliest sin is the one which sends an individual to hell. For the person who has no intention to use the “right” to abortion available in our country, the sin of abortion is not likely to damn him. But another sin could very well condemn him to hell. This is especially true if we try to hide our dissent by pretending the Church must be wrong.

## **Conclusion**

If we do this, we are doing the same thing to the Church that the Old Testament kings did with the prophets and the Pharisees did with Our Lord. Instead of considering and obeying the source of authority, we get angry and attack the

Church for not saying what we want to hear, or saying what we *don't* want to hear. We can pretend that our disobedience is really obedience to a higher source, but Our Lord does not permit this. He said that the one who rejects the Church rejects Him, and the One who sent Him (Luke 10:16).

People can try to muddy the waters and try to argue that they can ignore the Pope when He doesn't teach infallibly (*ex cathedra*), but that ignores the fact that the binding *ex cathedra* definition grows out of the binding teaching of the ordinary magisterium. Our Lord has commanded us to obey His Church. This means we trust Him to protect His Church from error. If we refuse to trust the Church and her visible head, the Pope, it means we refuse to trust the Head of the Church—Our Lord. No matter how we twist history to make a private error or band behavior of a medieval Pope justify disobedience of a Pope who does none of that, Our Lord's command cannot be evaded. If we think otherwise, we *will* answer for it.

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[†] The problem seems to fit “cradle Catholics” as well, and should not be seen as a “convert only” problem. Blessed John Henry Newman's observation should not be seen as indicting *all* converts, or *only* converts.

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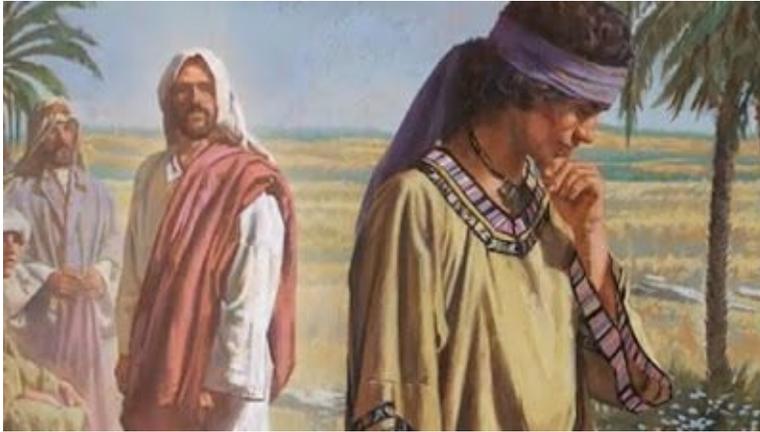
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## What do I still lack? [at The Hahn Family Blog]

[Pope Saint Pius X](#)

Matthew 19:16-22



It is easy for me to place myself in the shoes of the rich young man in today's Gospel. Not because I am rich of course but because I too like the path of least resistance. I too want to lean on my past accomplishments and not be challenged to go the extra mile.

As always I like to focus on the repeats in the Gospel and with this passage we have the word "good" mentioned three times. When I read this repetition I am reminded that Jesus said, "Be perfect as Your Heavenly Father is perfect." He did not say, "Be good." I think Jesus is challenging the young man and me to step beyond the letter of the law. Jesus tells Him what he must do to be good and to enter eternal life.

The young man states that he has done all that Jesus mentions, but deep inside himself he knows there must be something more. Even though he is a good person and following the Law he knows deep down that God is calling him to something more, something higher than merely being good. God is calling him and me to holiness, to perfection. Why else would he ask the question, "What do I still lack?" His question about eternal life was answered. He was told by Jesus what he had to do but something inside him is not satisfied with merely following the Law.

When the young man heard the answer he was sad because he was possessed by his many possessions. He could not bear the thought of going that extra mile. Would he still enter into Heaven though he walked away sad? Yes. Would he be happy in this life because he chose to hold on to his things and let go of a deep relationship with Christ? Probably not. My degree of happiness is not often increased by following the Ten Commandments or the Precepts of the Church unless they are done out of love. My happiness is increased as I move farther away from the trappings of this life and closer to Christ.

Lord Jesus, I follow the Ten Commandments fairly well and I observe the Precepts of the Church yet I am not happy. Lord, what do I lack? Give me the strength to accept Your answer and chose You over the world.

#### FROM THE SAINTS

*"In our time more than ever before, the chief strength of the wicked, lies in the cowardice and weakness of good men... All the strength of Satan's reign is due to the easy-going weakness of Catholics. Oh! if I might ask the Divine Redeemer, as the prophet Zachary did in spirit: What are those wounds in the midst of Thy hands? The answer would not be doubtful: With these was I wounded in the house of them that loved Me. I was wounded by My friends, who did nothing to defend Me, and who, on every occasion, made themselves the accomplices of My adversaries. And this reproach can be levelled at the weak and timid Catholics of all countries."--*

Pope St. Pius X, Discourse at the Beatification of St. Joan of Arc, Dec. 13, 1908

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This contribution is available at <http://jamesmhahn.blogspot.com/2017/08/what-do-i-still-lack.html>  
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## No Coincidences Here [at Walking the Path]



I have come to believe that in the timing of our Scripture readings is by no means coincidental. There have been many a time where I have been struggling in dealing with personal issues, work issues, and even health issues in which I open my daily readings only to see a message from either the Old Testament, Psalms, or New Testament that is crystal clear. Sometimes the message seems to be applicable to events around me, but in the case of today's readings it seems quite clear there is a message for our nation. It is not only given once, but four times.

Let us begin with the first reading from

### [Isaiah](#)

. The author uses the word foreigners to describe those joining themselves to the Lord. There is no duplicity in the message. The passage ends with the writer describing a house that will be a house of prayer for all people. I imagine a church that upon review includes people of all races. I happen to live in an area that is reflective of that. However, our presiding priest today challenged us to look deep inside ourselves in wake of the Charlottesville tragedy. Where do we have prejudices that are not always evident. Are we reflective of this house that the Book of Isaiah describes?

Psalm 67 responsorial is "O God, let all the nations praise you." Once again a message of inclusivity. The Gospel message of love is not just for selected

people it is for all. I know that it is quite easy to discriminate thinking that a certain group is selected to hold the Gospel truth, but somehow I don't think that would be Jesus' message.

Paul in the

### [Letter to the Romans](#)

implores the Gentiles to follow the Gospel message. He utilizes the word mercy as God is merciful with those who once disobeyed and wandered away. The final sentence states " For God delivered all to disobedience that he might have mercy upon all. Once again the word all stands out.



Finally in the

### [Gospel](#)

we encounter an Canaanite woman whose daughter is sick. This woman was quite possibly of mixed heritage being from Sidon and Tyre. The woman was an outsider and is thus treated as so by the disciples as they tell Jesus to send her off. To know that the woman is considered a lesser person is important for two reasons. One being her gender in a society that was patriarchal, but also as a foreigner there is a clear class division. Jesus seems to be ignoring the woman the group continue their journey and following the suit of the disciples. But we must remember that God's ways are not our ways. After speaking exclusively of the lost sheep of Israel, Jesus does something that I imagine startles some. He replies to the woman who pleads with him for help using the metaphor of dogs eating scraps from table knowing that this woman would be by many considered

a dog. The woman's faith in the power of someone she does not even know, but quite possibly has heard about is rewarded. What is for us to gain here?

Even in turbulent times such as what we are encountering in our nation and throughout the world we are asked to be faithful. Yes I would like many people to be fixed and would love to have an audience with God in which I could present such a list. But that once again would be my plan. God is a God of surprises, to borrow Gerard Hughes book title. In my own life I can reflect on numerous times God when I allow God to drive the car that I have been pleasantly rewarded by His mercy and grace. The very fact that I am writing this blog is one. Going to God daily and praying for those who pursue the message of hate is important to me, for without this exercise I know that I can become hateful as well interiorly. That is why Scripture is important for me.

The word of God does not have to be that booming authoritative voice emanating from heaven. It can be found in Scripture and nothing is more evident than that today amidst the violence that continues to divide out nation. The challenge becomes loving those whose purposeful intent is to spread hate and violence. We are a nation that is made up of many peoples, beliefs, and religions and as the readings today provide us we are all one.

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This contribution is available at <http://walkingthepathtoholiness.blogspot.com/2017/08/no-coincidences-here.html>  
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## Who's Got It Better Than We Do? [at String of Pearls]

My husband and I are spending the summer in our old hometown in Upstate NY, working hard at being the caretakers/cleaning crew of our Oyster Haven VRBO lake house (and my husband is commuting to work from here). So today, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I got to attend a noon Mass at my childhood parish church. And then I stayed afterward to pray a group Rosary.



We moved to this wonderful town when I was 10, and I went to the Catholic grade school just across the street from this church. This is where I went to Sunday Mass every week as a kid, but it's not where I got married. My husband and I actually exchanged our wedding vows in

*his*

parish church across town--the one that was connected to the Catholic high school we both attended. We thought it was apropos to get married there: seeing as how we'd met at that high school and started dating when we were 15, that church seemed to be more a part of our story as a couple.

But the church I was in today was where we gathered in November for my father's funeral Mass. It's the first time I've been back inside it since he died.

Both of these churches that are special to me are just breathtakingly beautiful,

but I thought I'd show you some pictures of the one I was in today. I had forgotten just how glorious it is; my goodness, it rivals many of the ornately beautiful Catholic churches I've had the privilege to visit in Europe, when I've tagged along on some of my husband's working trips.











How's that for a feast for the eyes, on Our Lady's special feast day? You could almost believe you were in Heaven, couldn't you? (And these iPhone photos don't even begin to do it justice!) Is there anything more beautiful than the inside of a Catholic church such as this one? Don't answer that, because obviously the answer is an emphatic "No!"

When I am present for the Sacrifice of the Mass--surrounded by beauty such as this, hearing the soothing sound of the voices of the faithful solemnly joined in prayer--I often think of something I heard about the Harbaugh family. When well-known football coaches Jim and John Harbaugh were growing up in their close-knit, loving family, their parents had a phrase they used all the time.

**"Who's got it better than us?"**

Jack and Jackie Harbaugh would ask their kids.

**"Nooo-body!"**

John, Jim, and their sister Joanie would answer.

Well that's how I feel about being a member of the Catholic Church, the best family on earth, and having this Woman as my Mother.



Truly, who's got it better than we do?

**NOOO-BODY!**

That's who.

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2017/08/happy-feast-of-assumption.html>  
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## Anniversary trip brings clarity on marriage [at Peace Garden Passage]

God works exceedingly slow. But our trip back to the Pacific Northwest, where our marriage had essentially begun, symbolized that if we're willing to endure through hard times, miracles can happen.

When my husband and I met, we were only 18 and broken. This brokenness, which had attracted us like magnets, likewise threatened our destruction many times.



Love was always there, but often hidden underneath layers of pain we were too afraid to face.

Bringing five children into our lives gave us a new and important focus, but also additional strain. In the end, though, I believe it was being forced to confront the demands of those children that most readily provided the openings for grace. Having to work together for their good ultimately caused us to drop our resentment toward one another long enough to pay attention to their needs.

Selfishness began to fade, and eventually, to disappear.

seriousness began to fade, and our hurts, to slowly heal.

As we started viewing one another as helpmates, we found ourselves laughing again — in part because it was a better alternative than crying, but also because it felt good. Years ago, we'd stopped taking couple's trips for family vacations. But something about reaching 25 years seemed important, so a trip fund was begun. It was a personal need, yes, but I felt that God wanted this for us, too.

Discovering again the Seattle area, as we had all those years ago together, then boarding a clipper boat bound for San Juan Island — on which we spotted seals, sea lions, porpoises and orcas in the wild — was sheer delight.





Experiencing our first forest zip-line tour, and cruising the island border in a little red scot coupe, while inhaling the luscious scents of the ocean and cedar trees as wildflowers dazzled, proved luxurious.











But this trip was something else, too. It was God reminding us that what we experience in any hard moment is fleeting, and making a permanent decision based on a temporary situation can keep us from knowing life's greatest pleasures. Like playing cribbage on a hotel patio, or visiting old and dear friends over a delicious meal of mussels and salmon...



...or holding hands on an airplane bound for the coast at age 48, with the guy you met at 18.

Life is messy, but with God's help, the payoff is possible. And as we've discovered, it's a wild ride worth sticking out to the end.



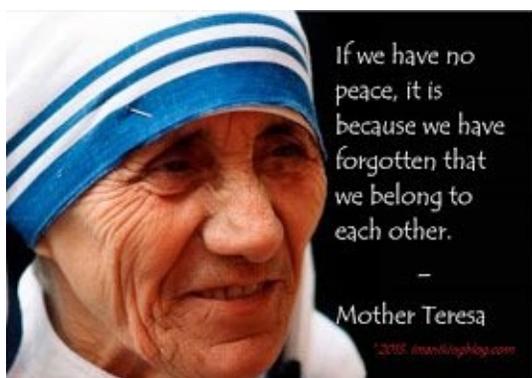
*[For the sake of having a repository for my newspaper columns and articles, I reprint them here, with permission, a week after their run date. The preceding ran in The Forum newspaper on Aug. 19, 2017.]*

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2017/08/living-faith-anniversary-trip-brings-clarity-on-marriage/>  
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## The Modern World met a Mother who Loved... 10 ways Mother Teresa of Calcutta changed the World to SHARE [at Catholic News World]



***Mother Teresa has touched the hearts of Millions around the world with her love....***

Mother Teresa's real name was Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu and she was born Aug. 26, 1910, in Macedonia. Agnes' father died when she was 8. When she was 18, Agnes left home and joined the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland. Agnes never saw her mother or sister again after she left for Ireland. Sister Teresa transferred to the Sisters of Loreto convent in Darjeeling, India. Sr. Teresa took her vows in 1931, and choose the name Teresa to honor Saints Therese of Lisieux and Teresa of Avila. She taught for for 15 years with the Sisters of Loreto. In 1946 Teresa traveled to Darjeeling for a retreat. Mother Teresa was Canonized a Saint on September 4, 2016.

1. Mother Teresa obeyed the voice of God: "I heard the call to give up all and follow Christ into the slums to serve him among the poorest of the poor." She obtained permission from the Sisters of Loreto to leave the order – permission of the Archbishop of Calcutta to live and work among the poor. She also prepared by taking a nursing course.
2. In 1948 Sister Teresa changed her nun's habit – using a simple sari and

sandals worn by the poor women. She moved to the slums to begin her work. She obtained food and supplies by begging.

3. She taught the children of the poor to read and write by writing in the dirt with sticks. She also taught the children basic hygiene. She visited families, finding their needs and helped them with supplies.

4. In 1950 she started the Mission of Charity. This congregation is dedicated to caring for “the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone.”

5. Mother Teresa opened hospices for the poor, a home for sufferers of leprosy, and a home for orphans and homeless youths.

6. Mother Teresa's Sisters spend 1 hour in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each day. Their day begins with prayer and Mass where they encounter Jesus the source of their strength.

7. Mother Teresa was honored with many awards throughout her life, from the Indian Padma Shri in 1962 to the inaugural Pope John XXIII Peace Prize in 1971 most famously, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

8. She refused the traditional Nobel honor banquet, instead requesting that the \$192,000 budget be given to help the poor of India. She continued her work with the poor for the rest of her life, leading the Missionaries of Charity until just months before her death Sept. 5, 1997.

9. Her Sisters have hundreds of houses throughout the world. They have helped millions of people.

10. Mother Teresa was Officially Canonized as a Saint by Pope Francis on Sept. 4, 2016.

Compiled by Miriam Westen, MEd, MTS, MA Th.

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## Peace Prayer of St. Francis [at The Green Catholic Burrow]

*Welcome to the second post of my series on Catholic piety for Protestants and converts; in this series I am delving into some of the classic prayers of the Church. Catholic piety is not typically well understood in Protestant circles, and as a convert I found this to be an area that was both fascinating and also deeply important to my changing perceptions of the Church.*

*If you missed the first post in the series, check it out [here](#).*

### **The Peace Prayer of St. Francis**

#### **The Prayer:**

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.*

#### **Impact:**

My conversion happened at a crisis point in our lives. As I mentioned in my [Reflection after the Easter Vigil](#), I was feeling pretty crushed by life when I first

darkened the door of the Church. **This prayer spoke to my soul, that in crisis, in rejection, in sadness, loss, and even despair, with Jesus in me, I could sow joy.** I did not have to be a victim of my circumstances, always reacting, always on the defensive, but I could forget myself and serve others, even coming from a place of great lack in terms of both material goods and also emotional stamina.

In conflict with our previous church leaders, I could sow peace and pardon. In a place of despair regarding our financial future, I could lean on a strength not my own and sow hope to others.

In a place in my life where I deeply felt need of consolation and understanding, I could find purpose in offering these things to others, and forget my own craving for the comforting of my wounds. Jesus was strong enough to do these things in me, without my needing to be strong enough first.

None of these ideas were really new to me, as a believer from a Protestant background. **The impact on me of many things I found in the Church didn't always come from a place of striking difference from Protestant piety, but by an unexpected similarity met by a difference in tone and fueled by the hidden power of the Eucharist.** Truths that I knew in my head and strove for in my soul sprang to life before the living reality I encountered each Sunday at the Mass.

The Facts:

**Welp, friends, the first thing you find out when looking into the history of this prayer is that it [didn't actually come from St. Francis](#).**

Am I the only one that didn't know this?

The prayer originated in France in the early 1900's, published anonymously in a little spiritual magazine entitled *La Clochette*. It became associated with St. Francis by virtue of having been published on the back of a holy card bearing St. Francis's image, but without being attributed to him. (Dr. Christian Renoux, [Franciscan Archive](#), 8/22/2017, 10:30 am).

The association with St. Francis makes a lot of sense, regardless of authorship; the spirit of the prayer is very much in accord with the life and spirituality of St. Francis. In the words of [Jack Wintz, OFM](#): **“Francis of Assisi may not**

**have *written* the words of the prayer attributed to him, but he certainly *lived* them.”**

**Further Resources:**

In closing, a musical rendition of the Peace Prayer, by John Michael Talbot. I love prayers set to good music!

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This contribution is available at <http://www.greencatholicburrow.com/catholic-piety-protestants-peace-francis>

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## The Distributist's Garden [at Practical Distributism]

It's pretty standard (and rightly so) to link Distributism with things like farmer's markets and small scale organic farming. If you're a Distributist, you ought to opt out, as much as you can, from industrial agriculture. As much as you can, you ought to support small local family farmers.

But beyond that, it's also pretty standard to link Distributism with gardening: this is another way to opt out of industrial agriculture, after all. Instead of buying imported tomatoes in February, grow your own tomatoes and eat them in July, when God intended them to be eaten.

Suppose you think: sure, I ought to try to plant a garden. What then?

There's the question of how: to grow a garden, you need to learn how to garden. I'm not going to go into that here. I'm interested in the "why" and the "what." They actually go together, as we'll see in a bit.

To the "why": there are dozens of good reasons to plant a garden, obviously. For example, gardening is a great way to learn some important moral lessons. Chesterton tells us that the true soldier doesn't fight because he hates what's in front of him but because he loves what's behind him. A deep point. But what gardening can show us, in a way that's not so morally fraught, is that it's incredibly difficult even for the true soldier to keep those two things apart. You may be fighting a just war—a truly defensive war, intended solely to save your beloved home—but that doesn't necessarily save you from coming to hate your enemies. This is part of the grave risk of warfare: you can lose your life or health in war, but you can also lose your soul, even if you're on the right side.

How do you learn that from gardening?

If you don't know, you've never gardened.

Just think of going out and planting a lovely garden patch, faithfully weeding and watering as needed, mulching, tending, watching, anticipating—and then finding one morning that your plants have all been mowed down by a renegade white tail deer. Or slugs. Or imagine that just as your lovely rows of corn

seedlings emerge, crows descend upon the field to feast upon your lovely little plants. Etc. etc. etc. The gardener faces dozens of battles like this every year. And when I'm fixed in a struggle with the crow for the life of my corn, I don't just want to save my beloved sweet corn. I want to kill the crow. I hear that caw and I look for my shotgun. I hate the crow. I hate the raccoon. I hate the deer. I hate the slug. I hate.....

And there you see it. I've never served in combat, but it's hard to believe that when you see your friends die around you, you wouldn't start to hate the people who do that to them. War presents moral risks, and not just to the bad guys.

This is a lesson you can learn from gardening. But note that this isn't a peculiarly Distributist reason for gardening.

There are, however, peculiarly Distributist reasons for gardening: by which I mean reasons that flow directly from the core of Distributist thought. And the central such peculiarly Distributist reason for gardening is: to increase your economic freedom. As Belloc puts it:

It is obvious that whoever controls the means of production controls the supply of wealth. If, therefore, the means for the production of that wealth which a family needs are in the control of others than the family, the family will be dependent upon those others; it will not be economically free. The family is ideally free when it fully controls all the means necessary for the production of such wealth as it should consume for normal living. But such an ideal is inhuman and, therefore, not to be fixedly attained, because man is a social animal. (*Essay on the Restoration of Property*, 2)

Distributism seeks economic freedom for the family (not an ideal—or total—economic freedom, but just such an amount as is properly attainable to families as members of real communities). One's economic freedom is keyed to—I suppose you could say it just is—one's independence from others. When you buy food from the grocery store, or from the farmer's market, you are clearly dependent upon those others. Hence, at least ideally (if not actually!) the family would control the means to produce its all own wealth, by which Belloc explicitly means to include one's own food. The conclusion, then, is that Distributism provides a motive for gardening: gardening is a way to produce one's own food, and hence to become more economically free.

So if that's right, then the Distributist garden, as such, is a garden that contributes to the gardener's economic freedom.

“Absurd,” you might say. “My little patch of tomatoes, tasty as the fruit is, remains symbolic at best.”

I won't turn up my nose at symbolic gestures, especially tasty ones. If all you can manage to grow, given your current situation, is a potted tomato plant on your apartment balcony, then God bless you. I'm not picking on you. That's great. Do what you realistically can, and ignore the rest.

But many of us, I'm sure, have much larger spaces available to us than a little patio with some pots. How many square feet is your back yard? How about your front yard? How much could you bring into cultivation? 100 square feet? 500? 1000? If your house sits on a little suburban lot of .2 acres (roughly the national average)—about 8700 square feet—then taking out 3700 feet for house and driveway, you'd still have 5000 square feet for swingset, landscaping features, and garden.

I'm not saying “you must, as a good Distributist, dig it all up and get to work planting!” But I am saying this: if you have the space, and the will, and a little time, then you can make your garden a real contributor to economic freedom. And here we come to where the “why” and the “what” come together, as I mentioned earlier they do.

Your best bet to making your garden really count, nutritionally, is to avoid the salsa garden phenomenon. So many people plant a few tomato plants and a few pepper plants, and eagerly anticipate making salsa. I've got no problem with salsa, but you will note that it's not exactly a staple. When you dip those store bought chips into your delicious, fresh salsa, you ought to enjoy it, and take pride in your work. But that salsa isn't making much of a contribution to your economic freedom. True, you didn't need to buy that can of salsa from the grocery store. But, then...you don't ever need to eat salsa. What you do need to eat is calorie dense food like potatoes, beans, winter squash, and grains like corn.

Your average suburban garden—say you come up with 1000 square feet—can't grow enough of any of that stuff to actually feed a family for very long. But it can grow enough of that stuff to actually feed a family for awhile. And I mean,

actually feed a family. OK, you may need to buy some add-ons, but you can make some pretty darn good meals mostly just from those ingredients. One particular favorite of mine is

### [creamed potatoes and green beans](#)

. The recipes all seem to think of it as a side dish, but we've made it as the main dish—just serve some fresh bread with it, or a salad, or some fresh carrot sticks—and it's a great meal. And I say this as the sort of person who generally feels no meal has been served unless I've eaten a fair amount of meat. The average gardener will have to buy in the milk, but as I say, the main part of the dish you can dig out of your own yard in the afternoon, and eat at dinnertime. (Though I should note that the beans I mention as staples aren't actually green beans, they're dried beans.)

If you like silly attempts at quantification, try this out. A family of 5 needs to eat about 12,500 calories per day. (That's probably too high, but I told you already this is a silly attempt at quantification, so trying to be more fine-grained here seems, well, silly.) If you have a 1000 square foot garden in full production—which you won't, because you'll have paths and other non-planted spaces within the garden, but again, ignore that—

### [you could fairly easily get](#)

about 25,000 calories per 100 square feet by planting corn and potatoes, or 250,000 calories: enough, theoretically, to provide all the food your family needs for 20 days. That's real progress towards economic freedom.

The list of crops I mentioned above—corn, beans, potatoes and winter squash—isn't my own list. It comes from Carol Deppe's excellent book *The Resilient Gardener*. (Chelsea Green, 2010.

<http://www.chelseagreen.com/the-resilient-gardener>

) She also argues you should keep a backyard flock of ducks (or, if you like, chickens). That seems right to me. Do so.

Given our cultural situation, it would be easy to misunderstand what I'm talking about—or what Deppe is talking about—since a lot of “preppers” have written about growing a survival garden, and it may seem I'm urging the same thing. I

have no objection to preppers, but I'm not arguing that you need to be preparing for a long-term, grid down, survival situation. The point here isn't the pursuit of self-sufficiency as such, or the desire to be able to make it once the country collapses into anarchy. The point is to orient your Distributist garden in a Distributist way. Think of the food you grow as real food, not as a side dish, not as a garnish. You can easily plan a garden that produces meals for your family. No doubt the gesture will remain largely—almost wholly—symbolic, but symbolic of economic freedom, and not merely of some generalized ecological feel-goodism, or localism, or what have you.

OK, sure, grow the fun stuff, too: grow herbs and tomatoes and lettuce. But not as your main crops. This is not a game. Distributism isn't a plaything for wealthy white collar workers to amuse themselves with. As long as we treat it as though it were, it will remain easy to write us off as dreamers.

We should never drain the pleasure out of gardening, for it is a truly lovely thing. Yesterday, I picked green beans near one of the herb beds, and smelled the delicious smell of our basil as I picked. Some of my sensations at the time—the strain on my injured back, the heat of the August North Carolinian sun and humidity—were rather unpleasant. But the basil more than balanced them out.

But we should never ignore the gravity of gardening, either. We should approach it as though it mattered. For it does.

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This contribution is available at <http://practicaldistributism.blogspot.com/2017/08/the-distributists-garden.html>  
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## It is Always Cain Killing Abel [at Creo en Dios!]

Those who have seen the French film *Of Gods and Men* are familiar with the story of the Trappist monks who lived among the Muslim population in Tibhirine, a small town in Algiers – of how they stayed well after it was clear there was mortal danger to staying, and of how seven of them were kidnapped and assassinated in 1996.

The youngest of the assassinated monks was Christophe Lebreton, who began writing poetry and keeping a prayer journal several before terrorists first visit to the monastery at the end of 1993. His journal, which I am reading now, ends a week prior to the monks' kidnapping.

Two sentences in that journal arrested me earlier today; it was the juxtaposition of two thoughts contained in Lebreton's journal entry for January 13, 1994.

Describing the events of the day he wrote

In Kabylia, a wali and his bodyguards were assassinated; in Algiers, policemen have been killed. At Vigils it was Cain killing Abel.

Cain and Abel. The first fratricide.

Fratricide is one of those sins we view as particularly wicked. Cain was cursed for killing his brother.

But the first thought I had when I read the two lines I just quoted was: It is always Cain killing Abel.

We pray – some of us every day – the Lord's Prayer, which begins with the line "Our father." Not "father." Not "my father." But "Our" father, a phrasing that acknowledges not only our relationship with God, but our relationship with each other.

If we take that seriously, if we accept that we are all children of God, then EVERY killing of one person by another is the killing of a brother or a sister.

On that day in 1994 the wali and his bodyguards were killed by one or more brothers. On that same day, someone else killed their brother the policeman.

Fratricide.

And today – or if not today tomorrow or the day after – someone else will commit the sin of Cain, killing a brother or a sister. Because whatever other name we give it, it is always Cain killing Abel.

Note: The book I am reading of Lebreton's journal is titled: *Born From the Gaze of God: The Tibhirine Journal of a Martyr Monk (1993-1996)*.

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This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2017/08/20/it-is-always-cain-killing-abel/>

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## Softening a Hardened Heart Makes Building God's Kingdom Easier [at A Moment From De Sales]

God needs our hearts to be full of His love if He is to build His Kingdom in our lifetime. God does this by speaking to us. As Scripture says: “*If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.*” Scripture challenges us to hear God's voice wherever we are, and through whatever we are doing-and to do it everyday.

For when we listen to God's voice urging us to “*Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself,*” it softens our heart to see more clearly what God's mission is and how we can help accomplish it.

However, life situations often tune out God's voice. When this happens, our hearts become hardened by life's challenges. For instance, Roger is a man with deeply embedded anger which easily dims God's gentle voice. Thelma has long held resentments and hurts that block her from listening to Jesus' words of love and mercy. For, if we live isolated, like Roger and Thelma, we need Jesus' grace to melt our hearts to allow love to flow once again.

Hearts also become hardened, because of sin. Often this sinfulness blocks God's voice telling us what He needs from us. When it does, our ability to spread God's love and build His kingdom suddenly stops. Only with God's love, freely given and so easily shared, is our sin tainted hardened heart no longer "trapped."

Thank the Lord, we have a persistent God. He sends His Son Jesus, who continually calls us forward with these words: “Follow me!” And when we respond and walk with Him, His grace heals us. Soon we become better hearers and doers of His Word building God's kingdom though our restored gifts and softened hearts.

Following Jesus, we recognize more vividly how connected daily living and our faith are. With Jesus' command to *Be Compassionate*, we are aware of the struggle of those who walk with us. We clearly see their needs and how we can respond. As we do, our hardened heart moves from being self-centered to the softened heart of other-centered. This newly revived heart wants only to love

everyone met along our way.

When a renewed heart beats to the rhythm of God's love, Jesus moves closer to fulfilling His mission through us and our world appears a brighter place!

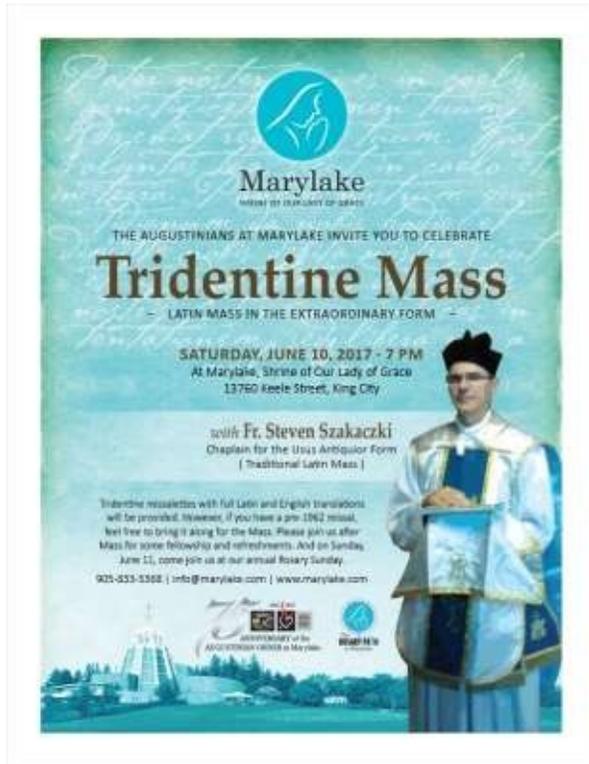
**If today you hear God's voice, harden not your heart!**

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## REPORT: High Mass/Missa Cantata on Saturday, June 10, 2017 at 7:00pm EST



Hello Everyone,

Allow me the privilege to release another report of an offering of a Missa Cantata/High Mass in the Extraordinary Form that occurred during the summer season. On June 10, 2017, 7:00 pm EST the Augustinian brothers of the Marylake Shrine of Gratitude, in King City, ON, graciously allowed for their annual offering of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite/Latin Mass, to take place. This offering has now been offered annually, either for its 3rd or 4th year at the Shrine.

For this offering, Fr. Steven Szakaczki, head of the Latin Mass contingent of the parish of St. Lawrence the Martyr, Scarborough, and veteran priest to the Latin Mass offerings in the Archdiocese of Toronto, was main celebrant for this Mass. Servers were requested independently, via contact by the Master of Ceremonies, including I, the author of this posting, for service at the altar. For this EF liturgy,

I was acolyte 2 alongside my longest friend in the Faith, who served as Acolyte 1.

Prior to the Mass Fr. Steven, and all servers in their positions, met at the Shrine for a rehearsal, and to iron out liturgical particulars between our knowledgeable Master of Ceremonies, Giovanni, Fr. Paul, who was the current head prior/brother of the Shrine (and organizer for the choir portion of the Mass,) Fr. Steven, and the servers. Ironing out these particulars was essential, as mentioned before in my prior announcement post

[here](#)

, this Mass fell on an interesting time of year in the EF calendar, the Saturday of an Ember week in the Octave of Pentecost, and thus some changes to the order of the Mass (readings, etc.) needed to be known to all parties involved.

The liturgical differences, due to being an Ember Saturday were:

- On an ember day liturgy, up to 5 additional Old Testament "lessons" of Scripture are added in addition to the standard Epistle. This is followed by a collect after each lesson. *As was custom before in the EF, there is the granting to the celebrant of the option of a shorter amount of only one lesson in addition to the main collect, followed by the Epistle, a tract (instead of an Alleluia), a "sequence," and then the Gospel reading.* It was decided for the sake of time and unnecessary burden on all present, the shorter option was in effect.
- *A sequence was sung (being in the Octave of Pentecost) called the Veni Sancte Spiritus, before the Gospel was proclaimed.* This is NOT the same as the "Come Holy Spirit ..." prayer, though ``Come Holy Spirit`` is the literal translation of the title of the sequence, based on its first three Latin words.

Since I was not serving as thurifer, this year, and got to remain in sanctuary the whole time, I had the privilege of listening to Fr. Steven's homily in full. Here is from my recollection the main points of this homily:

- Where we are today in the calendar of the Novus Ordo, is that we are not celebrating Pentecost anymore, but have moved back into Ordinary time during the weekdays. Unfortunately, in the liturgical changes, the Octave of Pentecost was removed from the calendar.

- In the Extraordinary Form Calendar, we are on the Saturday of the Octave of Pentecost, specifically the Ember Saturday. While people in both forms may have partaken in the Novenas (for Pentecost or more likely to,) the Holy Spirit, it is unfortunate that this was taken from the Novus Ordo Calendar.
- We should be truly fortunate in the EF Calendar to have the Octave, to be celebrating the Joy of the Feast of Pentecost, as without this truly remarkable event, there would not be the Catholic Church.
- Before we discuss Pentecost, just what is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, as revealed to us in the Scriptures, with intention of God and our Lord to exist, sharing the same divine nature as the other Persons. What the Holy Spirit is, is the LOVE of our Lord and his Only Son.
  - When there is a relationship that involves love, there are three persons: the person giving love, the one receiving it, and the Love itself.
  - God the Father, so loved all of us that He gave His Only Son to us, Jesus. God Loved his Son, and the Son loved His Father in Return, that between the two exists the Love that "spirates" from both of them, and that is the Holy Spirit.
- When we examine the events surrounding Pentecost, we come to the Apostles, who were vital to spreading the Gospel and hence, establishing the Church after Christ's Death, Resurrection, and even Ascension to Heaven. Even after His Ascension into Heaven, the Apostles did not go about an just make the Church happen. They were still fearful of persecution by the Roman authorities, having been so close to our Lord. Further, they likely discussed many things about their Lord, and likely still had much doubt about Him and what He said.
- So here they were, all hiding in the upper room alongside our Virgin Mother, Mary, and some others, waiting out their days in hiding. Then, comes the very paraclete that Our Lord said would be sent to help them carry out His mission. The tongues of fire came down upon them and they were filled with those Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the courage to go out and establish the Church, doing the Lord's work.
- When they went about doing the Lord's work, filled with the Holy Spirit, they did many amazing works and converted scores of people to our Lord and the Faith, even performing miracles and amazing works!
- So then, why do we not see many, or any, of these supposed works that happened with the Apostles after being filled with the Holy Spirit, despite many Catholics being baptized and confirmed, and receiving the Holy

Spirit with the Sacraments? There are two key reasons

- 1. **TRUST** - Sadly today, many people, even Catholics, do not place their full trust in the Lord, and in the Holy Spirit. They place their trust in the things of this world, or things of man, many a time being led to sin and unhappiness. The Apostles were able to place their trust in our Lord with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. **LOVE** - When we go about doing our spiritual works, or our lives, we often do not do many things with the Love of the Holy Spirit. [Editor's note: As the Holy Spirit IS LOVE itself, then we must, as Children of God, go about with the LOVE of the Lord in our whole being in what we do, and that LOVE IS the Holy Spirit.]
- So, on this Feast of Pentecost, may we pray for the opening our hearts to trusting in the Lord, and the TRUST and LOVE that our Apostles exhibited when filled with the Holy Spirit, to be able to serve our Lord fully.

All in all, the liturgy and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, was carried out in a solemn, reverent, and even joyful capacity, and the chapel was clearly filled with the presence of something "awesome" happening in that holy space, meeting (though **not literally** replicating) that very same experience the Apostles had in the upper room, being so close to our Lord and His Holy Spirit, in the Latin Mass.

As for attendance, while not as full as last year, the chapel, which I estimate visually to be capable of holding about 200 bodies in its pews, was almost completely full, with only the odd spare seat in the back couple of pews. That is still a remarkable attendance for an offering in a Chapel, held not in the immediate core of the Archdiocese, AND had only parish posters and some internet promotion, which seems limited to this blog and my requests on some Facebook groups. When you factor all that, there is CLEARLY demand for the Latin Mass, and even some spreading, will bring out a good sizable number of the Faithful, including young people, who thanks to social media are discovering this treasure of liturgy that they rightfully deserve from the Church at large.

This young acolyte (and assuredly, all present in the pews and involved in carrying out the sacred liturgy) are truly thankful for the generosity of the

Augustinian Fathers for offering, even yearly, the opportunity for the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite to be offered in their shrine, in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Likewise, Fr. Paul was truly impressed and thankful for the hard work and dedication we all showed, including true reverence for our Lord in the Liturgy, our organization and efficiency in carrying out the Liturgy, and the humility we brought to the Latin Mass.

We hope that by efforts such as the Augustinian Fathers, more offerings will become established via influence in King City, and surrounding areas of Vaughan, Woodbridge, Aurora, Newmarket, and Brampton.

Also, it is hoped that this annual tradition will continue in future, as it has been found out that as of this summer, the prior head brother, Brother Paul, who was appreciative of the Latin Mass, will be leaving the Shrine and Br. John Paul Szura, is now the new superior/head brother of Mary Lake. It is with good hope that the new head, Br. John Paul, will continue on allowing the tradition to continue, one which will maintain good report with those who favour Catholic Tradition/the Latin Mass of the faithful in the surrounding municipalities of the Shrine and those in the Archdiocese of Toronto, and further meet the spiritual needs of those faithful and the youth, who truly want a deep and personal connection to Christ in the Liturgy. May the love of St. Augustine and the fraternal order founded on this great saint for our times, continue to thrive in our Archdiocese of Toronto.

Thank you, Augustinian Brothers, and those in the E.F./Latin Mass for making this sacred event happen.

Pax Tibi Christi. Julian Barkin.

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## Misreading the cross [at Gentle Reign]



Back in the 80s, we were flabbergasted that kids didn't know that Paul McCartney was in a group before Wings. Then, by the late 90s, it was like, "who was Wings?" It hasn't, probably won't for a long time, get to be "Who's Paul McCartney?", but that is the way things go. Human memory is short. Meanings evolve, change. In Britain, a flat is what we call an apartment in the States; flats in the states are shoes without heels, tires without air, or black keys on the piano. In Australia, a boot is the trunk of your car; in the US, you can put your boots in the trunk, or give someone the boot out of your car (into the trunk?), or put a boot on a car if it's parked in an illegal space. Same symbol, "b-o-o-t," but different meanings. We can probably figure out the etymology of each, find how the symbol-word came to have the meanings it has, by going back to uncover its origin in antiquity (probably the origin of "boot" inasmuch as it pertains to motor vehicles isn't all that ancient!)

I was thinking about all this today as I listened to the gospel with its admonition about what we call the "cost" of discipleship:

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

I had been reading

[Sr. Mary Boys’s \(of Union Theological Seminary's theology department\) very insightful essay](#)

on the way that the meaning of the cross has changed across the millennia, to the point where it has been, at different times, a form of torture, a symbol of empire, a sword, a threat, and the focus of the charge of deicide against the Jews. While often explicitly rejected by the papacy, nevertheless, in the catholic “imagination” of the peasantry and countryside, the lamentable but pervasive justification for mistreatment, torture, and murder of Jews arose from the charge that Jews had killed Jesus of Nazareth. Her essay deals with the question of whether the cross ought to be laid aside as a symbol because of its history of misuse. Happily, she does not embrace an affirmative conclusion, but she treats the possibility with intellectual and emotional respect. It’s a good read.



It is unthinkable that, in the context of first-century Mediterranean life under the aegis of the Caesars and their heirs, that Jesus or an evangelist or anyone would use the term “take up the cross” in a psychological or privatized sense. The cross was a matter of almost unspeakable shame, terror, and ignominy. It was a form of punishment reserved for enemies of the empire. No Roman citizen could be crucified; only those in occupied nations, and only for crimes of treason, rebellion, or impiety against the god-emperor, were crucified. The two men crucified with Jesus, called “thieves” in some translations of the gospels, were in fact insurrectionists, fomenting public discord, disturbers of the sacred

## *Pax Romana*

. To think that Mark or Matthew or any NT writer would use “take up the cross” in the personalistic sense we hear it used today (“caring for my mother is my cross”) is just not an option.

“Taking up the cross” is being aware of the cost of choosing to live in the reign of God. Living with

## *Abba*

as one’s sole ruler will bring one into conflict with whatever powers claim that obeisance of us here, and will inevitably, in some way, if we are truly aware and faithful to the gospel, lead us to the real cross. It’s a kind of witness to how few people really live the gospel, and how many of them aren’t actually Catholic, that so few of us are killed. Me for instance. Like the victims of the Borg in

## *Star Trek: The Next Generation*

, we have been completely assimilated. We think that being a good Christian and being a good citizen are completely compatible. We will even go off to war and kill other Christians, or vote for people who advocate same, or buy stock in companies that work people for slave wages and do violence to the ecosystems of earth and the economy of the world. Sorry. “Taking up the cross” doesn’t mean putting up with the asshole in the cubicle across the aisle. It means not putting up with the structures and strategies of human empires that keep people enslaved to each other, hopeless, homeless, hungry, and poor. It means rejecting “trickle down economics” in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It means all of that, and enduring the ridicule and even hatred and violence that befall prophets and whistleblowers who dare speak the word that the emperor has no clothes, nor morals, nor God.



It's not new at all for Christians to misunderstand the cross, as we heard in Sunday's gospel. Peter is an eyewitness, with the twelve, to the life, words, and work of Jesus. But it is Peter himself who, even on the very tail of his insight about Jesus's identity, misses the meaning of it. He has his own way of seeing what "messiah" means. For just coming to that conclusion alone, Jesus has given him credit for insight beyond his own ability to know. But now, when he attempts to impose his meaning of "messiah" on Jesus, who himself has been growing into a meaning for that term and that calling, Jesus calls

*Kephas*

(the rock, Peter) a

*skandalon*

(stumbling-block), and worse,

*satanas*

, that is, someone testing his commitment to the path of God. Jesus, it seems, has come to identify messiah with the "servant of God" who brings good news to the poor, with the "son of man", a human being who restores divine justice to the world in God's time, with the peaceful anti-king of Zechariah who rides into Jerusalem in humility on a beast of burden. Peter is still thinking "son of David," a restoration of monarchy, a military victor, a king to stand against and vanquish Caesar with Caesar's own weapons.



One of the reasons we imagine that Jesus's calling Peter "satan" was actually *ipsissima verba*

, the actual words Jesus spoke, is the "criterion of embarrassment." That is to say, it would not have been in Peter's, who was the leader of the Christian community after the death of Jesus and James, best interest to have the text preserved. Likewise the story from two weeks ago of the pagan woman who changes Jesus's mind about who his ministry was for, about how big God might be, and who should benefit from God's goodness. This kind of truth-telling might be considered embarrassing or even scandalous in a community that values perfection or sinlessness as possible for human beings, or who imagine perfection does not allow for growth. (If it is natural for human beings, for any life, to "grow," then is perfect humanity one who grows well, rather than one who just appears, or gets some special kind of map?) So I think we have to deal with this stuff, and not spiritualize it too much. Why do these two stories exist right in the middle of Matthew, and side by side? I think it all has to do with Jesus's emerging self-identity, and the alignment of that messianic sense with the prophecy of Isaiah, the apocalypse of Daniel, and the natural outcome of facing down the powers of Rome and their Jerusalem collaborators. It wasn't a mystic vision that allowed Jesus to predict his death: it was the natural order of things. It had happened hundreds of times before.

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you  
and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me.  
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.  
Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

So, I guess it's OK for us not to be there yet, if it took his own disciples a while  
— maybe a lifetime — to catch on. That's why St. Paul's words in the second  
reading struck me, strongest at my fourth mass of the day. It's all a matter of  
growth. Even Jesus had to grow into the meaning of

*metanoia*

, of a change of heart, of personality, so complete that it means turning away  
from Caesar and walking anew in the empire of God. Even Jesus's heart had to  
expand as he wandered, prayed, ate, taught, and interacted with people. And so I  
heard, like you did I'm sure, St. Paul speaking to me from just twenty or thirty  
years after the death of Jesus with words that both push me along and console  
me in my slow progress:

Do not conform yourselves to this age  
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,  
that you may discern what is the will of God,  
what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Have a good week. As John Shea suggests, don't think of difficult people in your  
life as your “cross” — think of them as opportunities to live in love, to be like  
God, to enter into

*agape*

. Little by little, the cross will make itself known, and it will not be  
psychological or symbolic. Real wood, real nails, real death sentence, real death.  
No need to look for it. If we live in the reign of God, the cross will find us. Faith  
tells us that, when the moment comes, God will be in that moment, and we'll  
have enough experience in

*kenosis*

and

*agape*

in our Christian life that the impossibility of anything but the fullness of life and light beyond the cross will give us the courage to take it up. We've been marked with that sign since before our baptism, it is branded on our soul. Seeing it, up close and personal, even horrendous, leering, and full of bravado, will seem somehow familiar, somehow like coming home.

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