

NewEvangelists.org

new  
evangelists  
monthly

*November*  
*2017*

# **New Evangelists Monthly #59**

November 2017

- [\*\*New Evangelists Monthly - November 2017\*\*](#)

# New Evangelists Monthly - November 2017

- [Forward](#)  
...about this eBook
- [The Mandate Takes a Hit. That's Not Enough.](#)  
Leaven for the Loaf by Ellen Kolb
- [Most Amazing Love of Jesus](#)  
A Spiritual Journey by David Wong
- [Self-Preservation](#)  
The Mission of Saint Thorlak
- [The Protestant Revolt: Should Catholics Commemorate 500 Years of Divorce and Heresy?](#)  
Catholic Champion Blog by Matthew Bellisario
- [Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness](#)  
Plot Line and Sinkers (Ellen Gable, Author) by Ellen Gable Hrkach
- [Rest ~ 31 Days of Adirondack Memories](#)  
Campfires and Cleats by Chris Capolino
- [Creamy PB](#)  
With Us Still by John Schroeder
- [Mystical Union Is Not a Fairytale - It's Child's Play](#)  
joy of nine9 by Melanie Jean Juneau
- [Repay To God What Belongs to God](#)  
Creo en Dios! by Susan Stabile
- [Standing Strong: Going All In with the West Brothers](#)  
Carolyn Astfalk, Author by Carolyn Astfalk
- [Thoughts on NFP: Fifteen Years and Seven Kids Later](#)  
Martin Family Moments by Colleen Martin
- [Being Practical About Distributism](#)  
Practical Distributism by David Cooney
- [Understanding and discernment as well as LOVE versus LAW](#)  
In the Breaking of the Bread by Fr. Gilles Surprenant

- [\*\*A Mother's Prayers are answered giving us Two Great Saints and a new Marian Feast Day\*\*](#)  
It Makes Sense to Me by Larry Peterson
- [\*\*Whose Image Do You Worship?\*\*](#)  
Christ's Faithful Witness by Fr. John Paul Shea
- [\*\*Losing a Child\*\*](#)  
Lord, Make Me a Saint by Jamie Jo
- [\*\*Of Memory, Metanoia, and Manslaughter\*\*](#)  
God-Haunted Lunatic by Rick Becker
- [\*\*The Feodorovskaya Mother of God ~ In the Thicket\*\*](#)  
Pauca Verba by Fr. Stephen Morris
- [\*\*Service and Participation\*\*](#)  
Gentle Reign by Roy Cooney
- [\*\*Lost Time: Resting Before St. Michael the Archangel\*\*](#)  
The Frank Friar by Fr. Nicholas Blackwell
- [\*\*Holding On To Hope\*\*](#)  
Sunflower Sojourn by Lianna Mueller
- [\*\*Thank You For Coming!\*\*](#)  
Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation by Michael Seagriff
- [\*\*Time for a Real Solution\*\*](#)  
On the Road to Damascus by Robert Collins
- [\*\*Learning From Experience\*\*](#)  
Shifting My Perspective by Claire McGarry
- [\*\*More on Luther and the Holy See\*\*](#)  
Catholic Deacon by Deacon Scott Dodge
- [\*\*Our Miscarriage Story\*\*](#)  
A Couple of Catholics by Pat and Nicole Padley
- [\*\*Lessons from the Vineyard on how to grow in the Christian life through obedience, self-denial and prayer\*\*](#)  
One Pearl by Victoria Clarizio
- [\*\*A Cause of Celebration\*\*](#)  
Theologyisaverb by Elizabeth Reardon
- [\*\*Peaches and Cream\*\*](#)

Grace to Paint by Sister Maresa Lilley

- [\*\*Martin Luther's Teachings on the Blessed Virgin Mary\*\*](#)  
by Tom Perna
- [\*\*That they may be one - thoughts on Reformation Day\*\*](#)  
by Margaret Felice
- [\*\*Saintly Inspiration for Kids\*\*](#)  
FranciscanMom by Barbara Szyszkiewicz
- [\*\*Our Lady of Sorrows\*\*](#)  
Notes from an Unconventional Catholic by Carolee Gifford
- [\*\*Buy My House!\*\*](#)  
Quiet Consecration by Leslie Klinger
- [\*\*Boldly Catholic\*\*](#)  
Boldly Catholic by Rick Rice
- [\*\*Saint Luke, Gospel Writer and Doctor; Evangelist for God\*\*](#)  
by Virginia Lieto
- [\*\*Comfort\*\*](#)  
Bible Meditations by Barbara Hosbach
- [\*\*14 Thoughts on Properly Understanding Church Teaching\*\*](#)  
If I Might Interject
- [\*\*Of Taxes and God\*\*](#)  
Walking the Path by Christian Miraglia
- [\*\*Solemn Latin Mass for Feast of Christ the King\*\*](#)  
Servimus unum Deum by Julian Barkin
- [\*\*Eschatological Thoughts\*\*](#)  
From the Pulpit of my Life by Ruth Ann Pilney
- [\*\*Living like Martha AND Mary\*\*](#)  
The Hahn Family Blog by Jim Hahn
- [\*\*St. Paul and the Painted Ladies\*\*](#)  
Mere Observations by Jeff Walker
- [\*\*Dancing Before God\*\*](#)  
everyday Ann by Cas Everts
- [\*\*Reunions\*\*](#)  
Do Not Be Anxious

- [\*\*Wanting\*\*](#)  
bukas palad by Fr. Adrian Danker
- [\*\*The hidden meaning of "What good can come from Nazareth?"\*\*](#)  
by Scott Smith
- [\*\*100 October 13ths Ago: The Miracle of the Sun\*\*](#)  
V for Victory! by Anita Moore
- [\*\*Can Coconut-Pecan Frosting Save the World?\*\*](#)  
Epiphanies of Beauty by Christine
- [\*\*Are you a self-made man who worships his maker?\*\*](#)  
by David Torkington

## Forward

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The Mandate Takes a Hit. That's Not Enough. [at Leaven for the Loaf]

Nine months after taking office, five months after assuring the Little Sisters of the Poor that they could quit fearing fines, the Administration of President Donald Trump has announced a rollback of the HHS contraceptive mandate. (See [here](#) for my earlier coverage of the mandate.)

From Fox News:

*The Trump administration on Friday announced a major rollback of the ObamaCare contraceptive mandate, granting what officials called “full protection” to a wide range of companies and organizations that claim a “religious or moral objection” to providing the coverage.*

*The mandate, which has been the subject of multiple legal challenges, has required employers that provide health insurance to cover contraceptives. Under the existing policy, churches and houses of worship were exempt, while religious-affiliated groups that object had to allow a third-party administrator or insurer to handle birth control coverage. The 2014 Hobby Lobby decision expanded exemptions to for-profit “closely held” corporations.*

*But under the new policy unveiled Friday, the Trump administration is expanding the protections to any nonprofit group, non-publicly traded company, or higher education institution with religious or moral objections — and making the third-party provision optional for groups with “sincerely held” religious beliefs.*

(Full Fox News post

[here](#)

.)

I'm pleased that the President has followed through on a commitment he could have carried out his first day in office. Better late than never. Maybe he has no roots on this, and it took time for the people around him to put the ducks in a

row. Notice the arm's length language of the news report: *Trump administration did this, officials said that.*

I'm grateful. That's simple courtesy and a measure of positive reinforcement. But I'm not going to grovel over the recognition of my rights of conscience and religious liberty that should never have been abrogated in the first place. It's not as though the President is doing me a favor.

Actually, today's action does sound like someone thinks there are favors to be dispensed. The news coverage speaks of exemptions, protection, and rollback. Selected entities are added to the list of exempt organizations. No mention of the First Amendment, at least in the initial breaking news update. It's the First Amendment that's at issue, which is something the mandate's supporters have ferociously denied since 2012.

Why does the mandate stand at all? Why is there still anything to be exempted from?

The contraceptive mandate came out of Obamacare's definition of birth control for women as "preventive care." In a manner beyond anything the rankest sexist could have dreamed, Obamacare made it government policy that women are broken and need to be fixed. The normal functioning of a woman's body was something to be "prevented." Contraception was shifted from being a matter of choice to being a matter of public policy, forcing employers who chose to offer health insurance coverage to be involved in employees' birth control decisions. Nothing ever put employers into employees' bedrooms quite like the contraceptive mandate.

It's to the everlasting credit of the American Catholic bishops that they recognized the mandate's threat to religious liberty. Among other things, they knew that the Catholic health care system – which provides care to more women than any other provider in the nation – could be fined out of existence by the mandate.

The mandate originally came with exemptions for some politically-favored companies and organizations. Hobby Lobby and other plaintiffs later earned a Supreme Court victory that was extremely narrow, releasing closely-held companies from the mandate. President Trump told the Little Sisters of the Poor earlier this year that they could consider themselves free from fear of being fined for not wishing to pay for insurance coverage for employees' birth control. At

least fifty other lawsuits are pending against the mandate; I don't know how many just became moot.

Today, the mandate took a serious hit. It's still staggering around, though. The only way to kill it is to abandon the policy that gave rise to it in the first place. Stop treating the suppression of women's fertility as "preventive care." Stop expecting "free" contraception. When "free" means compelling financial support from people with religious objections to contraception, then "free" is too expensive.

Today's action from the Trump Administration is long overdue. It's the biggest hit on the mandate since Hobby Lobby. The mandate's foundation remains in place, though. For religious resisters to the mandate, First Amendment rights are still at risk. May today be a spark to renewed assertion of those rights.

---

This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2017/10/06/the-mandate-takes-a-hit-thats-not-enough/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Most Amazing Love of Jesus [at A Spiritual Journey]

Jesus is all mine, yet I want everyone to have him. I wish to be the one able to love him the most, yet I would rejoice if everyone else can love him more than I. It just shows that the amazing love of Christ for us can make us completely selfless. We cannot live without water or air, but we'll surely perish forever without his love!

---

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2017/10/most-amazing-love-of-jesus.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).



Openness in relationships is about the same as it is in game play. The price of openness is vulnerability, and the payoff is interconnected participation. Self-preservation, on the other hand, is a safer way to operate, at the expense of sharing yourself and experiencing others more fully.



The word “preservation” itself has its origins in the concept of sealing things against disease and decay. It was originally used in the context of extending the safe shelf life of food, so you can get the sense of what that might entail: pressed, isolated, airtight packing; curing and dehydrating meat; adding agents such as salt to inhibit the growth of bacteria or to keep foods dry; or boiling, followed by canning or freezing. The premise is to destroy things which break the food down and then to create a breach-proof barrier against future agents of disease.

Self-preservation, obviously, is a different sort of concept, referring to an act to protect our bodies and spirits against attack or malaise. We hear about it during times of extremes. Self-preservation during war is a necessary and intelligent course of action. Self-preservation in times of high duress is also reasonable and appropriate. First responders and emergency workers often use techniques to lessen the intensity of the emotions they feel on scene so that they can function more rationally and with the focus needed to operate under horrible and tragic conditions. There are also times when self-preservation becomes necessary in our relationships, particularly if we find ourselves being abused or witnessing abuse. It happens.



For a role play simulation, these outlooks are fine and interesting to contemplate and explore. It seems, though, that there is an imbalance of probability between the two. The extreme conditions leading to self-preservation are, for the most part, much less likely to occur than the ordinary conditions which lend themselves to openness. Even first responders, who see extremes on a daily basis, have a day off now and then. It seems disproportionate to have these as choices for our modes of operation if self-preservation is more of a situational variable and openness is more of a long-term habit.

Unless, of course, they are, in fact, equal.



The stark truth is that there are many people who operate in self-preservation mode routinely. Some have had traumatic events in their past which have robbed them of the ability to trust. Some are highly sensitive people who experience their emotions and relationships so intensely at baseline that they need some form of modulation to cope and function well. Some are people who have adopted these habits so gradually over time that they may not even be aware they are using them.

If we were to create a set of pamphlets on “How to Operate in Openness Mode”

and “How to Operate in Self-Preservation Mode,” it might surprise people to see how quickly they recognize their patterns. In lieu of pamphlets, we’ll give you the basic rundown of the operating rules for each mode in a hypothetical scenario.

Two guests are sharing a meal put on by their mutual friend who is hosting them. Toward the end of the meal, one guest leaves the table unexpectedly, abruptly getting his coat. “I have to go,” he says. “Thanks for dinner!”

As he leaves, the remaining guest and the host have two different reactions.

The remaining guest, who operates in Openness Mode, is confused by the surprising departure of the other guest. This person actively extends herself to understand what happened. She discerns, considers, observes, ponders. She does not have any lack of emotion – in fact, she’s rather upset, because she knows the other person quite well and feels miffed that he left without any warning or explanation. She wonders if she said something offensive. She worries. She is a bit irritated, because the other guest had something important to give her for a project they had been working on, and now she is left feeling frustrated. She runs all kinds of possible ideas through her mind. Maybe he became ill. Maybe he forgot something. Maybe he was embarrassed. Maybe she just cannot know right now. No matter what, she seeks the best possible interpretation, aware that it could be that he has not worked at all on the project and that he is acting very rudely in his behavior. She is open to his side of the story. She will remain as optimistic as the situation will allow.

The host, on the other hand, who operates in Self-Preservation Mode, is livid. He knows better than to trust people. He is always on alert and prepared for the worst case scenario. He is ready to attack or defend, in a state of perpetual presumption. He will not allow himself to be hurt, used or let down. He spends the next ten minutes angrily insulting the guest who left, unable to believe he went to all this effort for someone as ungrateful as that. Furthermore, he never had much use for him anyway. He remembers several other times this man was reluctant to help, and he is not surprised he acted in such an offensive way tonight.

Who knows what really happened? Who knows what will happen? Will the abrupt absentee return briefly with the packet for his friend, saying “Oops! Almost forgot!” Will he act like nothing happened in a few days? Is he even

aware of how his behavior came across?



Now take the host's outlook and extend it across every other possible scenario. The habit of assuming the worst is very easily nurtured. People with this outlook are rooted in fear and distrust. While it does keep them from being taken advantage of, this safety from hurt is also a safety from love, mercy, need and engagement.

Put another way, people who adopt the regular habit of self-preservation are immune from disease... because they keep themselves in an emotional vacuum. Just like a good, well-sealed mason jar.

Some of the characteristics of items which have been in a state of preservation for longer than intended:

- Dried out
- Frozen stiff
- Brittle
- Bitter
- Hardened
- Shriveled
- Unusable

Food this far gone is usually thrown out and replaced. This is not an option for

people. Nor should the spiritual state of our hearts ever get to this point.

To be fair, we need to acknowledge there are just as many risks that come with being open and “unpreserved.” People who assume the best are at risk for being hurt... being disappointed... being let down... looking foolish... looking naïve... and being wrong.



That’s the chance you take with discernment. People who are open allow in all kinds of possibilities, including the ones that are incorrect, and even sometimes dangerous. People who trust indiscriminately are especially vulnerable to danger and exploitation. Discernment is key. Openness does not require one to be a stooge or a doormat; it calls for discernment, a sifting of facts and an active search for that which is useful amidst the lint and clutter.

We could say that openness is a willingness to feel pain for the sake of finding the good... and that self-preservation is a pre-emptive rejection of anything that might hurt.

We could say that openness is an act of humility... and that self-preservation is a bold stand of pride.

Openness says, “I don’t understand... I need you to show me.” Self-preservation says, “I don’t need you to protect or defend me, I can do it myself.”

Notice which says “I need.”



There is a time to preserve, and a time to be open. Think about what these concepts mean, and we'll put them in the game – along with our last deck – next week.

**PRAY:** Our prayer this week is a look at Sacred Scripture.  
Read Luke 17:32-33.

**CONTEMPLATE:** What does this passage say to you about self-preservation?

**RELATE:** Carefully notice your interactions and attitudes this week, and see which mode of operation surfaces most. Do so with a spirit of wonder and not dread or fear. If you find that you do not like what you discover, then, thanks be to God – you now understand others who may be operating this way, in a manner you did not see before.

---

---

This contribution is available at <http://mission-of-saint-thorlak.weebly.com/mission-activities/missionary-thought-for-the-week-of-october-9-2017-self-preservation>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## **The Protestant Revolt: Should Catholics Commemorate 500 Years of Divorce and Heresy? [at Catholic Champion Blog]**

It is my opinion that the most detrimental destruction to the Sacrament of Marriage over the past 500 years has been the result of the Protestant revolt. Unfortunately the horrific event of the revolt is about to be celebrated by the Protestants as well as many ignorant Catholics. Some Catholic churches and Cathedrals are being opened to Protestants so they can celebrate their 500 years of heresy within their walls. This would make the Saints of old cringe in horror! We have entered a new era of an open door policy to the horrors of Protestant error. The assault on marriage today by numerous clergy in the Church reeks of the Protestant acceptance of divorce.

The consequences of divorce are numerous. While the separated spouses seek to enjoy life with a new "partner" children are left in the dust of loneliness, confusion, anger, resentment, guilt and often times deep depression. Divorce has been the catalyst for countless confused and lost souls. God created marriage first for procreation and the education and raising of children. The bond from the Sacrament of matrimony implies an obligation to one another and a right to one another's body. This is clear from Sacred Scripture and unanimous testimony of the Church Fathers, Saints and papal statements. For example, the Ecumenical Council of Florence states clearly,

"The seventh is the sacrament of matrimony, which is a sign of the union of Christ and the church according to the words of the apostle: This sacrament is a great one, but I speak in Christ and in the church. The efficient cause of matrimony is usually mutual consent expressed in words about the present. A threefold good is attributed to matrimony. The first is the procreation and bringing up of children for the worship of God." (Session 8—22 November 1439)

Thus it seems rational that when the marital bond is broken it is the children who often suffer the most. Children from divorced marriages often find themselves also later in life committing the same mistake of their parents. As we know, sin begets sin! In our modern culture with a divorce rate well over 50%, we see that

many of our children are like rudderless ships on a stormy sea, giving themselves over to many types of vice looking for worldly things to give their lives meaning. They are becoming violent, distant and often isolated. They are more likely to post pictures and contact friends on pathetic social media applications such as Facebook rather than developing social skills in person to person contact. As a result they form few lasting bonds with others, and their relationships with their family members often grow cold. Often their view of the Catholic faith grows cold as they see the hypocrisy in their own families, which are the source of scandal. It is no mystery then that revolt against the teachings of Christ is corrupting the youth in our age.



The secondary end or purpose of marriage is the bond of mutual assistance and a remedy for concupiscence. The spouses help one another to live holy lives by mutual correction, encouragement and help one another in moral and material matters. By the very fact that marriage is indissoluble it offers the spouses a glimpse into the eternal bond with God. As the couple remains faithful to one another they also overcome their weakness in concupiscence. "...if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to be burnt. But to them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband." (1 Cor 7:9-10) Thus the companionship, the unitive bond and mutual help is often strengthened as a result of the first end, the begetting of children, but can obviously exist without children. However, when the spouses separate and enter into an unlawful union with someone who is not their spouse, they then heap grave consequences upon their heads and their children by committing the mortal sin of adultery.

Those who live in a state of adulterous relations have been forbidden from receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist. (Familiaris Consortio, 84) Being that the bond of marriage is indissoluble no man can break that bond, not even the Church.

...whatever marriage is said to be contracted, either it is so contracted that it is really a true marriage, in which case it carries with it that enduring bond which by divine right is inherent in every true marriage; or it is thought to be contracted without that perpetual bond, and in that case there is no marriage, but an illicit union opposed of its very nature to the divine law, which therefore cannot be entered into or maintained."

And if this stability seems to be open to exception, however rare the exception may be, as in the case of certain natural marriages between unbelievers, or amongst Christians in the case of those marriages which though valid have not been consummated, that exception does not depend on the will of men nor on that of any merely human power, but on divine law, of which the only guardian and interpreter is the Church of Christ. However, not even this power can ever affect for any cause whatsoever a Christian marriage which is valid and has been consummated, for as it is plain that here the marriage contract has its full completion, so, by the will of God, there is also the greatest firmness and indissolubility which may not be destroyed by any human authority.

(Casti Connubii 31st day of December, of the year 1930)

The Church's teaching here is clear, either there is no marriage, or there is an indissoluble marriage. There is no in between state. If a declaration of nullity is declared then no marriage existed, and this must be decided by the Church authority and no one else including the spouses themselves. Pope Leo the Great famously demanded that a women who thought her spouse had died in war who married another man demanded that she return to her true spouse once he returned and was found to be alive. He also said that the women would have to return to her true spouse and sever herself from the unlawful marriage under the pain of excommunication. (Sacra Theologiae Summa IVB, 213)

Martin Luther being the madcap he was, creating his own religion at will famously decried, "Matrimony not only is thought to be a sacrament with no support of Scripture, but the tradition on which it is claimed to be a sacrament is nothing but a mockery." (De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae) It is also known that Luther thought polygamy was morally acceptable. This made Luther more akin to the pagans than to the Christians. What part of Christ's words, "So they are no longer two but one" did he miss? Did Christ say the three or four are now one? I think not. Like minded charlatans such as Calvin also denied that Christ established marriage as a sacrament. Being deceitful fools they were unable to

established marriage as a sacrament. Being deceitful fools they were unable to see meaning of Matthew 19:3-6 and Ephesians 5:22-32. As a result of these mountebanks the Sacrament of Marriage was destabilized and the Protestant tradition of adultery spread like wildfire everywhere the population fell prey to their malicious heresies.



Luther helped create the snowball that would grow larger and larger by those who followed him. In 1522 Luther brilliantly decided that divorce was acceptable under certain conditions, and that one could marry another if infidelity or abandonment occurred. He also foolishly wanted these decisions to be held in the hands of the secular governments. As a result others such as Zwingli in Zurich established divorce courts and concocted divorce laws. Zwingli also decided that other reasons could also justify divorce and remarriage. This madcap theological invention has thus lead many to commit grave sinful acts of adultery yet thinking they are following Scripture. We all know the tale of the impious adulterer Henry VIII who started his own Church, founded directly on his vice of adultery. This degenerate tradition is one that continues on in all of its retrograde glory in the Anglican Church. Protestantism then did not make the family stronger as many historians have claimed, it has weakened the state of marriage as a result of its heretical theological claims.

What a scandal it is then to see bishops of our Holy Church celebrating the impious madness of the the pretended reformers. What an abomination it is to see our clergy participating in Protestant worship! How can they allow Protestants to celebrate or commemorate their revolt in our churches and cathedrals? This is a madness that papal statements have condemned. As faithful Catholics we also must condemn these actions within our proper boundaries within the Church. Most of us can choose where we go to Mass and where we give our money and time. We can all petition God and the Saints for these sacrilegious acts to stop. We can inform our fellow Catholics of the perennial teachings of the Church with charity and clarity. Finally we can tell our Protestant neighbors about Christ and His one and only Church, the Catholic

Church. As Catholics we do not harbor ill will towards Protestants today, but we long for their return to the Church and the renunciation of the errors of their heresiarchs. Although for many their culpability today is not the same as their founders, we do not want to confirm them in their error nor pretend that all is well. Why pretend that Luther, Calvin and others were upstanding men and thus falsely communicate the idea that we endorse their harmful doctrines? This would be an act of cruelty. Nor would it be an act of charity to lead Catholics to believe their malicious errors.

For these reasons then the Church teaches:

The 1917 Code of Canon Law " It is not permitted at all for the faithful to assist in any active manner at or to have any part in the worship of non-Catholics." (Canon 1258)

"Is it permitted for Catholics to be present at, or to take part in, conventions, gatherings, meetings, or societies of non-Catholics which aim to associate together under a single agreement everyone who, in any way, lays claim to the name Christian? In the negative!... It is clear, therefore, why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics, There is only one way in which the unity of Christians may be fostered, and that is by furthering the return to the one true Church of Christ those who are separated from her. " ([Pope Pius XI, Mortalium Animos](#))

"How does a Catholic sin against faith? A Catholic sins against Faith by Apostasy, heresy, indifferentism and by taking part in non-Catholic worship."(Catechism of the Council of Trent)

"If any ecclesiastic or layman shall go into the synagogue of the Jews or to the meeting-houses of the heretics to join in prayer with them, let them be deposed and deprived of communion If any Bishops or Priest or Deacon shall join in prayer with heretics, let him be suspended from Communion" (Third Council of Constantinople.)

"I will not pray with you, nor shall you pray with me; neither will I say 'Amen' to your prayers, nor shall you to mine"  
(Saint. Margaret Clitherow before she was pressed to death by the Protestant heretics.)



Some Catholics are making the case that we are not really celebrating the Reformation but "commemorating" it. They claim we are commemorating reconciliation with them and that we are recognizing the great achievements of the Reformation. What achievements would those be? What reconciliation? Finally, many Catholics are justifying common prayer together with the Protestants claiming that the prayers are prepared in order to be applicable to both Catholic and Protestant beliefs. This however can never be justified. Just because there is nothing in the prayers that are against Catholic beliefs does not justify a participation with those who are not of the same believing, worshiping community, the Church.

Father Thomas Crean, OP explains,

Now to consider the second alternative : a proponent of ecumenical worship might well accept that such worship was not formally Catholic, yet go on to argue that it remains nevertheless untouched by pre-conciliar strictures against forbidden *communicatio in sacris*. Such strictures, he might say, apply only to those forms of non-Catholic worship which manifest adherence to a non-Catholic religion. Ecumenical worship, he might add, may indeed not express adherence to the Catholic religion; yet nor does it express adherence to a non-Catholic religion – for it does not express adherence to any religion. It is precisely designed to allow different Christians to worship God together without expressing adherence to a common understanding of Christianity. It is therefore legitimate.

Such a view is plausible; but is it tenable ? Can there really be a public, divine worship which manifests adherence to no definite religion ?

Let us consider what a human being, whatever his religion, seeks by engaging in a religious act. He is seeking to put himself or to maintain himself in a right relation with the Deity: that is what makes his act

...in a right relation with the Deity. That is what makes his act religious. He is not seeking merely to express certain convictions about God, as someone might do by filling in a questionnaire – he is seeking to come into the presence of God, and to be ‘ordered’ to God as God Himself wills. So by engaging in a given religious act, a person expresses his desire to be in a right relationship with God by means of it. But now let us assume that the religious act in question is a public act, i.e. the act of a community. By engaging in this essentially public act, the person would now be expressing his desire to be in a right relationship with God in or by means of this community. For since it is the community which is the subject of the religious act in question, by becoming a part of the acting community, he signifies that it has, for him, the power to perform a properly religious act, that is, to put him in a due relation to God. He may not in fact believe this – but it is what his act, as such, signifies.

Common worship need not imply a complete agreement on all matters concerning God and man. Thus within the Catholic Church, a Scotist and a Thomist may happily worship together. But if the foregoing reasoning is correct, common worship does imply an agreement that the community which thus worships together is a community in which God wills to be worshipped, and which is able to put one in a due relation with Him. In this sense, common worship does imply a common religion.

The Catholic, however, believes that it is in the visible Catholic Church, and only there, that God wills to be worshipped and that he can save his soul. He does not believe that any other community can bring him into a right relationship with God or maintain him in such a relation, except the Church. By engaging in ecumenical worship, therefore, he would seem to be in a contradictory position; he would be manifesting a religious commitment to a community which he believes has for him no salvific power, no power to put him in a due relationship with God. His act, as a public religious act, implies that he attributes such a religious power to the community; his faith forbids him to believe this. For he believes that if he left the Catholic Church, even to engage in exclusively ecumenical worship, he would lose his soul.

For a detailed explanation of the illegitimacy of Catholics participating in non-Catholic forms of worship I recommend the Dominican theologian Thomas Crean's article,

## 'Praying With Non-Catholics — Is it Possible?'



Should Catholics then be engaged in anyway shape or form in commemorating or celebrating the Protestant revolt? Should we be causing scandal by allowing them to pray in our churches? Should we pray in common with them as if our difference in beliefs do not matter? I think the answer is clearly no, we should not. We should be working to bring the Protestants back into the Church, not by acting as if our commonalities are the most important reality, but by making it clear that their existence outside the unity of the one Catholic Church is the true topic of concern. This is what true charity consists, willing the good of the other, not obscuring the good of the other. We cannot expect to win souls over to the Church while pretending to honor or commemorate division, or even give the appearance of such.

We must mention another fruitful cause of evil by which the Church is afflicted at present, namely: Indifferentism, that vicious manner of thinking which mushrooms on all sides owing to the wiles of malicious men, and which holds that the eternal salvation of the soul can be obtained by the profession of any faith, provided a man's morals be good and decent ... Let them beware who preach that the gates of Heaven are open to every religion! Let them seriously consider the testimony of the Savior that some are against Christ because they they are not with Christ, that they scatter who do not gather with Him, and therefore without doubt they will perish in eternity unless they hold to the Catholic faith and observe it whole and inviolate. (Pope Gregory XVI)

This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone. It spreads ruin in sacred and civil affairs, though some repeat over and over again with the greatest impudence that some advantage accrues to religion from it. "But the death of the soul is worse than freedom

of error," as Augustine was wont to say.<sup>21</sup> When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin. Then truly "the bottomless pit"<sup>22</sup> is open from which John saw smoke ascending which obscured the sun, and out of which locusts flew forth to devastate the earth. Thence comes transformation of minds, corruption of youths, contempt of sacred things and holy laws..

(Pope Gregory XVI, [On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism](#))



---

This contribution is available at <http://catholicchampion.blogspot.com/2017/10/the-protestant-revolt-should-catholics.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness [at Plot Line and Sinkers (Ellen Gable, Author)]



Image copyright Ellen Gable Hrkach Please do not use without permission

Today is [Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day](#) but the entire month of October is devoted to Infant Loss Remembrance. James and I feel very blessed and grateful to be the parents of five young adult sons (ages 18-30). I also think about the seven precious babies we lost through miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy. This month, we remember in a special way these seven little souls (and intercessors) in heaven.

Here are a few of my reflections on pregnancy loss:

[Among Women Podcast](#) Episode 89 (Pat Gohn interviewed me about miscarriage and pregnancy loss)

[Ecce Ancilla Domini](#), an article on openness to life.

[Five Little Souls in Heaven](#) (This article was written 22 years ago and published in the Nazareth Journal)

[Difficult Anniversaries/Responsible Parenthood](#)

One of the themes of my first novel, [Emily's Hope](#), is pregnancy loss.

This excerpt describes Emily's loss of baby "Seth."

"I need to push." She wanted so desperately not to push, to allow her baby to stay inside of her, and for her to continue to nourish and nurture her child, but her body wouldn't allow that. She pushed only twice and her small child was born. Emily heard a sound like a kitten crying, then realized that her baby had let out a small, soft, weak cry.

As soon as the umbilical cord was cut, the nurse immediately carried the baby across the room as the pediatric staff attempted to work on their child. Emily and Jason sat quietly, their hearts heavy with emotion. A few minutes later, she felt another contraction and her placenta was delivered. She could hear a nurse referring to "him," and realized that their child was another boy. After a few minutes, the doctor brought him back, his small form still hidden in the blue hospital blanket. He spoke in a hushed, almost apologetic voice, "There is nothing we can do for him."

He handed the tiny one-pound baby boy to his mother. Jason held onto Emily's shoulder and watched as she cradled the smallest baby they had ever seen. He was so perfect and looked identical to their oldest son, Jake. His small body was covered with minute white hairs. He was perfect as he struggled to breathe. He was perfect as he opened his mouth to cry. Emily held her new son as gently as she could. Jason reached over and poured a few drops of water on him and said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Emily could feel the vibration of his tiny heart beating fast.

The nurse came in with a Polaroid camera and asked if they wanted her to take a photo of their child. Emily nodded as the nurse took a photo of her and Jason and their tiny son. She gazed in awe at this miniature human being and marveled at the fact that even though he was tiny, he was so perfect. His little hands looked like a doll's hands. She removed the baby blanket and laid his small, warm body on her chest. She could feel his heart beating rapidly. After several minutes, she wrapped him again in the small blue blanket.

Then, in an instant, he was still. She could feel that his heart had stopped and he wasn't breathing, but he continued to feel warm and soft. He looked like a sleeping angel.

(End of excerpt.)

If you have lost a baby through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth or infant death, please click on the link above [“Baby Loss”](#) for resources and helpful links.

In memory of our seven little souls in heaven:

Baby Hrkach Twins (June 1986)

Baby Hrkach (February 1991)

Baby Hrkach (June 1991)

Mary Elizabeth Hrkach (June 1993)

Seth Hrkach (April 1998)

Lucy Hrkach (March 2006)

---

This contribution is available at <http://ellengable.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/pregnancy-and-infant-loss-awareness-2017/>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Rest ~ 31 Days of Adirondack Memories [at Campfires and Cleats]

Welcome to day 31,  
the END of  
the #write31days challenge  
and my  
"31 Days of Adirondack Memories" series!!

THANK YOU for sticking with me for a month of  
poetry and reflection on  
our summers in the most magical place  
on Earth!

Today's theme~~ **Rest**

*There is a rickety redwood picnic table. There are bare, sandy feet. There are stacks of books and board games. And up on Route 9, there is the comforting fixture of our American flag waving, though largely unnoticed. There is homemade potato salad and a plate stacked with slices of tomato and cucumber. There are fishing rods leaning by the cabin door; haphazard piles of sandals and flip flops alongside.*

*Today there was dock jumping and row boating and mussel hunting. Then as the sun dipped low behind the mountains ringing Schroon, after a day all too fleeting, there is the whisper-y fragrance of citronella and hickory barbeque and the familiar July crescendo of cicadas.*

*There is the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia, easily spied overhead night after night in the vast, velvety blankness. There is someone randomly asking, "Can anyone spot the Pleiades?" and "Who's up for a game of Trivial Pursuit?"*

*And most vividly, there are hushed, happy voices, familiar lilts and inflections, saying nothing of huge importance, but enveloping me in safe-ness. Just as I*

hope that we are creating a haven that shrouds our kids in much the same...the safety, the memories, the goodness.



My 31 Days of Adirondack Memories

for the #write31days challenge:

*~~ I'm honored that one of my stories is included within~~*

By the way, if your kids are fans of hands-on science and



The \$10/ month offering is good through the end of October.



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!



In this way, I will receive a small commission on the purchase.....  
at no cost to you.

**THANK YOU!**

~Chris



BTW, I'm offering photo services and customized  
photo packages for your blog or business!  
< *Subscribers receive a deep discount!* >

---

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2017/10/rest-31-days-of-adirondack-memories.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Creamy PB [at With Us Still]

It's getting close now, the bottom of the jar. '*Peter Pan Creamy*' peanut butter, to be precise. And I won't mind polishing it off...getting that jar out of the pantry once and for all...so that I can return to my much-preferred variety of the bread spread: '*Extra Crunchy*.'



'Creamy': Code for 'vile slithering smoothness'...

So how did 'Creamy' get into our pantry in the first place? That's one of life's little mysteries.

Actually, it's no mystery at all: My beloved wife bought it a month or two ago, when I put 'peanut butter' on the grocery list. She pretty much bought it *for me*. She never touches the stuff herself—*either* variety, *Creamy* or *Extra Crunchy*.

What *is* a mystery is this: How can the love of my life...the woman to whom I've been married for 38 years...not *know this* about me? How can she *not know* that 'Crunchy' is absolutely, positively, irredeemably, inalterably the peanut-butter-way-to-go?

Remarkable, isn't it – how we can be *mysteries* to each other...even to those to whom we are intimately close?

Heck, we are often mysteries to *ourselves*.

*Profound* mysteries.

And, I suppose, rather *mundane* mysteries, too: Like, ‘*why in tarnation can’t I stop eating so much peanut butter...when I know darn good and well I’m trying to lose a little weight?*’

The prophet Isaiah seems to be wrestling with this sort of human dynamic in the [passage we hear at Mass on Sunday](#) (Is 5: 1-7). He tells of his friend, who poured hours and hours of tender loving care into his vineyard, only to be disappointed at harvest time:

*Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?*

It’s a mystery, isn’t it? We try to be good stewards of our spiritual lives. We say our prayers. We spend our daily quiet time with the Lord. And still, the weeds pop up...the brambles and rootworms appear.

I wonder if part of the issue might revolve around self-reliance. We tend to take great confidence in our strengths as individuals...in our ability – with a little effort and discipline – to *lick this thing*. But perhaps our confidence is misplaced.

I noticed that Sunday’s gospel reading also offers the story of a vineyard [gone to seed](#). Those who first hear the story are inclined toward reaction and retribution as a remedy for the vinegrower: ‘*He will put those wretched men to a wretched death.*’ But the Master seems to have an entirely *different* solution in mind:

Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures: *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...*

Christ, the Cornerstone, offers an alternative to self-reliance. Christ invites us to go deep into Him – and there, perhaps, to gain insight into the profound mystery of self.

When we pause to hear Christ’s voice, in the depths of our conscience, we find the true source of our power. And by staying connected to that Vine, we are released – ever so gently, ever so gradually – from the grip of evil desires and sin.



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

*IHS*

---

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2017/10/07/todays-find-creamy-pb/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## **Mystical Union Is Not a Fairytale - It's Child's Play [at joy of nine9]**

Twenty-five years ago, my husband discovered a book at a Trappist monastery which questioned my basic premise about the nature of reality, rekindled joy in my drooping spirit then challenged me to change and to live in mystical union with Christ. Although many Carmelites might not recommend this book as a valid description of pure Carmelite spirituality, *Guidelines For Mystical Prayer*, by a British Carmelite nun, Ruth Burrows, changed my life.

Sister Ruth Burrows describes Petra, a woman who lives only by faith without any experiences of God, and Claire, a “light on” nun who experiences mystical encounters. Both women know their core identity had shifted from ego-centric to Christ-centric. The Spirit of Jesus lives in them and they live surrounded by the Holy Spirit, plugged into the universal God.

### **Mystical Union IS Possible- Just Open the Window**

We poured over this book, reading it again and again, soaking in every nuance, digging out every morsel, every detail which described this new life. My husband and I were filled with an exuberant joy because we finally we realized our deepest longings could be fulfilled; a simple spiritual life was real, was possible. Indeed, Christ lives in us.

I witnessed a similar epiphany in a brilliant young friend who said he was a confirmed atheist. Although, when I asked Davin what he had read on spirituality or Christianity, he simply replied, “The library!” One day, while attending a small group, we were praying as Davin relaxed on the margins, supposedly just observing. Suddenly, he started to laugh. Our eyes popped open in surprise. The quiet, subdued young man was beaming and started talking quickly, raising his voice in excitement:

I’m hot all over, especially inside my chest. It is like a glowing, warm, golden mist that’s all around me, inside of me ... but it was there all the time; I just couldn’t feel it or see it. It’s like all of a sudden I am plugged into a circuit board of power that has been here the whole time. God is real.

He exists. I can't believe it. Why did I not see something all around me, in my face? Oh and I feel this energy flowing between everyone in this room and connecting to me as well, like electrical currents, like invisible bands or cords. I want to jump up and down and start yelling on the top of my voice that God exists and He is right here.

My young friend had an instantaneous experience of the Mystical Body of Christ, revealed to him with sudden clarity. It was a pure moment of mystical union, even though he was not “worthy”, had not fasted or prayed, had not even wanted such an experience with his logical, brilliant brain. God saw the deepest longing of his heart, a longing he could not even admit to verbally—it was a longing to discover the source of all life, Divine Love

We have all read of saints who claim to live in mystical union with Christ. The image which comes to mind is of a medieval monk, morose and miserable, wearing a hair shirt and living on bread and water. However, I discovered the claims of saints are not bogus but true, and furthermore, it is completely realistic to expect that I too will live joyfully in the Resurrection.

The accounts of the saints might be couched in fanciful, archaic language but they are not allegories or fairytales. This Resurrected life is not a for a select few because humans are wired for a life lived in and through a mystical connection to God.

### **Christ Lives in Me**

The life described by St. Paul so eloquently is actually factual. The life of saints is possible; a simple spiritual life.

”Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.” ([Galatians 2:20](#))

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Life In Christ means as a Christian you must:

recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. ([CCC 1691](#))

Christians are:

”sanctified ... [and] called to be saints,” [[1 Cor 1:2](#)] Christians have become the temple of the *Holy Spirit* [cf. [1 Cor 6:19](#)], having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear ”the fruit of the Spirit” [[Gal 5:22, 25](#)] . Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation [cf. [Eph 4:23](#)]. ([CCC 1695](#))

I craved the life of an intense regime of self-sacrifice as a consecrated, contemplative religious. When God called me to marriage and to be a mother, I really did feel like I was taking second best. Then, twenty years ago, a consecrated, lay contemplative who served in a listening house, said to me, ”You really have been given the best of both worlds. You are married with children yet you are living the contemplative life.”

Her response still brings tears to my eyes. To live a childlike spirituality of joy is not easy for a modern-day adult. I have been through decades of counselling and spiritual direction to allow Jesus to heal me, and save me from myself, my fears, and my ego. I have decades yet to travel through. There are tears in my eyes now because so few understand the little way of surrender. It was my children who stripped me and formed my spirituality.

### **Child’s Play**

Christ offers even adults an easy way to commune with Him. Relax. Give up striving. Surrender to His love and let it saturate every cell of your body. Then simply let His love flow through you. It ends up being a long journey to such carefree lifestyle because pride and ego get in the way. It is so simple that it seems complicated to our adult, logical minds.

No wonder Jesus praises children,

I assure you,” He said, ‘unless you are converted and become like children, you will never get into the kingdom from heaven’ [[Matthew 18:4](#)]

Union with the living God is child’s play. Listen to this debate between two of my pre-schoolers.

It was early evening. We often played musical beds at bedtime because the

younger children liked the security of a sibling or two falling asleep with them, especially when older brothers and sisters were still up and having fun. So it happened that I was laying down on Emily's bed nursing an infant while she played with my hair and sucked her thumb. Five-year-old David was almost asleep across the room. His breathing was slow and deep. The only other sound in the peaceful room came from a fan that created just enough white noise to drown out the other kid's voices.

David suddenly sat straight up in bed, popped his eyes open and yelled excitedly, "Someone just called my name. I think it was God!"

Emily took her thumb out of her mouth and lisped, "Who is God?"

I turned my head to look at her and smiled, "You know, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Emily was still puzzled, "You mean the priest at church?"

"No", I responded, "The God that fills the whole universe."

Emily took her thumb out of her mouth and said very dismissively, "Oh, *Him*. I know *Him*." Then she closed her eyes and stuck her thumb back in her mouth. Discussion closed.

I barely held in my laughter. This little squirt took for granted her close relationship with the Living God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God is close to babies and little children. His relationship with them is not complicated, as natural as breathing. They are simply His children; He loves them and they reflect love back.

David interrupted and added joyfully, "Well, He called my name!"

Emily opened her eyes and stated very authoritatively but in a nasal, little girl voice, "It was just your imagination, Daaave." Then she closed her eyes and started sucking her thumb again.

David was upset. I countered her statement, "It could be God, Emily. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts and does communicate with us." David was satisfied and he lay back down to sleep. Emily just closed her eyes in dismal and popped her thumb back in her mouth.

I was astounded, one of my preschoolers had heard the voice of God and the other took a relation with the Heavenly Father completely in her stride as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Maybe a deep connection with Christ is natural; adults just complicate the simplicity of God. The problem is tapping into and living out from my core where God has inscribed His fingerprint on my heart. It is hidden in my deepest self. Actually, if we can block out our own ego and selfishness, and simply stop and listen, we too can hear the voice of Christ and allow Him to draw us close to His heart. The experience of little children and the saints are really true. If you are a secret cynic, or simply someone like me who tried to no avail to connect to God with only my own strength, why don't you give God the permission to save you and transform you into a normal Christian?

---

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.blog/2017/10/20/mystical-union-is-not-a-fairytale-its-childs-play-2/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Repay To God What Belongs to God [at Creo en Dios!]

I'm home after having given a preached Ignatian retreat at "my happy place" this weekend – the Jesuit Retreat House on Lake Winnebago. It was a grace-filled weekend and I am always filled with gratitude at the end of the retreat.

This morning I preached at the closing Mass of the retreat, the Gospel for which was the scene in Matthew's Gospel where the Herodians and Pharisees try to trip Jesus up by asking him whether it is lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar. The question is intended as a no-win one: If Jesus says yes – he will diminish his standing with the people, who will view him as a Roman sympathizer. If he says no – he will be accused of sedition or treason against Rome. Heads they win, tails Jesus loses.

As is invariably the case when people set out to trap him, Jesus knows full well what the Pharisees and Herodians are trying to do are trying to do so – "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?" He knows sees through their flattery, knowing that what they show on the outside is not what is in their heart.

Shown a coin of the realm, Jesus delivers his response: Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.

I suggested in my reflection that it is interesting that Jesus makes his statement based on the image on the coin. That invites us to ask the question: what image is imprinted on us? And we know the answer to that – we (all of us, including Caesar) are imprinted with the image of God. It is in God's image and likeness that we are made.

And that means that Jesus' one line answer actually says quite a bit. It suggests that his followers have a dual allegiance: an allegiance to the teachings and commands of God, and an allegiance to the government under whose flag and laws they live, but it also makes clear the priority of those allegiances.

As Christians, we have duties to both of these realms. The rub comes when we have to face the question of what Christians should do when the God they serve and the government to which they have sworn allegiances are pulling them into a

situation of divided loyalties. Jesus' answer makes clear that Christians should render what is due to each entity until they come to the point where obedience to the state leads to a moral conflict with the God's law, at which point God's law prevails. We are rightly responsible to civil authority, but that authority itself is under the authority of God. Our responsibility to God is outside the oversight of the civil authority, and therefore trumps civil authority. (Today's first Mass reading from Isaiah is a reminder of that: I am the Lord, there is no other, repeated twice in that reading. God might well say to the state of Palestine, and the state of Wisconsin and Minnesota and the United States, as Isaiah says: "It is I who arm you, though you know me not.")

Our issue today is not about taxes. We pay plenty of them, whether we like it or not. But there are other levels of government activity that do raise questions about rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's:

Should Christians protest the use of torture by their government, even if such practices might provide information that could help in the war on terror?

How should Christians respond to governmental efforts to limit the number of refugees?

How should a Christian respond when state legislatures or courts take action either to support or oppose same-sex marriage?

Should taxpayer money be used to support abortion?

How should a Christian respond to the continued use in many states of the death penalty?

These are the kind of questions that raise the challenge of today's Gospel. The question is not whether we should pay taxes, but what do we expect – what do we demand – from a government supported by our tax dollars? What does conscience demand of Christians when the actions of their government and the teaching of their faith appear to be in conflict?

These are not easy questions, especially since you can find Christians on both sides of some of the examples I gave. And note Jesus did not answer the question posed to him in a direct way, but answered it in a way that places believers in a position of having to balance their responsibilities to the two realms. God grants us the dignity and the responsibility to use our conscience to

answer the hard questions.

---

This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2017/10/22/repay-to-god-what-belongs-to-god/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



Having just confessed his sins to his priest—more sins than a kid his age should have—Jarret jumps in his Chrysler 300 and races to the outskirts of town. Emotion overwhelming him, he pulls off the road and flings himself face down behind an outcropping of rocks. Ever since that life-changing night in the canyon, Jarret has felt the presence of the Lord in his soul. Now that presence is fading. Is it his fault? How will he remain faithful without it when he still struggles against the same temptations?

Meanwhile his twin brother, Keefe, questions whether he has a calling to religious life. He's gone along with Jarret's bad schemes for years. Is he worthy of such a calling? What would he have to give up to pursue a vocation? Keefe reads everything he can about St. Francis and the Franciscans, but he's afraid to talk to his father about the Franciscans' upcoming discernment retreat because his father seems closed to faith. Is he ready to go all in?

Follow the West brothers in this contemporary teen fiction as they struggle through temptations and trials down paths they can barely see, toward goals they desire in the depths of their hearts.

### **My Review:**

Readers will enjoy following the West brother twins, Jarret and Keefe, as they try to discern God's will for their lives.

Though their once intertwined lives diverge, each will have to show fortitude and perseverance in following the paths laid out before them. For Jarret, his past sins, anger and flirtatious ways with girls, cultivated over the years, will be his biggest temptations. For Keefe, uncertainty, insecurity, and fear could keep him from hearing God's call. Both will doubt and struggle to do the right thing.

*Another chapter in Theresa Linden's masterfully-developed series for teens that will resonate with everyone who has struggled to find his place in the world, been tempted to take the easy way out, or doubted the work of God's hand in his life. A realistic portrait of the slow and subtle work of grace in our lives.*

### **About the Author, Theresa Linden:**

Theresa Linden is the author of award-winning Catholic teen fiction. Raised in a military family, she developed a strong patriotism and a sense of adventure. Her Catholic faith inspires the belief that there is no greater adventure than the reality we can't see, the spiritual side of life. She has six published novels, and two short stories in *Image and Likeness: Literary Reflections on the Theology of the Body* (Full Quiver Publishing). She holds a Catechetical Diploma from Catholic Distance University and is a member of the Catholic Writers Guild and the International Writers Society. A wife, homeschooling mom, and Secular Franciscan, she resides in northeast Ohio with her husband and three teenage boys.

## Links:

**Website:** <https://theresalinden.com>

**Blog:** <https://catholicbooksblog.wordpress.com>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/theresalindenauthor>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/LindenTheresa>

**Amazon:** <https://www.amazon.com/Theresa-Linden/e/B00QKS7LW6/>

**Goodreads:** [https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7537721.Theresa\\_Linden](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7537721.Theresa_Linden)

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.carolynastfalk.com/2017/10/04/standing-strong-going-west-brothers/>

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

## Thoughts on NFP: Fifteen Years and Seven Kids Later [at Martin Family Moments]

Oh Natural Family Planning... I have such a love/hate relationship with you. Mostly hate if I'm being honest, and I especially struggled with it during the early years of our marriage.



You see, to me (and Phil) using NFP basically means abstaining for long periods of time, being vigilant in checking signs, testing hormonal levels, charting temps, and then still somehow getting pregnant while we were trying to postpone another baby's arrival. Blame long, irregular cycles, blame faulty body signals, blame this gift of super fertility, whatever you want, just don't blame us! We are really actually trying here!

So when those babies come so unexpectedly, they come with a huge dose of fear, shame, and uncertainty. I wish I could take a pregnancy test and exclaim joyfully that we got the answer we were praying for, but I'm usually being comforted by Phil instead. I hate that. I hate that to the outside world, we are

living totally open to life, but then when pregnancy happens against our will, we aren't exactly on board with this openness. I hate that even though we got married wanting a huge family...I feel like we've white-knuckled our way through each announcement. Why couldn't I have just rejoiced in the Lord's plan and timing. We wanted lots of babies! He gave us lots of babies! Why couldn't I live more relaxed about it all?

I felt like I needed, no deserved, a better way. I wanted the church to figure out a method that was fool-proof. I wanted to feel supported, both physically and financially, from the church who proclaimed that being open to life was the only way to live a Catholic marriage. I wanted like-minded moms to talk with openly about the struggles of raising a huge family. I wanted to live in a way that encouraged younger couples to use NFP without scaring them away with all our unplanned blessings. I wanted to stop being jealous of couples who made NFP look easy. I wanted to stop viewing children as a failed result of NFP and see the blessings which they truly are.

Time has a funny way of settling down Type A folks like myself. Years and maturity and grace have helped me realize some major lessons when it comes to NFP. So I thought I'd share :)

1)

God is in charge.

We may want to be able to control everything in our lives, but we can't. And if we really think about it, who would want the responsibility that would come with that control? Not I! God already knows the bigger picture and knows what chances and circumstances we need to gain eternal life with Him. That's all that matters. I don't need to worry about another couple's family size or the perfect

timing of my own. It's freeing to finally feel this way. Also...

2)

Being open to life doesn't mean being open to another pregnancy *right now*.

Being open to life means accepting God's Will in the daily moments. Sometimes that makes us feel sad, happy, scared, or excited, and feelings are okay. We need to work through them to come out the other side in living in accordance with His Will. Having a child is a big decision, and we are co-creators in the act, so we have the ability to try and steer the ship a certain way, but being open means that we could end up in a different harbor. I used to be so scrupulous in this area. I used to envision God saying to me at the end of my life "Well, I wanted you to have ten, but you only had 7 kids. Off you go." I've learned, through lots of conversation, confessions, and prayer, that putting off having another baby (or trying to at least!) means looking at the needs of the family you already have first. Assessing the timing based on the state of the marriage, children, and finances that exist, then accepting the timing of an unexpected blessing if/when it occurs. Because...

3)

Fertility and infertility are not choices we can make.

Just as an infertile couple doesn't *deserve* to have a child, as much as they want one...neither does a fertile couple *deserve* the ability to control when their children come, as much as they want to. Children are gifts from God and not in our control. When Phil and I get the news that another little Martin is on **his**

(because we all know my odds!) way, that means we were loving each other and God right. It means our bodies were working correctly. It doesn't mean we failed using NFP. Besides...

4)

The fertility window is a limited time in a person's life.

When your babies are coming in rapid succession, you can honestly feel like you'll be pregnant forever. I know I did. But one day, no matter how fertile you've been, it will come to an end. I hear from older moms all the time that they wish they would have had more kids in their 20s and 30s because now they can't. That being said...

5)

NFP LIFE is hard.

When you try to follow all the church's rules and wait until marriage and then can finally be totally one with your spouse, it's hard to have to live like you're dating again. Especially when it's a no-go time, but you go to sleep next to the person you're crazy about and your hormones are telling your head to just shut up and love your spouse already. Just me? ;) It takes a lot of will power to abstain, and many will fail if the reason to abstain isn't strong enough. And that's all part of the plan and why there are so many Catholic babies. Sometimes I just need to accept something is hard, stop complaining about it, offer it up, and realize that I can do hard things. Anyway...

6)

I think a little "struggle" in this area is good for a marriage.

Younger Colleen can't believe older Colleen is saying this now, but looking back I can see how many graces and blessings and gifts we received by struggling with NFP. I'm actually glad my cycles were irregular and we didn't know what we were doing most of the time and God was completely in control. If I had everything all figured out, I'm sure I wouldn't have the sweet children that I have. When young couples plan to get married and not have kids for a long time, I literally ache for them. How do they know if they can even have children at all? What if they are postponing through their fertile years and then suffer from infertility? I want to tell them that if having a baby right away is *the worst thing that can happen*, then they probably should wait to get married. Marriage is ordered to family and not being in complete control only brings a couple closer to each other and God. It's team work and lots of conversations and loads of lessons in being unselfish. And in the end...if you're really lucky...

7)

You get a beautiful family out of the deal!



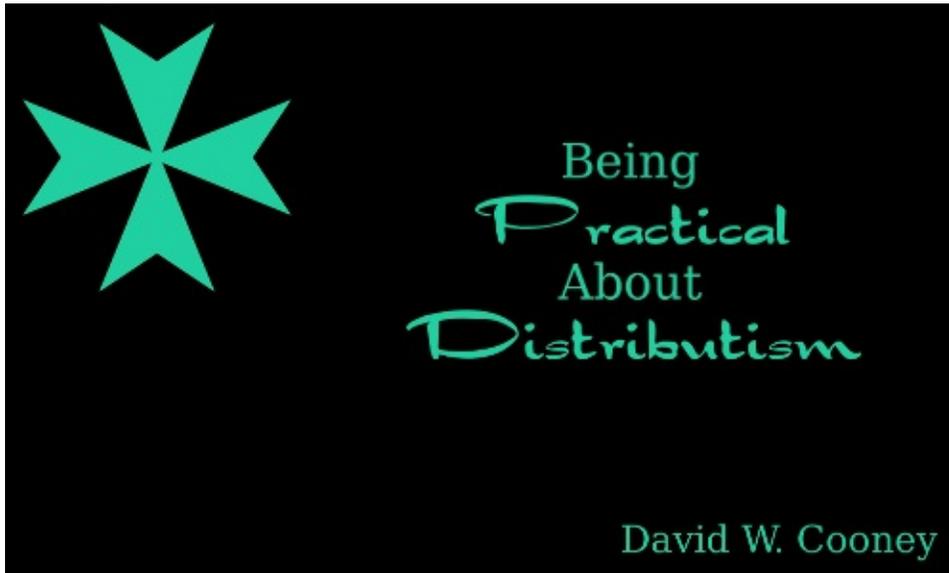
And that folks, is winning, not losing, at Natural Family Planning.

---

This contribution is available at <http://martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2017/10/thoughts-on-nfp-fifteen-years-and-seven.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Being Practical About Distributism [at Practical Distributism]



"The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid."

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 1806*

Those of us who promote distributism would love if society as a whole suddenly accepted it and immediately started changing to become a distributist society. We also aren't holding our breath, waiting for this to happen. We live in societies structured on Lockean philosophy and which most [mistakenly believe](#) have a modified version of "Smithean" economics. So how should those of use who promote and desire a distributist society act in the midst of this?

It is easy for distributists to target large companies that don't treat employees well. We've all seen articles like

[10 Companies That Treat Their Employees Even Worse Than Amazon](#)

and

### [The Worst Companies To Work For In The U.S.](#)

These are stark reminders of what distributists have known for a long time about capitalism; acting ethically in business is generally considered to be “good business sense,” but capitalism’s prevailing view that that economics is a

### [speculative science](#)

, rather than a practical science, means that ethics is something completely separate from business. Therefore, there is nothing inherent in its view of economics that would require capitalists to apply ethics to business.

Some economic analysts even criticize successful companies that do. You might remember the article back in 2005 when Costco was called the “

### [anti-Wal-Mart](#)

” by the New York Times. The article included criticisms by Wall Street analysts that Costco was treating its employees too well. Now, Costco is not run as a distributist style cooperative, but shouldn’t distributists be willing to give Costco credit for treating employees and customers well because it is the right thing to do? Costco has even shown interest in

### [working with cooperatives](#)

. In Washington state, Taco Time tries to support local businesses by committing to getting at least some ingredients from producers

### [within the state](#)

. I don’t know if this means that a Taco Time located in Tacoma gets its ingredients from producers near Tacoma, but at least their not getting it from other states or countries.

Spreading the word of distributism means more than criticizing what doesn’t fit our view. I have said that distributists should give preference to those shops that are most like the distributist model, like cooperatives and small independently owned shops and producers. I still say that, but we know very well that there will be times when we will need to go somewhere else. In those cases we should go

be times when we will need to go somewhere else. In those cases, we should go to those larger businesses that support other local businesses and which treat their employees well. We should also let them know that these are the reasons why we chose them instead of another place. If these companies keep hearing that customers like when they treat employees well, support local businesses and pass savings to the customers, they might explore even more ways to run their businesses in just and ethical ways.

---

This contribution is available at [http://practicaldistributism.blogspot.com/2017/10/being-practical-about-distributism\\_5.html](http://practicaldistributism.blogspot.com/2017/10/being-practical-about-distributism_5.html)  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

A recent CNA (Catholic News Agency) headline reads:

## **Understanding and discernment as well as LOVE versus LAW [at In the Breaking of the Bread]**

It is not the first time that controversy erupts over Pope Francis and what he says or does. Confusion often results from controversy, and it usually involves disputes over content, i.e., what Pope Francis says or does. There could be many reasons for such controversy and confusion, but I would like to explore only a few that may not often be even considered.

*When we react to something, our reactions say as much if not more about us than about that to which we are reacting.*

[Saint Thomas Aquinas](#)

was a brilliant Medieval philosopher who wrote that when we receive or know something, we receive or know it

[according to the mode](#)

by which we receive or know it. To illustrate with a ridiculous example, if I wear pink colored glasses, then everything I see will look pink.

There are many factors which have an important influence on how we perceive and come to know the reality around us, other people, and what others say and do.

(1) UNDERSTANDING - See

[Kohlberg's six stages of moral development](#)

It is not difficult to understand how differently people interpret what they

perceive when we consider what stage of moral and personality development they have achieved. To return to our subject, Pope Francis will be understood differently by people at different stages of moral development.

1. At the lowest level, someone whose primary preoccupation in life is avoiding punishment will want to know how Pope Francis' words and actions will help them avoid punishment or not. They may not find his appeals to conscience reassuring and would prefer him to be much more categorical and dispell any doubt about outcomes they may expect in various situations.

2. At a little higher moral development, a person will want to know "What's in it for me?" They could be encouraged by Pope Francis' warmth, understanding, and hospitality, but then they could also find discouraging his emphasis on paying attention to the needs of others.

3. As people enter into more conventional behavior, they want to be accepted by others; so they want to be sure that by following Pope Francis they will be accepted by others, but they could be unsettled by signs of resistance or opposition to Pope Francis' words or actions and the apparent disunity.

4. With further moral development people show concern for law and order. For this reason, they may be disturbed by any impression that Pope Francis misses opportunities to lay down the law or leaves any room for disagreement with the law or for other interpretations.

5. Beyond simple convention, people come to understand and embrace the notion of joint responsibility, and they adopt as their orientation "the social contract". At this point, they may more easily understand that Pope Francis is trying to inspire people to take responsibility for themselves and for others, and act for the common good. On the other hand, they can also go the other way and be confused when Pope Francis appears to give people too much latitude.

6. Finally, people who continue to develop their conscience enter into the realm of universal ethical principles, and at this point they discover and defend the sovereignty of the individual moral conscience. They recognize that the

individual conscience becomes more enlightened as it adopts universal principles that bring it into solidarity with all of humanity.

Perhaps this is the perspective that can best help one understand Pope Francis and what he is trying to do. Human beings need time to understand their place in the world, their relationship with others, with God, and with the world around them. Experiencing the love of God is the most powerful motivator drawing people to show love to others in return. Service motivated by love that is selfless is manifestly more authentic and its fruits are more likely to last longer.

People who have experienced less moral conscience development show the greatest need for clarity. They want everything to be clearly spelled out in black and white. People with more developed conscience have come to understand that life is complex and usually involves many factors.

By this time more attention to detail is required, and they recognize that in each individual case and situation people must have the freedom as well as the responsibility to gather information so as to more fully understand the situation and apply to it the full understanding of their conscience, which by now takes into consideration the good of the individual as well as the common good, and particular circumstances as well as universal principles.

We can understand how people could be unhappy with Pope Francis' open attitudes and declarations. Some want everything to be fully spelled out and are very uncomfortable when they are not. Pope Francis knows that people who want clear and simple answers can find them in the Catechism of the Catholic Church; so he doesn't need to repeat those texts and takes them for granted. He prefers to address the requirements of love and mercy beyond the simple demands of justice, much as Jesus set himself to do during his short time of ministry.

When Pope Francis is talking with real people in real situations, he trusts everyone to observe and be informed, to pray for God's guidance, and to come to the best decision they can. When they make mistakes, he is confident that as they remain open to God, then God will guide them to more and more understanding of the whole truth. In reality, none of us - or at least very few of us - are fully capable of embracing the whole truth about everything, especially about

ourselves, and rarely all at once. It is rather over time that we can come into the full knowledge of the truth.

God's "economy of salvation" takes our human condition into consideration and by his divine mercy provides us with sufficient time to embrace more and more of the truth moment by moment and day by day until we come into the full knowledge of the truth in Jesus his only begotten Son.

(2) DISCERNMENT - Is ours a healthy or an unhealthy human condition?

Even such simple notions as "dying to self" or "mortification" can be understood or misunderstood according to a person's condition of health. A

### scrupulous person

can be almost incapable of really understanding spiritual realities because their scrupulous turn of mind acts like a shield blocking any light from penetrating their spirit. For some people their

### obsession with detail

can lead to unhealthy feelings of guilt that have no foundation in reality but are rather conjured up in their misguided conscience. The attendant anxiety has nothing to do with God and

### actually hinders people

from being open and receptive to what God is doing and the loving relationship He offers.

When such a person tries to put into practice what they hear in the church about doing penance, they set out to put various actions into practice. However, their practices don't set them free to become more loving to neighbor and enemy alike; instead, their scrupulosity causes their new practices to make them even more self-obsessed.

Before an unhealthy person can truly navigate successfully deeper spiritual paths, they must first apply everything they hear to their unhealthy condition. If they are to renounce anything in order to "die to themselves", the very first thing they need to renounce is their scrupulosity. Once they become healthy again, they will enjoy clearer vision and be more likely to correctly understand what

they will enjoy clearer vision and be more likely to correctly understand what they hear about spiritual things.

This factor could also explain why some people react so differently to Pope Francis.

### (3) The Law of LOVE versus the Law of punishable offenses

Saint Paul spent most of his apostolic ministry trying to help people differentiate between the Torah and the Jewish observance of God's laws, on the one hand, and on the other hand, Jesus' teaching about the Law of Love, i.e., the "Great Commandment".

The issue revolves around the question: "

#### [How are we justified?](#)

" or "How do we become pleasing to God?" or "How are we to be saved?" and an almost infinite variation of perspective on this question.

The Law - the Decalogue (10 words) which God gave to his people through Moses - and the infinity of developing interpretations and applications of this Law in the lives of real people were intended by God to develop his people's consciences, because they had turned away from Him, just as Adam and Eve had turned away from Him in the garden of Eden.

There can be no reconciliation between God and human beings until people begin to recognize the ways in which they are offending God's love or turning away from him by turning inwards on themselves and ignoring their neighbor.

God is a selfless, loving, merciful, and life-giving, self-bestowing Being, and as long as we remain self-centered; then we can have little to do with God, let alone any kind of relationship.

However, the fault and failure happens when human beings get the notion that by following the Law they can be saved or acquire advantage from God or even exercise some measure of control over God and his behaviour towards them. In such a case, we observe the Law in order to "extract" from God the benefits we want. God becomes a vending machine and all I have to do is put in the coins of following the Law and He has to give me....

God knows that if He allows us to manipulate Him, we will self-destruct and will never enter into any kind of relationship with Him, which is the purpose for which He created us in the first place.

Enter Jesus on the human stage. Jesus insists on initiating a personal relationship and on personal responsibility. Jesus shows unheard of respect for the individual's conscience. He shows Love in person and patiently waits for people to respond to Love feely and willingly. In the end, Jesus lays down his life in order to demonstrate the true quality of God's love for human beings. God loves the person and is willing to overlook and forgive the faults.

This means that God the Father's offer of salvation - the restoration of our relationship of communion with God that was lost by Adam and Eve - is a priceless gift freely offered. To accept his gift implies and entails a change of mind, heart, soul, and life.

#### [To accept to be saved by Jesus](#)

means to enter into a new way of living, to live as He lived and showed us how to live, in communion with God and in solidarity with human beings and all of humanity.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and Priests were the different classes among the religious elite and authorities in Jesus' day. They insisted on literal observance of the Law and for the most part showed little or no patience, understanding, or compassion to individual people in the face of the difficulties they had in observing the whole Law all of the time under every circumstance.

Their hard and fast attitude permanently estranged from the Temple large segments of the population who did not have sufficient revenue or domestic help in order to fulfill the complex requirements of the Law in all of the religious establishment's interpretations and applications for everyday life. Jesus was most interested to reach out to all those who were in such ways excluded to bring them the good news that God was not excluding them but inviting them to enter in.

Today we have such "extremely religious" people in the Church who show the same hardness of heart and unrelenting insistence on external observance of the law and have little patience for real people.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were not capable of understanding the divine mercy offered by God and embodied in Jesus to bring forgiveness, healing, and life to all his children. Similarly, in our day there are so many people who show themselves incapable of understanding the divine mercy for which Pope Francis has been given to us by God as a new witness. Pope Francis strives to be faithful to Jesus and to proclaim in fresh ways for our times the new life Jesus brought to Earth.

---

This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2017/11/understanding-and-discernment-as-well.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## **A Mother's Prayers are answered giving us Two Great Saints and a new Marian Feast Day [at It Makes Sense to Me]**



By Larry Peterson

Most of us know the story of St. Augustine. He was born in North Africa in the year 354. His father, Patricius, was a pagan landowner and his mother, Monica, a Christian. Monica prayed fervently for her wayward boy to become a Christian too. Eventually, her prayers were answered and her boy did embrace Christianity becoming a great Doctor of the Church.

However, many of us do not know of the influence of the Blessed Virgin in this transformation. It is because of the conversion of St. Augustine that one of the many titles she is venerated under is Our Lady of Consolation, a title she is known by in many places around the world. And this never would have happened without his mom faithfully praying for her boy, a woman who would one day be known as St. Monica.

Monica is honored for her unyielding Christian virtues which included; dealing with the pain and suffering brought on by her husband's chronic acts of adultery and her own son's immoral ways. It was said she cried herself to sleep virtually

every night. But she did not despair. Rather, she turned her heartache over to the Blessed Virgin asking for her help. And help she received. Our Lady appeared to Monica and gave her the sash she was wearing. The Virgin assured Monica that whoever wore the sash would receive her special

*consolation*

and protection. It was given to her son and became part of the Augustinian habit.

Eventually, the Augustinian monks founded the Confraternity of the Holy Cincture (belt) of

### [Our Lady of Consolation](#)

. The statues of Mary as Our Lady of Consolation depict her and the Christ child dressed in elaborate vestments. Mary's halo has twelve, small stars and her tunic is held in place by a black cincture. The three patrons of the Augustinians are St. Augustine, St. Monica and Our Lady of Consolation. In addition, the devotion to Our Lady of Consolation inspired what is known as the

### ["Augustinian Rosary"](#)

which is sometimes called the "Corona of Our Mother of Consolation."

During the early 1700s, the devotion to Our Lady of Consolation was introduced to Malta. It was here that people began asking for a special blessing invoking Our Lady of Consolation for the dying. It became such a popular custom that monks could leave the monastery without asking permission to confer this blessing. Eventually, devotion to Our Lady of Consolation spread all over the world.

In the United States, the

### [Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation](#)

are located in Carey, Ohio. The church was first built in 1868 and named St. Edward. When Father Joseph Growden was given the responsibility of caring for the church he asked the faithful in Carey to pray to Mary, Our Lady of Consolation for her help in getting a new church built. He promised to name the church "Our Lady of Consolation"

## Church - Our Lady of Consolation .

On May 24, 1875, a statue of Our Lady of Consolation, having been procured by Father Joseph from the Cathedral of Luxembourg, was carried from St. Nicholas church to the new church in Carey. News reports tell of the tremendous rains that fell that day and, during the seven-mile procession, not a drop fell on the statue or the people bringing the statue to its new home. Upon arriving in the new church the rain fell once again---everywhere.

Today devotion to Our Lady of Consolation is of great importance in such places as Luxembourg, England, France, Japan, Manila, Turin, Malta, Australia, Venezuela and other places. Pope St. John Paul II visited the shrine in Germany. Our Lady of Consolation has certainly made herself available in many places so her children can quickly come to her if need be. You just have to love being Catholic.

St. Augustine, pray for us; St. Monica, pray for us; and

Our Lady of Consolation, please pray for us all.

Feast Days for Our Lady of Consolation are varied. The Augustinians celebrate it on September 4; the Benedictines on July 7. In the USA it is usually on October 22 or the last Sunday in October.

Copyright© Larry Peterson 2017

---

This contribution is available at <http://slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2017/10/a-mothers-prayers-are-answered-giving.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Whose Image Do You Worship? [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

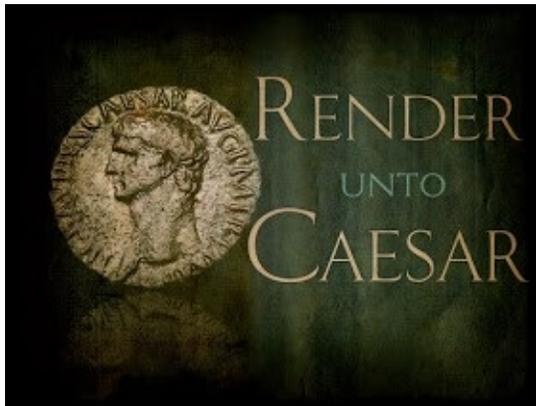
Sermon by Rev. John Paul Shea

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Oct 22, 2017

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Tucson, AZ

During the past week we have been listening to the parables of Our Lord Jesus Christ calling us to conversion.

Those parables angered those who opposed Christ.



Today's Gospel (Matthew 22:15-21) makes it clear that the Pharisees do not have much admiration for Jesus. In fact, the Pharisees were out to get Jesus. They sent their representatives to Jesus along with the Herodians -- Jews that supported King Herod.

The Pharisees ask Jesus about the legitimacy of the census tax. This tax created controversy because Jews were made to pay it to the emperor of Rome. The Pharisees hoped to use the census tax to trap Our Lord.

If Jesus said, “Yes, pay your taxes,” He turns away his most loyal followers who despised the Romans. They followed Jesus, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God, hoping that He would free them from the Roman occupation.

But if Jesus said not to pay Caesar’s tax then He incites the Romans to arrest Him as a rebel rousing zealot. Fully aware of their trickery, Our Lord does not play their game. He knows that the Pharisees were not questioning Him for the greater good. They were not questioning Him to know the truth.

It is this evil cunning that irritates our Lord. Knowing their malice, Jesus says, “Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?” He says,



*“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”* In other words, Our Lord is saying do what is right.

My brothers and sisters, it is these last words of Our Lord that make up the essence of our Lord’s message in today’s Gospel. Yes, we too live under civil societies with laws and taxes and so on. But, the bottom line is that all things belong to God! Every government, every society, every single thing we make, create, or build belongs to God!

It is when persons and societies and cultures forget that God is the ruler of everything that persons and societies and cultures and even religious institutions lose their way. This is what happened to the Pharisees whom we hear of in

today's Gospel. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of their time, but they had turned the Jewish religion from worshiping God into worshiping an image made in the likeness of themselves. This is why our Lord was so upset with the Pharisees. They had forgotten the truth found in today's Psalm: *"Give to the Lord glory and praise, give to the Lord the glory due His name!"*

Today's Gospel calls us to reflect on what we make the centre of our lives. Who or what are the rivals to God in our lives?

As Caesar's image was on a coin, this coin

therefore identified the Roman ruler. This



coin has the head of the Roman emperor on it and the inscription, "Glorified Son of Augustus." In other words, the coin symbolized all the institutions that tend to divinize themselves as the ultimate in authority. While Our Lord Jesus does not comment on this blasphemy, He reminds us Who really is in charge -- God Himself.

Therefore, it is God's image alone that shall be worshiped.



In fact, each one of us is made in the image of God. Do we reflect God's image

in our lives? Or, do we make a false image of ourselves that reflects what is not of God? Are we as concerned about giving back to God what is God's when we think about our image? Does our image reflect our Catholic values?

We all know that today our society teaches us to place ourselves at the center of the world. Our own false image means everything in this



culture: How much money we make... What material possessions we have... Are we attractive? Our society even encourages us to make false images of ourselves and one another based on sexual preference.

Yet, as Catholics we are called not to identify ourselves by labels and images created by the world. As Catholics we are called to identify ourselves as sons and daughters of God and therefore live a new life in Christ! We are called to render God praise for saving us from a fallen world that is passing away and rejoice in thanking God for this great gift! As Catholics we are called to worship God with all our minds, hearts, and to love our neighbours as ourselves who have been reborn in the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

My brothers and sisters, today's Gospel



passage calls us to give credit to where it is due and to live our lives accordingly. Our God has given us every single thing we have. Our God has given us the very life in which we live and the breath in which we breathe. Most importantly, our God has given us the opportunity for salvation through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us therefore live our lives today in this society as best we can by doing what is right in what we should do, but most importantly let us place our lives into the hands of God who is the owner of all that we are and all that we have. For He alone deserves the glory due His name. Amen.

---

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.co.at/2017/10/whose-image-do-you-worship.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Losing a Child [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



Last week a friends of ours lost their precious 5 year old son. It was sudden and traumatic. I'm sure for my friend, she is thinking even more of what I'm thinking as I type those words, that it's already been more than a week, it's just unbelievable how time keeps moving when your whole world has been shaken and yet frozen in the shock of it all. I think of how everyone is always in such a hurry. Don't you know this precious little boy has died? Can't the world just stop for a little while and see what an amazing life he had? Can't the world stop and see what a precious gift this life of ours is?

**"Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted." Matthew 5:4**

As I sit in the chapel Adoring our Lord, crying, Jesus holds me, He reassures me of my blessings and the gifts He's given me. He reminds me there is a time for everything and that He is holding my friend also.

**There is an appointed time for everything,  
and a time for every affair under the heavens.  
A time to give birth, and a time to die;**

**a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.**

**A time to kill, and a time to heal;**

**a time to tear down, and a time to build.**

**A time to weep, and a time to laugh;**

**a time to mourn, and a time to dance.**

**A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;**

**a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.**

**A time to seek, and a time to lose;**

**a time to keep, and a time to cast away.**

**A time to rend, and a time to sew;**

**a time to be silent, and a time to speak.**

**A time to love, and a time to hate;**

**a time of war, and a time of peace.**

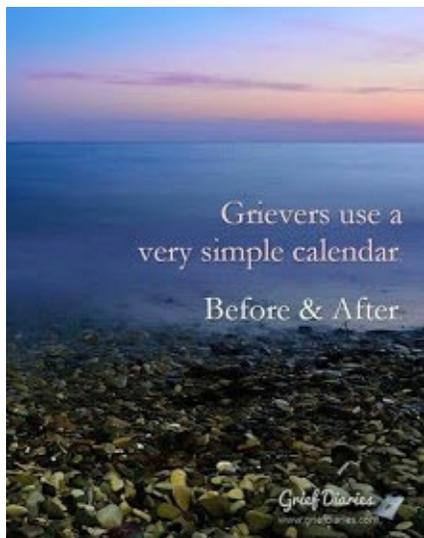
### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

I sit here crying non-stop. I feel what we all feel, deep sorrow for a grieving mother. My heart aches for her, my stomach hurts. I cannot focus my thoughts. I ache for the children as they try to make sense of it all. I remember losing my baby brother at the age of 13 and begging God to take me instead, to make it right. I begged God for at least the next 7 years. I wondered why God took him instead of me for a long time. I pray her children do not feel like this. I ache for the father that protects and loves his family in all things, I pray for him. I pray for her relationship with her husband, that this brings them closer as they mourn together.

Like you, I am feeling relieved that it didn't happen to me. And I'm feeling guilty for feeling like that. That I'm so thankful for my own 5 year old boy. I am thankful for the blessings I still have in my children, I hug them a little tighter today, I watch them a little closer and quieter. I listen to them a little better and make sure they know I love them. I want to breathe them in and savor every moment.

I wonder if my child, my happiness, will remind her of what she's lost. It will. Everything will.

And my heart aches again. I wonder if she can sleep. I wonder if her love of fall will become only sadness and dread each year now. I wonder if she will ever feel "normal" again. I wonder if she can get up today. Can she live again? Can she go on? She has no choice. She has to. She knows He lives and so her son lives also. My mind wanders to her having to do laundry and folding his clothes, about her passing his clothes down to the next child. I think of how every day from this day forward she will be missing him until that day she meets him again in the Arms of our Heavenly Father.



When a mother loses her child, the unimaginable becomes a reality and we may not truly understand unless we've also lost a child, but are connected by our sorrow and by our faith in Heaven.

For now, all I can give her is my prayers, my tears, my silence for lack of any comforting words. And the aching sorrow deep in my heart.

If you'd like to help this family out in any way, especially your prayers, here's more information:

[Go HERE](#)



Sweet St Eddie, Pray for us!

---

This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2017/10/losing-child.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Of Memory, Metanoia, and Manslaughter [at God-Haunted Lunatic]

*Oh, of thine only worthy blood  
And my tears, make a heavenly Lethean flood,  
And drown in it my sins' black memory.*  
~ [John Donne](#)

An essay by historian **Andrew Bacevich** scrolled up in my Facebook feed, and I saw that it had been posted by my friend Shawn Storer of [Catholic Peace Fellowship](#). That was enough to make it a must-read sooner rather than later, so I opened it up.

It was entitled “[Autopilot Wars](#),” and it was Bacevich’s take on our nation’s numb embrace of perpetual armed conflict as a norm. “Like traffic jams or robocalls, war has fallen into the category of things that Americans may not welcome, but have learned to live with,” Bacevich writes. “In twenty-first-century America, war is not that big a deal.”

It was a depressing read, yet hardly a surprising one, for our country long ago inured itself to killing as a way of solving problems. A people who’ve come to tolerate abortion through all nine months of pregnancy is a people primed to mow down entire populations without a second thought. Death has become a way of life, and, in the name of patriotism, we don’t even question the motives or objectives. Heck, we can’t even keep count of how many wars we’re in, let alone why we’re in them.

Bacevich’s article was rattling in mind as I drove to morning Mass. NPR buzzed in the background – it was the TED Radio Hour. I could hear a researcher murmuring about [manipulating the memories](#) of lab rats.

I turned up the volume.

The researcher’s name was Steve Ramirez, a professor of neuroscience at Boston University. He and his colleagues developed a technique they call optogenetics that allows them to turn memories on and off by aiming lasers at particular regions of rodent brains. The effects are temporary, but Ramirez indicated that

he anticipated further research that will lead to more enduring effects.

It crept me out. I'd just recently seen the new [Blade Runner 2049](#) which prominently features memory manipulation in cyborg replicants, and here was an actual process for doing the same thing in miniature mammals. However, my creepy feelings turned into alarm when Ramirez and his interviewer, Guy Raz, discussed possible future applications of optogenetics – like altering the memories of those suffering from [PTSD](#); to erase, in effect, the crippling memories of the battlefield. Despite the possibility that such memory manipulation might be abused, Ramirez indicated that the potential for good is much too great to avoid continued research in this area.

**I found myself yelling back at the radio**, “No! No! Don't do it! Can't you see?” Consider what the Pentagon would do such memory altering therapies. We already [train our soldiers](#) to suppress their innate resistance to exterminating human life, and we push them forward to the front lines to wipe out as many enemy lives as possible. Then, when they come back to us physically wounded, we patch them up and send them forward to kill some more. Is it really all that hard to imagine that the military would draw on optogenetics to do the same with the psychologically wounded? To take, that is, those suffering from PTSD and re-program their memories to enable them to return to the front?

Even if that appalling development could be avoided – and that's a huge “if” – the underlying premise of Ramirez's suggestion is itself flawed. The problem with PTSD isn't the crippling memories. The problem is what caused the memories in the first place: the dehumanizing horror of war. Isn't there good reason to remember that horror, painful as it is? It seems to me that such remembering could help undo what Bacevich details as our “collective indifference” to war as part of modernity's landscape.

Ramirez and Raz were concluding their radio conversation as I arrived at church. I shut off the car, went inside, and settled in for the liturgy. Entrance antiphon, sign of the cross, greeting, and then this: “My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us call to mind our sins” – and that's when it hit me. Memory of agonizing reality is central to our faith and essential for real conversion – [metanoia](#) in the Greek of the New Testament.

In fact, we use a different Greek word that translates as “memory” ([anamnesis](#)) to describe how it is that Christ's singular sacrifice on the Cross is made present

for us at Mass. The Reformers of the past and our Fundamentalist detractors in the present accuse us of re-crucifying Jesus in the course of our “false” worship. Yet the Mass is not a repetition, but rather a re-presentation – a liturgical and sacramental remembering that connects what Christ suffered on Calvary with our recollected transgressions here and now.

**I think of that scene in [The Mission](#) (1986)** when Robert De Niro’s character, Rodrigo Mendoza, a former slave trader and mercenary, is lugging the tools of his inhuman trade up a muddy jungle slope. He repeatedly slips and falls until one of his Jesuit companions cuts the burden free. Mendoza subsequent silent descent back down the hill, his angry reattachment of the bundle to his back, and then his slow ascent back up the hill again is a powerful image of real repentance. Rather than forgetting the past – cutting it away and rolling it out of sight – authentic conversion requires remembering. It requires revisiting our painful histories and our damnable decisions. Mendoza was a murderer, and his redemption requires that he thoroughly avow his murderous past before he can experience the grace of forgiveness.

Our faith is dependent on [remembering violence](#), for all sin is violence – a violent battering if not rending of our relationship with God. Similarly, our entire civilization also depends on such remembering, and the tragedy of our times is that we’re already re-programming our memories to avoid unspeakable realities, even without optogenetics. “Responding to the demands of the Information Age is not, it turns out, conducive to deep reflection,” Bacevich notes with reference to our war-making amnesia. “Our attention span shrinks and with our time horizon.”

This is the point that Nicholas Carr made in his recent [WSJ essay](#) on our contemporary smartphone dependencies. “Now that our phones have made it so easy to gather information online, our brains are likely offloading even more of the work of remembering to technology,” he wrote. “No matter how much information swirls around us, the less well-stocked our memory, the less we have to think with.” No wonder we don’t care about how many wars we’re in – or how many babies are being slaughtered in our abortuaries.

**Granted, remembering more means suffering more**, which is a tall order for a world bent on avoiding suffering – at least for ourselves. Remember more anyway, and then choose to suffer alongside those whose memories of killing cause them the deepest kind of distress – coming alongside them figuratively and

prayerfully, at the very least, but in reality as well if given the opportunity. Such compassionate companionship might embolden them to speak out on behalf of peacemaking and nonviolent solutions to our problems. We'll be wise to listen to what they have to say – and commit it to memory.

---

---

This contribution is available at <http://godhauntedlunatic.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/of-memory-metanoia-and-manslaughter/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The Feodorovskaya Mother of God ~ In the Thicket [at Pauca Verba]



**The story goes** that on August 16, 1239, Prince Vasily was hunting alone in the forest when he came across an icon of the Mother of God standing upright in the thicket. When he reached out to touch the image, it disappeared. Awestruck, he told the people of the city of his discovery and they returned with him to the exact spot in the forest where they found the icon as he had. Overjoyed, (who wouldn't be) they transported the icon to the Cathedral of the Assumption. The icon is still revered even to today.

These legends surrounding the discoveries of icons all begin to sound alike after you've read three or four of them. That doesn't matter, in each there is some word or phrase that seems to jump out to offer us some spiritual insight.

The prince found the icon *in the thicket*. A thicket is a dense growth of bushes or trees, thorns and brambles. Small animals hide in the thicket or like the ram in

the story of Abraham getting ready to sacrifice son-Isaac, we can get caught in the thicket. Jeremiah the Prophet (4:7) tells us that danger can lurk in the thicket.

*The lion is up from his thicket  
the destroyer of nations is on his way,  
he has come from his home  
to reduce your land to a desert;  
your towns will be in ruins, uninhabited.*

Like *forest* and *fog*, sometimes the thicket can be an image of our personal or communal inner state. Prince Vasily perhaps reached out to heaven from the thicket of what, we don't know: his vanity, pride, power-quest, anger, selfishness? We can come before the icon of the *Feodorovskaya Mother of God* here, from the thicket of our own inner emotion, where we might be stuck or hiding. Or perhaps we sense something dark or dangerous lurking within. Pray we know ourselves well enough to identify it. Then our prayer can be real, coming from a felt place.

*Mother of God,  
appear before me in the thicket of my emotions,  
my anxieties,  
my exhausting need to control,  
my rambling and fruitless thoughts,  
my inappropriate attractions  
and the desire to possess.*

*Mother of God,  
find me in the thicket  
where negative belief lurks -  
that comfortable religion of  
judging and  
demarcating.  
criticizing,  
pronouncing and  
condemning.  
Unleash a love in me  
that takes the world into my heart,  
wishing only wholeness,*

*healing,  
salvation and good  
for each.*

*Father Stephen Morris*

---

This contribution is available at <http://paucaverba.blogspot.com/2017/10/the-feodorovskaya-mother-of-god-in.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Service and Participation [at Gentle Reign]



My mind and heart are full of thoughts about service and participation this week as I prepare to give the reflection at all the masses this weekend for our liturgical ministry fair, and then to speak later this month in London, Ontario, at King's College at the University of Western Ontario about participation, particularly in song, as an act of faith and conversion. There is a lot to be said about all that, of course. What I'm hoping is to say some of it in a comprehensible and true way, with a beginning and a middle and an end. It will be slightly easier when I can speak for 45 or 50 minutes on the topic; less so this weekend when I want to restrict myself to less than ten minutes speaking time.

I know that the first reading and gospel offer to any preacher of the word a wonderful opening into the paschal mystery that offers to us a God who tells us, in Jesus, that "whoever would be greatest among you must serve the rest." This can only be true, of course, if it is true of God, so we must somehow try to imagine that God, rather than ordering the universe through fiat and command, does so through the gentle persuasion of love and sacrifice, of somehow

*servicing*

creation, being at

*our*

service, as the story of Jesus, who is "the image of the unseen God," reveals to us in faith.

The contrast between this beautiful reality which we know to be true through

The contrast between this beautiful reality, which we know to be true through our experience of people whose humility and simplicity in servant leadership have called out our very best through the years, and the image painted of spiritual leadership in the texts from Malachi and the contentious chapters of Matthew that lead up to the arrest, trial, and death of Jesus, couldn't be starker. With language borrowed from vassal state covenants learned from their Babylonian and Assyrian masters, the prophet speaks on behalf of the "great King" who is displeased with his priests:

O priests, this commandment is for you:  
If you do not listen,  
if you do not lay it to heart,  
to give glory to my name, says the LORD of hosts,  
I will send a curse upon you  
and of your blessing I will make a curse.  
You have turned aside from the way,  
and have caused many to falter by your instruction;  
you have made void the covenant of Levi,  
says the LORD of hosts.  
I, therefore, have made you contemptible  
and base before all the people,  
since you do not keep my ways,  
but show partiality in your decisions.  
Have we not all the one father?  
Has not the one God created us?  
Why then do we break faith with one another,  
violating the covenant of our fathers?

Neither is Jesus pleased with the Jerusalem leadership of the Jews, whom he praises, one must speculate, for their teaching ("observe all things whatsoever they tell you") while excoriating their behavior ("but do not follow their example.")

...For they preach but they do not practice.  
They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry  
and lay them on people's shoulders,  
but they will not lift a finger to move them.  
All their works are performed to be seen.  
They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.  
They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues,

greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.'



The context of all this is the rivalry between Christian Jews and traditional Jews in the community to which the author of Matthew belonged, and it's not pretty, especially the violent rhetoric ascribed to Jesus. The condemnation of the actions of the leadership is set up as an example of how to

*not*

to act in the Christian community. Christians aren't to say one thing and do another. Integrity is to be the rule. Humility, honesty of character, should mark the Christian believer. Then we hear that line that rings across all the synoptics in several forms: "The greatest among you must be your servant."



One might be tempted to go after certain corners of church leadership, following Malachi's diatribe against the corrupt priesthood and Jesus's portrayal of the temple leadership. But the "bad news" for us Christians is that we are all called to same integrity. In the eyes of the Church, we are a "royal priesthood" of Christ, all of us baptized into the one priesthood of Jesus. We are all called to the same

high standard of behavioral integrity. to "preach the gospel." as St. Francis is

... reported to have taught his Little Friars, "with words if necessary." Nobody's off the hook. The good news is we can all stop competing to get to the top of the heap, we can stop losing sleep over our career path. Instead of striving to get higher, we need to learn how to bend lower, but with a purpose: that of serving those who need our help.

In the church like in all of life, the shape of our service is the shape of the impact our gifts can have upon communal need. Service in the liturgy is a sacrament of service outside the liturgy. In our lives, based upon our talents and passions, we try to match those positive energies to the needs of those who have other gifts. I'm a songwriter, for instance; that's one of my talents. What am I supposed to do with that? Well, strange as it seems, people seem to

*need*

music for all kinds of reasons, all kinds of reasons having to do with emotional support, creating meaning, and making memory. Not everybody can write songs. I can do what I do, and fill in a hole in what's needed by other people. The same goes for playing them; and for empowering other people to join together to sing. That is a real need. That other people do what I do better than I do, or reach a wider audience, or do so in different genres, it doesn't matter.



So all of us in the church are called to be who we are for the purpose of transforming the world, of "lifting up those who are bowed down," which is what God does, of protecting the weak and reconciling differences among people, which is what God does. We are called by God in our baptism to be facilitators of unity, peace, and reconciliation, with a special love for those without easy access to opportunity and resources.

Liturgy is kind of an act of intentional remembering for the purpose of arousing thanksgiving in mind and action, and also a physical acting-out or rehearsal of a grateful response. We remember who God is, what God has done in Christ through the Holy Spirit for us and for our world, and we set about acting in a way that allows God to act through us. We greet one another, friend, family and stranger alike, as beloved sisters and brothers; we announce and respond to

God's word, we sing God's word, we sing memory and forgiveness and thanksgiving and love songs to God; we feed one another from God's table with living bread, the living self-gift that is Jesus Christ in his mystical body; we collect gifts of money for the use of the church and offer them with ourselves and Christ at the altar. Into that apparently mere ritual are folded the other 167 hours of the week, hours filled with caring for one another, especially sick family members, aging parents, volunteering at PADS sites, food pantries, and resale shops; big and little acts of compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation. All of it a mosaic of people using their gifts to serve the needs of others, with an eye to lifting up the lowly. All of it practice in bowing down, in service to one another. Which is what God does.

Participation in liturgy is a sacrament of participation in life. The more conscious, the more fully aware and active participation in liturgy is, the richer the experience is, just as the experience of all of life is enriched by reflection and gratitude. That's what I'm going to try to tell people at St. Anne this weekend when I'm inviting them to consider participating in liturgical ministry, if it's their time, and if they're feeling the call to do so. I know that there is a need. I believe in the church, and that this is the way the Holy Spirit leads and organizes the church, by relating gift to need. Then I hope I'll be able to relate this entire experience and my own career in music and songwriting as a microcosm of the Spirit's miraculous work in my talk at King's College.

The gospel and tradition of the church calls us to integrity in humility: what we say and do matters. Our deeds need to match our words. The word this weekend is, Do not strive for glory as ministers for God. Instead, become great by going lower, by becoming a servant. That's what God does in Christ, and no servant is greater than the master. We have one master: Christ the servant.

*What we're singing at St. Anne this week:*

Gathering: Psalm 23 (Conry)

Psalm 131 My Soul Is Longing for Your Peace (Deiss)

Alleluia - Mass of St Aidan

Gifts: To You Who Bow

Eucharistic Acclamations: Mass of Joy and Peace (Alonso)

Communion: Heart of a Shepherd

Closing: Canticle of the Turning

---

This contribution is available at <http://rorycooney.blogspot.com/2017/11/service-and-participation-a310.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Lost Time: Resting Before St. Michael the Archangel [at The Frank Friar]

### The Victorious Angel

With two years of French under my belt, a 17-year-old me finds myself away from the group as we were touring around the Louvre in Paris, France. A country boy from rural Michigan surrounded by artistic works that have shaped the human conscience for hundreds and hundreds of years. To say that I had no frame of reference to help me deal with the art I was beholding, would have been an understatement. Through my meandering, I found myself before [Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan](#) an artistic masterpiece done by Raphael. The size, scope, and depth of this work grabbed my eyes with such a force that it was impossible for me to break my gaze from it. The flow of the oils over the canvas enticed me in such a way that I felt that I was within the painting, cheering on this angelic conqueror. I knew not the names of these angelic and demonic combatants, but I knew through the moving colors, that the good was victorious over the evil.

### Taste of the Transcendent

Time is an interesting concept, when a person is in a moment of rapture, like I was before that painting time suddenly has a different sense to it. My body and mind felt like I was merely observing the work for a meager 20 seconds.

However, as my eyes broke free from the painting I looked at my watch and was astounded that those 20 seconds were in fact 20 minutes. I lost time. Being captivated by that painted and losing my sense of time were both new experiences for me. My mind had neither the categories nor language to grasp what had just happened to me. How does a person just simply lose 20 minutes of her or his life like that? I was in awe about the whole thing, but unfortunately, I could not remain with the experience, because I knew the group would be looking for me by that time. Fortunately, that memory of that transcendent moment before St. Michael for 20 minutes stayed with me. The will of God, unbeknownst to me was at play in my life through that painting.

## Coming Home

As quickly as the seasons pass, that 17-year-old me became a 21-year-old man. The farm boy committed to others turned into a self-absorbed person that used others in his life for his own selfish gain. Yet, the Lord was not done with me. In October of 2004 the Holy Spirit placed a question in my head, “why don’t you go to Church?” That whole month was spent wrestling with that question as my external eye, began to focus on my internal heart (this month is a story for another time). Finally, I yielded to the question, and went to the local Catholic Church. As I walked into that church for the 7pm Sunday evening Mass for the college students, I was greeted by a statue. It was a statue of an angel slaying a demon. Yes, the name of that parish is St. Michael the Archangel parish. Upon seeing that statue memories began to fire off, taking me back to that 17-year-old me before the painting in Paris. That taste of awe during that transcendent moment returned to me again before that statue, and I did not know why, but I did know that I was where I had to be at that exact moment of my life. I still do not know why the Lord called me at that moment in my life. All I know is what the Prophet [Isaiah](#) wrote “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.” Yet, through that gift of lost time, brought forth by a moment of transcendent awe, my heart was cracked open and was able to receive God’s grace on that October day, when I returned home to the Catholic Church. Moreover, from that day on I knew the Lord had claim over my life, and I began to experience the truth, put forward by the [Psalmist](#) “O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.”

---

This contribution is available at <http://thefrankfriar.com/2017/10/13/lost-time/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Holding On To Hope [at Sunflower Sojourn]

“May the God of hope fill you with *all joy and peace* as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

Having hope isn't always an easy task. *It's in the situations when we really need hope that it's easiest to lose it!* Hope is so necessary to live our best lives possible. Hope brings *freedom*. **When we lose hope, we live in anxiety and fear.** We lose our joy and our center. Hope lifts the shackles of worry off of us. Hope protects and preserves—when we lose hope, we lose faith in the thing we hoped for! **If we are no longer hoping, we might miss it when what we hoped for comes along!**



Photo by [Evan Kirby](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**To the world, remaining in hope sometimes seems crazy.** But, we serve an awesome God! He's a , a miracle worker, a promise keeper...Jesus Christ came as a human being to earth, this painful, messy, confused place. Then He died and actually rose from the dead for you—for your eternal JOY! **HOPE is what God offers!**

**In finding your dream job, or a job...Have hope!** Maybe there are still some stepping stones before you get there, so that you can do the BEST job possible! Or, maybe God will reveal something even greater to you along the way!

**As far as meeting a suitable spouse...Have hope!** Being hopeless isn't going

to attract the person you are waiting on! Have HOPE in God's promises and goodness...Even if the timing is not what you wanted or what the world thought was reasonable!

**In any situation...Have hope! *You never know how the situation will turn around!*** In my life, I remember a time when I had been job searching for months...I had interview after interview...But no job offers (except retail). One day, out of the blue, I had an email from a supervisor at an organization where I had volunteered a few years back. They were starting a new program—and my qualifications literally fit perfectly with what they were looking for! Basically, it was my dream job due to the different elements of it. I got the job almost automatically! Believe me, I never would have expected that to happen! **But GOD. Faith and hope sustained me throughout all those closed doors!**

**Find hope!** It will add increase and strength to your life, as well as to the lives of those around you! **An attitude of hope is, well, *hopeful!*** If you're struggling with finding hope...Pray for it! Believe me, it will be granted, sometimes in ways you never expected! **I love all my readers and I pray that each of you has an outpouring of hope as you read, in whatever situation you need hope!**

**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and *not to harm you*, plans to give you *hope and a future.*” Jeremiah 29:11**



---

This contribution is available at <http://sunflowersojourn.wordpress.com/2017/10/27/holding-on-to-hope/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Thank You For Coming! [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

It is a privilege each week to share one of my posts with Allison Gingras at [Reconciled To You](#) and Elizabeth Riordan at [Theology Is A Verb](#) as part of their *Worth Revisiting* promotion.



When I entered this world, my Blessed Mother and her most chaste spouse, Joseph, welcomed Me with loving arms, eyes and hearts. A choir of heavenly angels surrounded and serenaded us!

My heart leaped for joy when the humble shepherds came and paid Me homage. I smiled! We waited.

But none of the religious, political or social leaders bothered to visit. They never thought to look for Me. I cried! Even today, centuries after my arrival, most of

them rarely think of Me. I cry!

Then the foreign dignitaries came. They had left their country in search of the Truth, not knowing on their departure, exactly Where, What or Who that Truth was but certain they would find It. They did - the Incarnate Truth wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger - and they were forever changed. I smiled!

My parents and I had to flee to Egypt to thwart Herod's plan to murder Me. He killed other Innocents instead. Oh, how we cried! This type of evil continues to manifest itself today. We still cry!

As I embarked on my public ministry, many welcomed my miracles but later rejected Me. Only My Mother, Mary Magdalene, My Beloved disciple John and a handful of women walked the *Via Dolorosa* with me and watched them nail me to the cross. They cried.

I rose from the dead in order to restore eternal life to those who would believe in Me - so many still do not. I cry!

I remain physically here among those I love - Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity - in the Most Blessed Sacrament, waiting for them to visit. Few ever come. Hardly anyone believes I am really and substantially present here among them. I cry!

So you can imagine the ineffable joy I experienced when this Chapel of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration opened and each of you, one by one, sometimes in pairs, began visiting me for an hour each week. You still come these many years later, often at great sacrifice, even when you are tired, discouraged, overwhelmed with worry, anxiety, illness or distraught over the death of a loved

one.

You have given Me the greatest gift possible – yourself, your time, and your heart. Your presence here with Me is a source of great comfort and a most welcomed act of reparation for the general indifference so many display toward my Pierced and Sacred Heart!

When you next visit and see Me encased in this modest Monstrance blessed by my beloved John Paul II and so majestically held up by this angelic throne, know that I look at you lovingly as tears of joy flow from my Sacred Face in appreciation for the gift of your presence.

I love you more than you are able to presently understand. I desire to hold you eternally in My arms! Will you let Me?

---

This contribution is available at  
<http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2017/10/worth-revisiting-thank-you-for-coming.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## **Time for a Real Solution [at On the Road to Damascus]**

In the wake of yet another tragic act of violence there has been the usual knee jerk reaction calling for more laws and more restrictions, more bans and more loss of freedoms concerning guns. The gun is to blame for the killing in Las Vegas. If we only had one more law this could have been avoided.

Chicago has the strictest gun control in this nation. Some of their laws even have been ruled as being unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States. The types of guns people use in these senseless acts are illegal altogether in Chicago. On paper, Chicago should be the safest place in this country. Yet, every year Chicago leads the nation in the numbers of murders and the numbers of people who are shot. Their crime is now spilling over to neighboring communities and they too are seeing a record number of murders. Obviously more legislation is not the answer to the problem.

Perhaps the solution is more incarceration. Maybe if we jail more criminals and keep them there longer these sorts of things wouldn't happen. The United States also leads the world in the number of people we incarcerate. It does not appear that building more jails and filling them with the unruly is the solution either. So what is the solution? Where do we start?

Society is broken. We have lost sight of what is good and true. We hold lies and impossibilities in higher regard. For example, we have institutions full of people we have locked away simply because they believe themselves to be something they are not. Mr. Jones thinks he is Abraham Lincoln so we have to institutionalize him for his own good and for the protection of the population. Yet, Bruce Jenner is heralded as a hero, given his own TV show, and made woman of the year for becoming Caitlyn. Mr. Jones is a danger, Bruce is a hero. Both believe themselves to be something they can never truly be.

Our society has gone completely off the rails. We idolize decadence and debauchery. We kill our children and call it a choice. We extend rights to places they were never intended to exist and take the same rights away from those they are intended to protect. We live in an age where everything perverse is

permissible and everything good is unfathomable. Nothing is forgiven.

If we want to rebuild this society to the greatness it once was we will have to begin by restoring our foundation. It makes no sense to fix a leaky roof when the crumbling foundation is about to bring the entire building crashing down.

Contrary to popular belief, the foundation of every society is the family, not the individual. As goes the family so goes the society. It should come as no surprise to anyone that our society is in shambles. We have been chipping away at the family for over fifty years now.

The women's liberation movement started the ball rolling by neutering the male. We have never had a feminist movement in this country. What we have had is an attempt to masculinize femininity. There has been a highly successful campaign to get women to believe that the only way they can be considered equal to a man is if they can say and do everything a man does. They try to shame women who embrace their maternal side to stay home and raise the next generation. We created the pill so women can have sex like men, without fear of getting pregnant, and then made abortion legal so they can kill the unwanted if they still did. These two things combined have done more to destroy our country than any enemy we have ever faced on the battlefield.

The "empowering" of women disenfranchised the men. There is no job a woman can't do better than a man, including being a father. With the male's role severely reduced in society his role as father was also reduced. Fathers took a far backseat in contributing to the upbringing of their children. God made us male and female and bestowed upon us different characteristics. Both father and mother are vital to raising a well balanced child.

The glue that holds a family together is the marriage of the father and mother. This too has been under merciless attack for decades. Marriage began as solely a religious institution but state governments quickly got involved because of the importance of marriage and the family in the structure of society. Government used to recognize this and support the traditional marriage. We no longer consider traditional marriage as being the primary building block that forms the cornerstone of society. Marriage is now viewed as an individual right, not important to society. Marriage has gone from a life-long covenant to a dissoluble contract. The family has paid a great price for it. Blended families are now the norm. Fatherless families are not that far behind. The statistics of what happens to the children of fatherless families are staggering. It is rare for good things to

come from a family without a father as its head.

If we want to rebuild our society the first thing that has to happen is that fathers have to step up and do the job correctly. We have to restore the value of men and those men have to be the strong examples their children crave.

We have to realize that marriage isn't about love or what two consenting adults want to do to each other. Marriage is about procreating the next generation and to provide stable unity for those children to grow, thrive, and be loved in. Marriage is a vocation. It is not a right. A vocation is a calling from God. Not everyone is called to be married and no one is called to be in a nontraditional marriage. That is the devil at work in our lives.

With fathers being fathers and mothers being mothers who are committed in a life-long traditional marriage we can raise a well adjusted next generation who can start to right the ship. Until we fix our broken foundation we will just continue the slide into moral decay. The pendulum can only swing so far before it starts swinging the other way. I hope that we are almost at full amplitude.



---

This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2017/10/time-for-real-solution.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 11 Nov 2017 17:04:11 GMT  
Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked  
Connection: keep-alive Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=86400 Vary:  
Accept-Encoding Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit  
automattic.com/jobs and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback:  
https://shiftingmyperspective.com/xmlrpc.php Link: ; rel=shortlink X-ac: 3.atl  
\_dfw

## Learning From Experience [at Shifting My Perspective]

**Thus says the Lord of hosts: Reflect on your experience! Haggai 1:7**



Jocelyn has a tendency to replay negative experiences over and over again. Out of the blue, she'll bring up a bad memory from years ago. She won't just cry about it; she'll downright sob. It breaks my heart that she puts herself in these tailspins, for no apparent reason.

I've been trying to teach her that she can have power over her thoughts. I explain that when a painful memory pops into her head, she can choose to focus on it, or push it aside.

I know that trying NOT to think about something is actually thinking about it. So

I help her replace the thought: together we remember good things that she can think about instead. This technique always works with my boys. Unfortunately, it only works half the time with Jocelyn.

But just the other morning, by complete accident, Jocelyn gave me a whole new approach that I think is the answer to her problem.

As Jocelyn was eating breakfast before school, the microwave kept beeping, letting us know my bone broth was warmed and ready. I was busy packing her lunch box and water bottle into her backpack, and didn't get to the microwave for a bit. After about the fifth beep, Jocelyn said, "I want to help you. But remember that time I tried to get your bone broth out of the microwave and I burned myself? That really hurt." She then started to get upset thinking about how much pain that burn had caused.

Although she was focusing on the second half of her comment, the first half kept replaying in my mind. It finally hit me why: she had just given me the tactic I had been searching for for years.

"Jocelyn, you're a genius!" I exclaimed. "You used a bad memory to help you learn something good. You wanted to help me, but you remembered what happened last time, and you didn't want to repeat that. You are so smart!"

In the short time I spoke, she went from being on the verge of tears, to beaming with pride. Giving her bad memory a good purpose reframed it, and put it in its place. If she ever digs it up again, she'll know, like a coin, that there are two sides to that memory. She can then flip it to see the good.

We've all made mistakes, and lived through big issues and tragedies. Life is hard, and it always will be. But if we can look on the flip side of our difficult memories, and learn from them, we give them purpose. Each time we do, that experience becomes a coin in our wisdom treasure chest. The more coins we collect, the richer in wisdom we become.

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

***\* Do I ever rehash old mistakes and issues, reliving the bad feelings they stir up?***

***\* Have I learned the lessons those memories carry in their hands?***

***\* Can I now reframe those memories and only reflect on the positive they've brought to my life?***

---

This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2017/10/05/learning-from-experience/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## More on Luther and the Holy See [at Catholic Deacon]

Whose work informs my views on Luther, his theses and Cardinal Cajetan? Well, that of many scholars both Protestant and Catholic. Most recently, Dr Seymour House, who teaches at Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon, introduced me to the work of Fr. Jared Wicks, SJ. Fr. Wicks's doctoral dissertation, directed by none other than one Joseph Ratzinger, was on Luther. Published back in the 1980s, it was revolutionary for Catholic Reformation scholarship. Here's the best thing I could find on Fr. Wicks to pass along on short notice:

["An Interview with Jared Wicks, S.J., Catholic scholar of Luther."](#)

As far as Martin Luther and Cardinal Thomas Cajetan- they encountered each other from 12-18 October 1518 in Augsburg, Germany. Cajetan was sent on a mission: to get the troublesome Augustinian to recant what had been deemed heretical in his 95 Theses and his other public pronouncements, particularly his

[\*Sermon on Indulgences and Grace\*](#)

, up until that time. This was not an academic

*disputatio*

, but an inquisition. Luther approached it as such, which is to say ready to fight.

Suffice it to say, when it comes to Luther, theological reasoning did not win the day, which was hardly surprising given the politics and the sorry state of the Church at the time. To state that Leo X's interpretation of Luther's teaching as set forth in 41 condemned theses in

[\*Exsurge Domine\*](#)

leave something to be desired is merely to re-state a widely held scholarly view. While

*Exsurge*

dealt with more of Luther's teachings than those found in his 95 theses, it is not controversial to assert that the bull did not do a good job in of capturing Luther's theological concerns and so did not adequately deal with them. This, in turn, calls into question at least some of the grounds on which he was condemned as a heretic.

Prior to his 95 Theses, Luther had published nothing. This was not usual for professors of the day. The printing press was still relatively new and the printing business would only find its economic footing as the result of Martin Luther's prolific efforts and his deep involvement in the layout and publication of his works. While printers made a lot of money off Luther's writings, as an author he did not.

Between the publication of his theses and his encounter with Cardinal Cajetan, Luther had only published his

*Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*

in March 1518. Between October 1518 and the promulgation of

*Exsurge Domine*

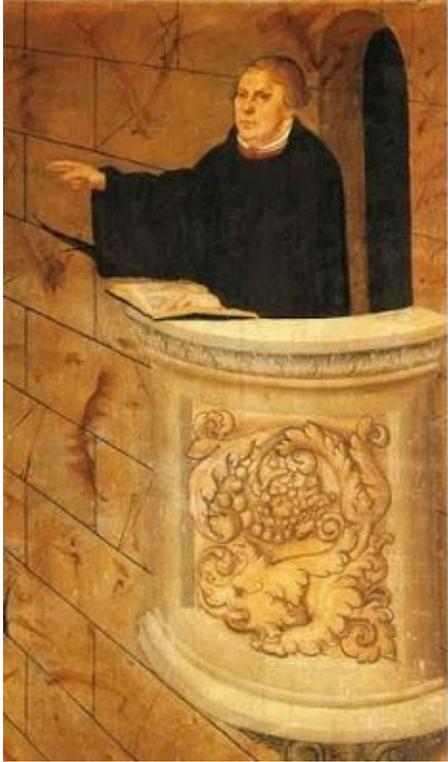
there was only the disputation in Leipzig at which Luther spoke.

I suppose an example is in order. So, below are the first two of Luther's

[95 theses](#)

:

*When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy*



## **Luther preaching in Wittenberg**

In

[\*Exurge Domine\*](#)

, Pope Leo X clearly had no problem with thesis 1. Keeping in mind Luther was first and foremost a Bible scholar, who knew Koine Greek and was highly proficient in Hebrew, his assertions in both theses likely seemed reasonable not only to him but some other Catholic theologians of the day as well. But at the very beginning of his

[\*Sermon on Indulgences and Grace\*](#)

, Luther, a Biblical humanist who took his cue from St. Bernard of Clairvaux (a must read for anyone who wants to grasp Luther's Catholicism is Franz Posset's

[\*Pater Bernhardus: Martin Luther and Bernard of Clairvaux\*](#)

), took the scholastics to task when he stated:

First, you should know that some new teachers, such as the Master of

Sentences, St. Thomas [Aquinas], and their disciples, divide [the Sacrament of] Penance into three parts: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. And, although this distinction and opinion of theirs is scarcely or not at all to be found based in Holy Scripture or in the ancient holy Christian teachers, nevertheless we will pass over this for now and speak using their categories

This is what likely led to this condemnation, the fifth one, found in

*Exsurge Domine*

:

*That there are three parts to penance: contrition, confession, and satisfaction, has no foundation in Sacred Scripture nor in the ancient sacred Christian doctors*

In his work

*On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*

, published in October 1520, not only after the promulgation of

*Exsurge*

, but after the 60 days the bull gave him to recant, along with Baptism and Eucharist, Luther affirmed Penance as a sacrament. Now, Luther's view as to how the sacrament is efficacious in light of his

*Sermon*

certainly prompts questions. But to assert that penance conceived of as contrition, confession, and satisfaction is not scriptural or even all that traditional is not necessarily to deny these elements are consistent with revelation. In fact, Luther did not deny the first two at all. He unequivocally held that one should be sorry for one's sins and confess them. The issue, therefore, became that of satisfaction. Luther's problem with satisfaction arose from how indulgences were sold. Indulgences were marketed as doing away with the need for satisfaction. It is fair to say he also had a problem with how satisfaction was conceived of by the schoolmen: performing good works in order to be forgiven.

By focusing on the importance of contrition for sin, Luther held that being truly

By focusing on the importance of contrition for sin, Luther held that being truly sorry for one's sins led one to do good works, that is, pray, fast, and give alms. Here is what Luther said in his

*Sermon*

:

No one can defend the position with any passage from Scripture that God's righteousness desires or demands any punishment or satisfaction from sinners except for their heartfelt and true contrition or conversion alone—with the condition that from that moment on they bear the cross of Christ and practice the aforementioned works (but not as imposed by anyone)

For this Bible scholar, what else could Jesus's call to

*metanoia*

mean except to be sorry for one's sins and to converted, to have a change of mind and heart.be contrite and be converted? In essence, what Luther's attempted reform was about was the conversion of Christians, the interior movement of the Spirit as opposed to merely external observances.

It must be admitted that Luther's temperament after Augsburg and Leipzig was such that when challenged he was prone to take his positions to their extremes. One can see this in his disputation with Erasmus concerning Christian freedom.

One might also explore Luther's condemnation in

*Exsurge*

(condemnation 2) on the ground that he held infants, after Baptism, still suffered the effects of original sin in light of the Catholic Church's teaching on concupiscence, which also seeks to explain why Christians continue to sin after Baptism.

With that, apart from my remarks for my presentation in November on

*What the Catholic Church Learned from the Reformation*

, I have done my due diligence as a Catholic blogger to observe the 500th anniversary of the publication of Luther's 95 Theses

anniversary of the publication of Luther's 95 Theses.

---

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2017/10/more-on-luther-and-holy-see.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Our Miscarriage Story [at A Couple of Catholics]

Have you ever just had a feeling deep in your gut that things were not going to turn out alright?

From the day I found out we were expecting our third I just had this ominous sense wash over me. Something just told me that this was not meant to be.

Call it crazy.

Call it mother's intuition.

Call it whatever you want, but I always knew buried in the depth of my heart that we would not be meeting our child this coming Easter.

Of course, I hoped for a different ending, I never wanted to actually say the words out loud for fear that they would give life to this nightmare I'd been carrying silently in the recesses of my mind.

I know it sounds silly looking back on it, but I always just knew. Just like I always knew she was a girl.

I remember feeling so anxious as I counted down the days to the milestone eight-week appointment when we would be able to see her heartbeat. With previous pregnancies, my nerves always began to settle down after the eight-week appointment, but still, this was not the case with Francine. Her pregnancy was different from the start. Even after seeing her beautiful little wiggles and steady heartbeat on the ultrasound screen my mind was not at ease.

By the time our twelve-week appointment rolled around I was practically bracing myself for the news that something had gone horribly wrong. I remember the morning of the appointment a thought crossed my mind that I should invite Pat to come along. But in a rush, I failed to heed that little nudge from the Holy Spirit and walked right out the door.

As I entered the doctor's office and laid back on the cold, sterile examining table my thoughts raced as I anxiously yearned to hear her sweet, healthy heartbeat.

My OB rolled the monitor back and forth against my abdomen searching for a heartbeat he would never find and I found myself repeating the names of Jesus and Mary...my feeble attempt at prayer. The truth was my thoughts were racing so fast I couldn't even remember the words to a prayer let alone muster up the courage or grace to mumble one.

My doctor soon gave up on the heart monitor and kindly asked me to step into the ultrasound room to see what was going on.

I wanted to scream, "you're not going to find a heartbeat. She's gone." Somehow I held tightly onto what little composure I had and played along. Before I knew it, there she was on a grainy, black and white monitor exposed for all to see.

What should have been a moment to make my maternal heart swell with joy and optimism, instead became the moment it was torn to pieces. My heart plummeted to my stomach. The breath stolen from my lungs.

Time stood still as I began to feel the weight of what was no longer a fear, but a reality...my reality.

I know it sounds so cliché, but I've never known suffering quite like this. I've met suffering before, of course. I've watched friends and family pass away, some unexpectedly, others after a long life well lived. But this cross is different...not necessarily heavier just indescribably different. It's a foreign sort of pain and loss. One I'm still grappling with for sure.

## **How do you grieve and put to rest someone the world never knew?**

There are no stories or memories to find joy or solace. Yet, I knew this beautiful soul, deeply and intimately. Her whole being was wrapped up into mine.

It's fitting that we lost Francine on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

I could have discovered this heart-wrenching loss on any day, but Our Mother in Her Blessed Sweetness chose to come alongside and meet me in my sorrow that day. Rather, she chose to lead me further into her own Immaculate, Sorrowful and Anguished Heart that day.

In my better moments, I've offered to her this unyielding pain as a feeble way to console her Most Immaculate Heart. In my weaker moments, I've reached for Her, clinging to the solidarity that we've both lost someone so precious to us, someone, the world never truly knew. And as strange as it sounds I'm thankful for that.

The following days and weeks have been a blur. I feel like a shell of who I once was and while its only been a few weeks I seriously doubt I'll ever get over this.

The truth is even if I wanted to I could never go back. Six short weeks ago I was with child. I had life growing inside of me. I was starting to show, struggling to zip up my pants and anxiously anticipating feeling her first squirms and movements. I was hopeful and starry-eyed for the future this little one would bring. I anticipated her arrival and looked forward to discovering the little personality that would unfold before us.

And now its all come to a sudden halt. I'm not carrying and nourishing a baby inside of me anymore.

Instead of a round, growing belly — a hopeful, winsome, daydreaming heart, I'm left with an empty tomb, hallow and cold, and a heart now pregnant with grief, worry, and doubt.

Though I'm no longer with child, my heart doesn't seem to know the difference. I still long to mother her, to care for and love her, but my longings are left with no outlet.

## **So where do I go from here?**

After all, this is the kinda stuff that can cripple people.

The kind of stuff that can unleash a darkness in the heart that never seems to fade, a darkness that if not reckoned with could easily take hold for the long run. If there is one thing I know it's that there is no middle ground with grief...you either deal or you don't. You either face the darkness and eventually find the light or the darkness will overcome.

I'm certain Our Lady grappled with the same feelings, the same darkness, the same mess of emotions we desperately try to bundle together under the guise of grief. I'm certain that her pain was infinitely more piercing than mine...even on

the worst days. And I'm clinging to the confidence, supplied only by His grace that like any good mother, she will walk with me through this grief to a place where it doesn't ache quite as much.

After all, didn't she do just that when the world fell into despair on those three darkest days her Son was in the tomb?

She stayed with the apostles and Mary Magdalene, grieving with them, consoling them. At a time when she could have isolated herself, sitting in the darkness of her own grief...a grief brought on by the world itself, she didn't. Instead of blaming the world or shutting herself out from it, she did the very opposite.

She brought the lamenting world into her warm, loving embrace.

She consoled the world who put Love to death, resting in hope and confidence that the Lord was not finished. She found healing for her broken heart by giving it to others, by caring for and nurturing like mothers so often do.

And oddly enough it is in her very suffering that I have found hope, hope provided by God's goodness but brought to life by her example.

So it is my prayer that I can follow the road she has paved for me, walking side by side with those who suffer in whatever capacity, offering hope and encouragement that He does, in fact, have more in store for us, each and every one of us.

This is where I can begin to move past grief and into something greater. This is where healing is found.

---

This contribution is available at <http://acoupleofcatholics.com/blog/2017/11/01/francine-helen-miscarriage-story/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Lessons from the Vineyard on how to grow in the Christian life through obedience, self-denial and prayer [at One Pearl]



The vineyard is the spiritual life of the Christian. The Lord has prepared the ground by removing stones and tilling, planted her in fertile soil and given her all she needs to be fruitful. At the first sign of fruit, she is pruned, *channeling all of His grace, all of the growing energy into the fruitful branches.*

### **The Hedge of Obedience to God's Will**

As the foundation of the spiritual life, He has built around her a hedge of the law. At first glance, the law might seem like a constraint which keeps the soul from going where it will, but the barking of little foxes reveals the Lord's plan. "My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.'" (Sg of Sgs 2:9-10, 15) The hedge keeps out those things which would destroy the fragile vineyard. In Jesus' time, the vineyard owner planted a hedge around the vineyard to keep animals and thieves out. It also kept the grapes from becoming wild and sour.

The law and conscience help her to hear the voice of the Lord, keeping out other voices which tempt, distract, and confuse. The hedge helps to direct the growth of the vineyard properly, leaving it free to grow to its true glory and beauty.

## **The Winepress of Self-Denial**

Next, the divine gardener digs a pit of poverty in which to press grapes into wine. Through [sacrifice and trial](#), the Lord digs, carves out of the heart all that is unnecessary. This makes space, makes her empty, so that He can pour Himself into her. When the time comes for pressing grapes the Lord squeezes her once again. He asks her to constantly let go of all she clings to, all she has accumulated. With worldly pleasures stripped away, we discover the “good stuff” (wine!) and are able to drink deeply of it.

Although grapes are delicious by themselves, the Lord reveals that He can make them into something even better, if she will give all of her fruit to Him.

Ultimately the fruit of the spiritual life is the imitation of Christ. The winepress also helps reveal this because it is an altar on which her fruit is sacrificed. She is transformed into His very self through the reception of this wine.

The Christian who freely embraces self-denial quickly learns the simple joy of the gospel. Acknowledging our poverty brings us together in interdependent fraternity because it forces us to rely on one another. If we live poverty, all our illusions of independence are stripped away. We will learn our desperate need for the wine of the new covenant, Jesus’ blood.

## **The Tower of Prayer**

This tower is the sacred place of intimacy with her beloved. No one but Christ is permitted to enter. Yet, the whole world enters her tower as His body! This is an enclosure where she is safe in the embrace of His arms, where they know each other. It is knowing His love that gives her utter peace, joy, and confidence. This is where she comes to know Him and know herself.

Scriptures speaks over and over of the chosen people being encircled, surrounded. Jerusalem itself is of a circular shape, surrounded by mountains. We find this in the Song of Songs, in which the bride and her beloved share intimately in his “rooms”. In Hebrew this is *Masseh*: “the translations suggested for the Hebrew *Masseh* have this in common: they refer to a round space, an

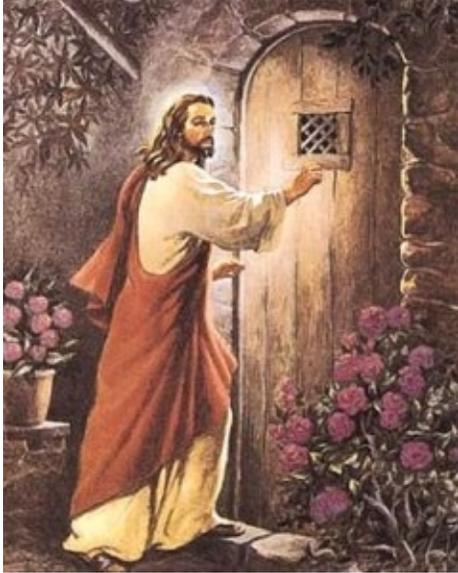
enclosure, a round room, a round banquet hall...What matters is the idea, the feeling, that the Bride has: wherever she is, she is now always wrapped in the protective tenderness of the Bridegroom and totally surrendered to him.”  
(Cantata of Love, 114-115)

Ultimately, prayer is at the heart of the spiritual life. A spousal relationship with Christ, a life in imitation of and union with him, is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life. The tower reminds us of this goal, of the vision of our lives. When we get nearsighted and distracted by the daily tasks of the vineyard, we need to climb the tower and remember why we have come. During harvesting season, a vineyard owner (or his steward) would live in the tower to be on the lookout for thieves and animals who would threaten his crops. In the soul of the Christian it is always harvesting time and constant vigilance is required. Christ watches over the vineyard night and day, to protect it, but also to admire it.

## **The Call of the Vinedresser**

The Christian is not the owner of the vineyard; she must keep this truth ever before her eyes. The Lord carefully planted the vineyard, built the hedge, winepress and tower, and then entrusted her with this gift. He waits in expectancy for her to flower and blossom. She must nurture and care for this gift in order for it to be fruitful. To do this, she must remain constantly in the flow of living water – His grace. For the vineyard cannot survive without His grace – “Apart from me you can do nothing.” To be fruitful she must “remain in him”, the true vine.

The incredible thing about vineyards in Israel is that they survive for most of the growing season without a single drop of rain.” *The nightly dew is enough to sustain them for months.* And so it is in the spiritual life. Her vineyard will often seem more like a desert, dry and desolate. She must trust in these times that the Lord is sustaining her in the night with secret dew and although all seems dark, “He waters her at every moment.” (Is. 27:3)

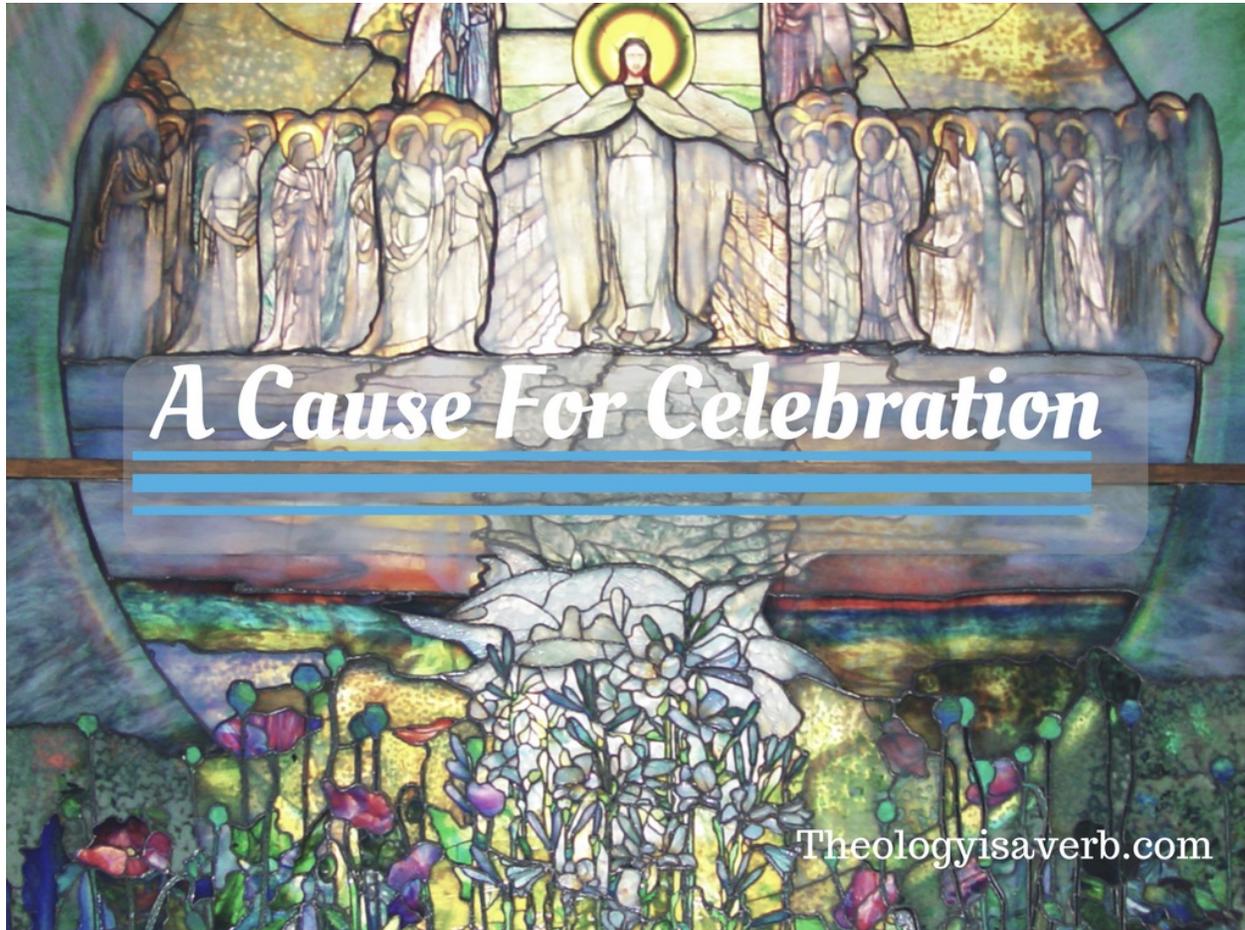


For we see this truth throughout scripture: the [Bridegroom](#) comes in the stillness of the night, “with dew” and “the drops of the night.”(Sg of Sgs 5:2) When her beloved stands at the gate and calls to be let in, what will her response be? Will she be ready, with lamps alight, like the wise virgins? When the Father sends the Son to ask for everything, will she remember that it was His all along? Will she, like the other tenants hold onto an earthly inheritance or will she remember that He “takes nothing away and gives her everything”(Ben. XVI)? Her beloved has promised her: “everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.” (Mt 19:29) He is so humble, so gentle that He will never force His way into the vineyard, which is really His! Her “... beloved is knocking. ‘Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove...’”(Sg of Sgs 5:2)

---

This contribution is available at [http://www.onepearl316.com/spirituallife\\_vineyard/](http://www.onepearl316.com/spirituallife_vineyard/)  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## A Cause of Celebration [at Theologyisaverb]



When you think of the many reasons that might lead you to celebrate, odds are that this experience would not make your top 10 or even your top 100. And yet, as a believer in Christ, the truest promise of salvation should be our greatest cause of celebration. Inexhaustibly matched by a Father's joy and overwhelmed by the hope found in Jesus, grief is a journey of discovery of each of these. What then, if we intentionally began this journey from this perspective?

At a mere eleven in years, I had found one of the greatest teachers that I would ever have. Standing at 5' 3 she was spunky, compassionate, enthusiastic about grammar, and a paradox of interests and gifts. Her two favorite loves were unquestionably Jesus and Magnum PI, both of whom adorned her personal grading and lesson plan book. That sixth grade year, she would have me both

detesting and embracing the fine art of diagramming sentences. I also found that year a teacher that took a genuine interest in every single student that walked into her class. Though she would certainly have not chosen favorites, she was undoubtedly mine.

*And then suddenly she was gone.*

Sitting in my kitchen that Sunday evening, the phone rang. How odd, I thought, it was that one of my teachers called to speak to my mother, seeing as how she taught high school. Yet, apparently I wasn't the only one who knew how much this amazing teacher and woman of faith meant to me. As my mother relayed what had transpired since Friday with a sudden illness and complications, I sat motionless. Though hearing the words, I could not connect the series of events to the fact I would never see her again. The following day, when the principal addressed the students with the news, I laid claim to grief. And still, I felt the best way to honor her, would be to be present in her Father's house, though I wasn't sure where her church was. "Are you sure, Elizabeth..are you sure you want to go to the funeral?", my mother asked. "Yes, I need to say goodbye..would you go with me?" "Of course " she said,"let me find out the arrangements".

As we walked up to that small white church, the music carried out the open windows on the cool fall breeze. Entering in, I was ready to say goodbye but not for the lesson of love to come. While it mattered little to me, and to anyone else gathered, that my mother and I were not of African American descent I did wonder what they must of thought of why I was there. And even I was unsure that I had the right place. For, gone were the somber clothes of black and grey, and in its place instead was a vibrant array of color. Bright flowers, and joyful songs raised in praise revealed not sadness but unparalleled hope in the life that awaited. Though it was almost more than a little girl in mourning could take- it was the very thing that was needed.

That night my heart was full of questions. How could they sing when the loss is so new..did they not miss her too? Didn't they know it was a funeral and not a birthday? That was it! They sang because it was a birthday of sorts, not an end but a beginning of a new eternal life with God. They celebrated the fact that their joy for her in the promise of heaven could more than bear their loss. To this very day I cannot think of funerals in the same way that I did before. Do I mourn? Yes, but I also sing..and celebrate!

My life flows on in endless song;  
above earth's lamentation,  
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn  
that hails a new creation.

Refrain:

No storm can shake my inmost calm  
while to that Rock I'm clinging.  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,  
how can I keep from singing?

Through all the tumult and the strife,  
I hear that music ringing.  
It finds an echo in my soul.  
How can I keep from singing? [Refrain]

What though my joys and comforts die?  
I know my Savior liveth.  
What though the darkness gather round?  
Songs in the night he giveth. [Refrain]

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,  
a fountain ever springing!  
All things are mine since I am his!  
How can I keep from singing? [Refrain]

"How Can I Keep From Singing", Robert Lowry, 1826-1899

Peace,

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

*This post is part of the Catholic Women Bloggers Network Bloghop. To read*



*more like this:*

---

This contribution is available at <http://theologyisaverb.com/2017/10/16/a-cause-of-celebration/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Peaches and Cream [at Grace to Paint]



6×8” oil paint on primed canvas sheet; use ‘comment’ below to inquire.

Imaginary still life.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2017/09/29/peaches-and-cream/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Martin Luther's Teachings on the Blessed Virgin Mary

Since tomorrow, October 31, is the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the day Martin Luther nailed his “95 Theses” on the door of Wittenberg Castle Church igniting what would become the Protestant Reformation, I thought I would provide you some quotes from Luther regarding his Marian Theology. Contrary to popular belief these days, Martin Luther had a love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Although many Protestants today ignore Mary’s important role in Salvation History as well as make lavish statements regarding the Catholic Church’s teaching on Mary, Martin Luther speaks highly about the Mother of God. In his *Sermon on the Gospel of John*, he states,

“...she is rightly called not only the mother of the man, but also the Mother of God...it is certain that Mary is the Mother of the real and true God.”

I am aware, as many of you likely do as well, that many Protestants today are so far removed from Luther and have splintered countless times, most don’t recognize his teachings on many theological points, let alone his words on Mary. As you will read below, Luther’s Marian Theology, most pointedly his thoughts on Mary as the Mother of God, Mary as Ever-Virgin, the Immaculate Conception, Mary’s Assumption into Heaven, and Mary’s Spiritual Motherhood, are more closely related to the Catholic Church’s theology today than the modern-day theology of the Lutheran [ecclesial community](#).

So with this being said, here are 7 quotes I found from different sources (see them below) focusing on Martin Luther’s Marian Theology –

1. “[She is the] highest woman and noblest gem in Christianity in Christ...She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.” – *Christmas Sermon*, 1531
2. “One should honor Mary as she herself wished and as she expressed it in the Magnificat. She praised God for his deeds. How then can we praise her? The

true honor of Mary is the honor of God, the praise of God's grace...Mary is nothing for the sake of herself, but for the sake of Christ...Mary does not wish that we come to her, but through her to God." – *Explanation of the Magnificat*, 1521



3. "Christ...was the only Son of Mary, and the Virgin Mary bore no children besides Him...I am inclined to agree with those who declare that 'brothers' really mean 'cousins' here, for Holy Writ and the Jews always call cousins brother."

4. "God has formed the soul and body of the Virgin Mary full of the Holy Spirit, so that she is without all sins, for she has conceived and borne the Lord Jesus." – *Luther's Works* (can't find particular sermon).

5. "It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin." – *On the Day of the Conception of the Mother God Sermon*, 1527

6. There can be no doubt that the Virgin Mary is in heaven. How it happened we do not know. And since the Holy Spirit has told us nothing about it, we can make of it no article of faith... It is enough to know that she lives in Christ. – *Feast of the Assumption Sermon*, 1522

7. “Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all of us even though it was Christ alone who reposed on her knees...If he is ours, we ought to be in his situation; there where he is, we ought also to be and all that he has ought to be ours, and his mother is also our mother.” – *Christmas Sermon*, 1529

For further reading, I would suggest reading my sources. They were a great help to me today for writing this “Mondays with Mary”, most notably the article by Dave Armstrong. I would also suggest reading the book, which is also a study by the Augustine Institute, [\*True Reformers: Saints of the Catholic Reformation\*](#).

Sources:

Armstrong, Dave. “Martin Luther’s Devotion to Mary.” , Catholic Culture , 2017, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=788>.

Editor, ChurchPOP, et al. *6 Beautiful Quotes on Mary You Won’t Believe Are From Martin Luther*. ChurchPop , 7 Mar. 2017, [churchpop.com/2017/03/07/5-surprising-quotes-from-martin-luther-on-the-blessed-virgin-mary/](http://churchpop.com/2017/03/07/5-surprising-quotes-from-martin-luther-on-the-blessed-virgin-mary/).

“Martin Luther (Founder of the Reform), Speaks on Mary.” *Catholic Bridge*, [catholicbridge.com/catholic/martin\\_luther\\_on\\_mary.php](http://catholicbridge.com/catholic/martin_luther_on_mary.php).

---

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2017/10/30/mondays-with-mary-martin-luthers-teaching-on-the-blessed-virgin-mary/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# That they may be one - thoughts on Reformation Day



As a teacher of Church History, I find today's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation somewhat exciting. Sad, but exciting. Notable might be a better word.

Every year I teach a unit on the Reformation. It is cursory out of necessity – two weeks with 8<sup>th</sup> graders is not a lot of time – but provides a helpful gateway into the moral issues we deal with every day. When I reflect on the Reformation, particularly Luther's involvement in it, I see writ small (and then large again) the universal dance of obedience, conscience, belief, and collegiality.

I'm in no position to propose an alternate ending to the story, but I do wonder about the same things my students often do: What if Archbishop Albrecht and Pope Leo X had read the 95 Theses and thoughtfully considered his objections? What if Luther hadn't been so dramatic about everything? Were they theologically that far apart, or could each side have come to a resolution without violating their consciences? And what if the Church hadn't waited until the Council of Trent to add clarity to these theological issues that Luther was already grappling with?

We are so used to being divided these days I sometimes forget that unity was once the goal – and that perhaps it should be the goal. I acknowledge today that Luther did service to the Church by taking a stand against corruption, while also lamenting the division that was a result. Let's not make an idol out of unity, and

so doing forget that true, principled discipleship is the goal of the Christian life, but let's not disregard the value of unity either.

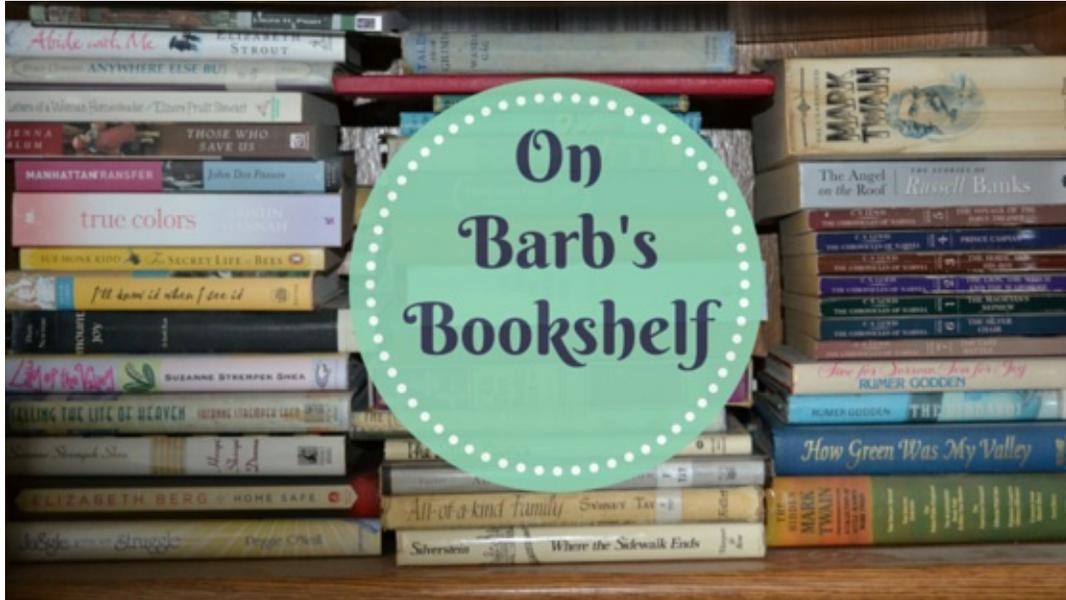
I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. – John 17: 20-23

---

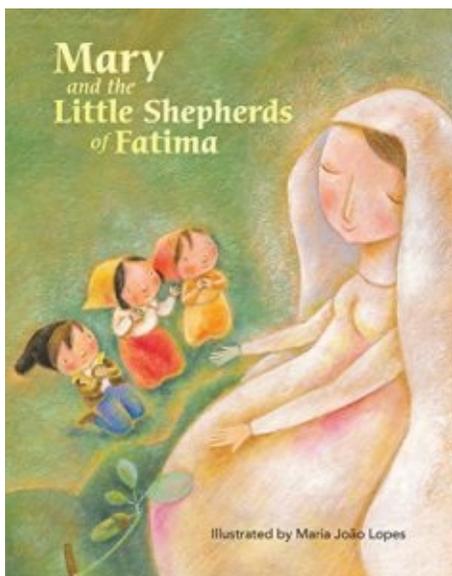
This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2017/10/31/may-one-thoughts-reformation-day/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Saintly Inspiration for Kids [at FranciscanMom]

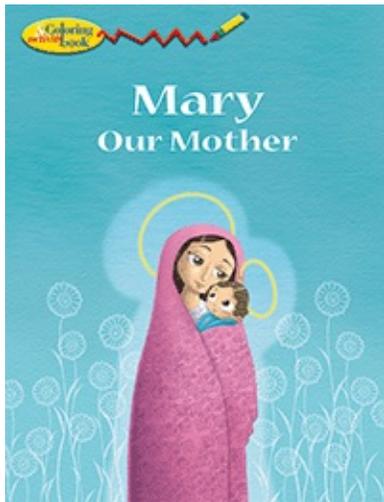


November is the Month of the Holy Souls, but it kicks off with All Saint's Day: a time to celebrate the saints we know by name as well as those whose saintly virtue is less well-known, but no less important to God. This November, encourage your children to learn more about the saints of the Church! Pauline Kids, a division of Pauline Books & Media, has published several books about saints — including one book about how to be a saint!

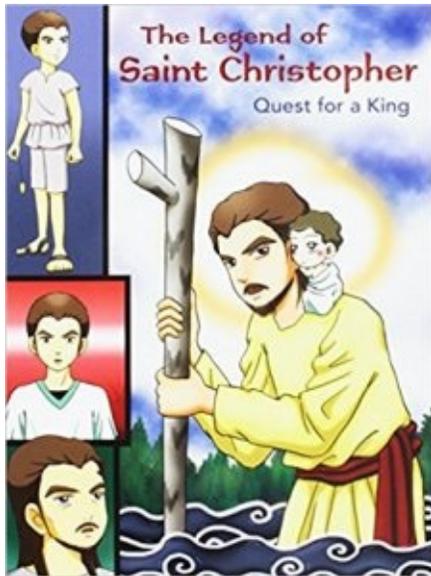


Let's begin with a peek at a book about the child

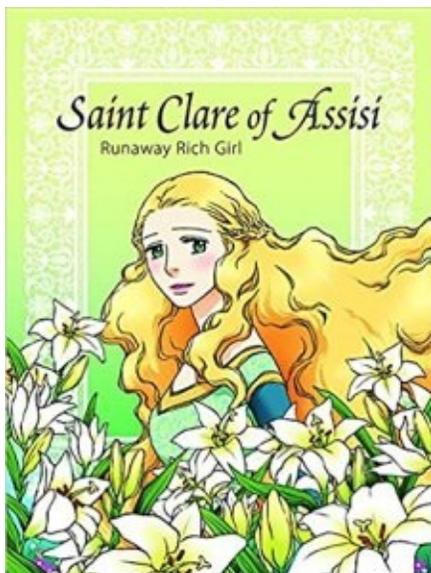
visionaries (two of whom are now saints) of Fatima. [\*Mary and the Little Shepherds of Fatima\*](#) is a picture book just right for a bedtime story or classroom read-aloud. Written by Sister Marlyn Monge, FSP, and Jaymie Stuart Wolfe, this book recounts the experiences of Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia in 1916 and 1917, when they saw visions first of an angel and then of the Blessed Mother. This sensitive retelling of the Fatima miracles concludes with four pages about prayer, including instructions on praying the rosary, and a parents' page explaining more about the Fatima visions. This sweetly-illustrated book is perfect for children in kindergarten through third grade.



Children in this age group will enjoy [\*Mary Our Mother\*](#), a coloring and activity book about (you guessed it!) the Blessed Mother. Coloring pages depict the major events in Mary's life, and are interspered with activities encouraging children to think about their own families and ways they can help others, as well as Bible-trivia activities. My favorite section included coloring pages of apparitions of Our Lady, including Fatima, Aparecida (Brazil), Guadalupe, and others. Prayers such as the Memorare and Magnificat are also featured. I wanted to get some crayons out and color some of these pages!

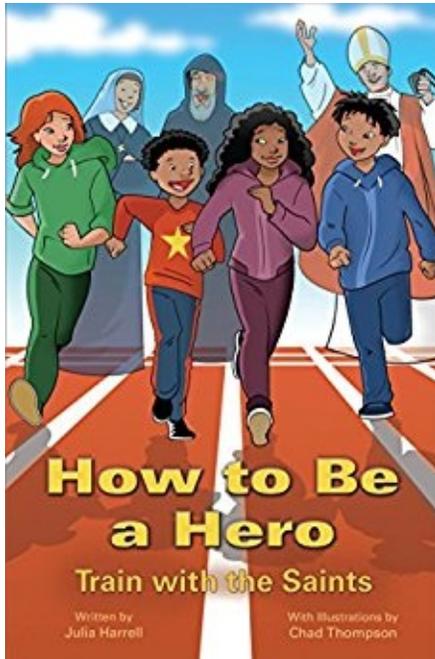


Older readers who are into graphic novels will be thrilled to find graphic novels about saints among Pauline Kids' offerings. The subjects of the two newest ones are St. Christopher and St. Clare of Assisi. In [\*The Legend of St. Christopher: Quest for a King\*](#), Offerus, a young giant known for his great strength, sets off on an adventure that includes an encounter with the devil. When he learns about Jesus, he decides he wants to serve him instead of earthly kings, and is baptized and given the name Christopher. As his life changes, he observes, "God has filled me with joy and peace because I'm serving him by helping others." Learn about his amazing experience when he encounters a little child in need, and why the Church calls him the "patron of travelers."



You might think that the graphic biography of St. Clare of Assisi doesn't include dramatic battle scenes. But there's no lack of

suspense when Clare slips away from her childhood home through an ancient tunnel, on her way to follow Francis and embrace a life of poverty. [Saint Clare of Assisi: Runaway Rich Girl](#) doesn't gloss over the episodes of Franciscan lore that include kissing lepers and receiving the stigmata; Clare is included in the scenes of both of these events. And there **is** a battle scene depicting the Eucharistic miracle where St. Clare, holding the monstrance, defends her holy place and her city from an attack by the Saracens.



I saved my favorite book for last: [How to be a Hero](#). “This book is a training manual,” author Julia Harrell notes in the introduction. The book is organized by virtue, with 11 saints matched up with the four cardinal virtues, three theological virtues, and four “little” virtues. Most, but not all, of the saints featured in this book are more modern-day saints such as St. John Paul II, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, Saint Charbel, and Blessed Chiara Badano, though St. Joan of Arc makes an appearance too. In the book’s conclusion, titled “You can be a hero,” the author notes that “there are as many ways to be holy as there are people” and encourages young readers to act virtuously. A Prayer for Virtue and Litany for the Virtues of the Saints round out the book, as does a discussion/journaling section titled “How can I train to be a hero of virtue?” Readers in fourth grade through middle school will enjoy this book.

---

Copyright 2017 Barbara Szyszkiewicz

This post contains Amazon

---

This contribution is available at <http://franciscanmom.com/2017/10/27/on-barbs-bookshelf-saintly-inspiration-for-kids/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

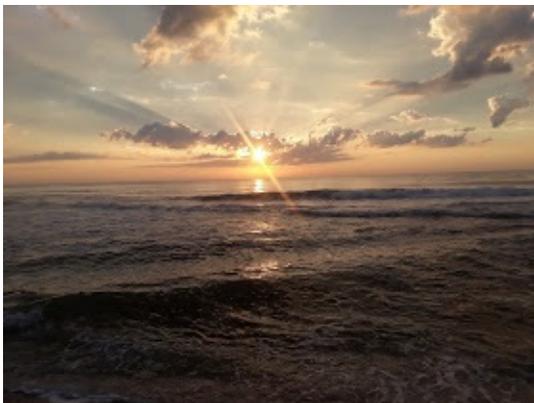
## **Our Lady of Sorrows [at Notes from an Unconventional Catholic]**

**I am grateful to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy in appointing me to the ministry. I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and an arrogant man, but I have been mercifully treated**

**because I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief. Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**

*1 Timothy – Reading for the Day, Our Lady of Sorrows*

St. Joseph by the Sea, where I had spent the last week in retreat was a perfect setting to renew my body, mind and soul. Long walks along the ocean, Mass every day, reading and eating terrific food in an atmosphere of silence, those were my days.



Friends still texted me. Sacred Heart Hospital, where I am a Catholic chaplain, is in the process of being gobbled up by one of the greedy goliaths we stood between, a very real David, a small Catholic, community hospital serving the very poorest of the poor.

Economic realities have forced this alliance. My friends were worried – whether I was retreating or not. Personal crises happened. A beautiful aide's daughter was found dead. Another friend's niece was born at 25 weeks and in very critical condition. All of these concerns accompanied me on my walks on the beach. I brought these needs and my weakness to our loving God.



Confession is part of this retreat. I made a very frank confession and received a cogent response from a not at all warm and fuzzy priest. “Do you want peace or do you want torment?” I picked peace. Decidedly. And peace flowed over me.

I woke up early the day after I came home, ready to go to my beloved hospital.

It is so much a home to me. Jesus is there in the tabernacle. My patients are there, my friends. People trust me to look after them. They look after me. It is a place of love.

I was dressed in my funeral clothes ready to be at least a face of love and support

to my friend at the service for her daughter.

Part of what I do as chaplain is pray a morning prayer overhead. It's a way for us to say who we are, a place of faith-based healing. I attempt to interject real petitions, sometimes even humor, an invitation to God to join us in our daily work. Today I prayed also through the intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows, it was her feast day, never one of my favorites.

I went to the cafeteria and was asked by my friend whose niece was born prematurely to visit the baby and her sister at a neighboring hospital. No other answer but, "yes."

She told me what hospital, ironically the one that was soon to swoop in and acquire us. That hospital was directly across from the funeral home where I was planning on attending the service for my friend's daughter.

I negotiated the hospital's parking lot and found my way to the NICU only to discover the baby and mother were in another site of the hospital, close to my home.

I still was foolishly thinking, "I can do this. I'll just swing by the funeral home, pay my respects, hit the road, and go to the other hospital.

For probably the first time, I encountered a funeral usher who was truly a crab ass. "Lady, you can't go in there. Park in that overflow lot down the street."

I patiently explained that I had an emergency. Could I possibly just park and quickly see the bereaved?

I was told in no uncertain terms that was unacceptable. I began to park in the other lot when I got another text from my friend asking whether I was with her sister yet?

Deciding to drive away from my other friend and all of my friends on her unit who love her too was a hard decision, but one I felt compelled to make.

After what seemed an interminable time driving, I finally arrived and traversed the hospital until I got to the extreme other end where the NICU was located. I entered the unit and before I even got a chance to introduce myself I was greeted with, "Thank God, you're here. They are right this way." I assumed they noticed the big old chaplain on my ID.

The nurse who led me in told me the baby had just died. I walked into a curtained cubicle where a mother sat rocking, cradling her very tiny, dead baby. I knelt down and said, "Rosa, I'm Carolee, your sister sent me. I am here to help in any way I can." I told her that my friend had said she would like her baby baptized. I asked if she would like that. "Yes, I want her baptized." I said okay, "Let's baptize Bianca." "That's not her name," she said. I was surprised. Then the nurse told me the mother's name was, Linda, not Rosa.

"Oh shit," is what I thought but I knew her identity was irrelevant, only that she needed me and what God could do to help her.



I was still kneeling and I asked Linda what the baby's name was. "I don't have one," she replied tearfully. I looked right into her eyes, and I said, "Linda, it will help you so much if you can give your baby girl a name, is there a name you would like to call her?"

"Grace," she replied. Thank you God for letting me keep it together. As I baptized little baby Grace, I couldn't help but think of my own daughter, Grace, born 27 years ago.

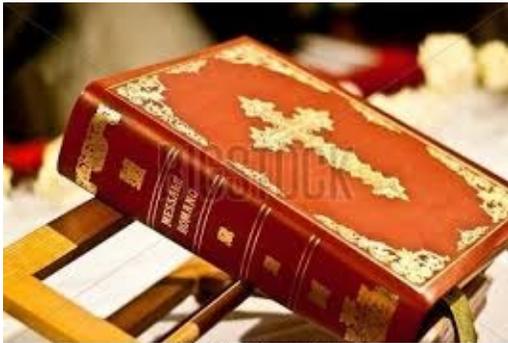
It was then that the young chaplain resident arrived. The one who I am sure the staff had expected when I waltzed in instead. She was obviously as confused as I was but I talked to her privately and told her what had happened. She thanked me profusely for being there and shared it was only her second week in training.

I then saw Rosa in the cubicle next door. Bianca was still alive but barely. Her color looked terrible. She was expecting me and we prayed. I actually just stood by this woman as she pleaded with God for her daughter's life. I was next to her with my arms around her as a neonatologist clumsily explained her daughter's precarious condition. Rosa looked dazed at the onslaught of information she was receiving.

A family friend arrived and I departed.

My car needed to be inspected and my mechanic's close proximity prompted a stop there, only to discover I had been riding around on a very flat tire. My daughter-in-law drove me back to the hospital.

I had debated about returning to the funeral home where my friend's daughter's funeral was in progress. I decided she had so many people to love and support her I would bring love and food to her home where maybe I could be more helpful. I was also well and truly shot to shit. As soon as I got to the hospital I went to the little nun's room and sobbed.



The rest of my day was spent performing duties which bring me great joy – taking food, toothpaste and sanitary napkins from the hospital's Love Bank to the parish next door; seeing some of my beloved psych patients; changing used candles; preparing the altar for Mass.

My phone rang a little before Mass. It was Rosa's hospital. Bianca took a turn for the worse. "Could I come?"

As I waited for my son to come and bring me, I went to Mass. I heard Father Hilferty's wonderful homily on Our Lady of Sorrows. I asked our Blessed

Mother to be with all three women of sorrow, suffering so very much today.

When I entered the NICU for the second time that day, another sobbing, suffering woman greeted me, holding her dead baby girl. This time I prayed in thanksgiving for life; for Bianca, and her parents, her dad, there now, clearly numbed by the ordeal; and for the sympathetic nurse, standing by the parents of her patient she so lovingly tended.

When my son picked me up he was kind. I knew I needed some time and privacy to process this feast day of Our Lady of Sorrows. I headed to our secret garden, a tiny bit of beauty at the top of our hill. I sat on the rough stone bench and wept.



For so long I have felt distant from our Blessed Mother. I didn't use to – I nursed my own baby Grace as I watched the rosary. The milk and repetitive prayer lulled her happily to sleep. Events and my own sinful decisions caused me to be almost embarrassed to go to her. I knew Jesus was there to forgive me and love me no matter what but Mary was quite another story.



Our Lady of Sorrows is my least favorite manifestation of Mary. I know she deserves the love and respect the name brings but in embracing her pain I am forced to look at my own sorrow, and I would really rather not. Today though I am fervently praying to her to take care of the three women who met their sorrows today and all the other ladies of sorrow who have dealt with losing a child. Mary pray for them, intercede for them!



---

This contribution is available at <http://caroleegifford.blogspot.com/2017/09/our-lady-of-sorrows.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## **Buy My House! [at Quiet Consecration]**

Trusting in God has never been my strong point. Listen, I give very good lip service to the whole idea. When I am in a good spot, I can look back and see how all the disappointments and closed doors lead eventually to some really great stuff happening in my life.

For over two years I could not get a job where I lived. I kept trying but it was so discouraging. To keep hearing, "Thank you but no" over and over was really tough on my ego and my self-esteem.

In March I retired from my job of 30 years and in April I started working as coordinator of the parish school of religion for my Catholic Parish. I work 4 minutes away from my home after what feels like a life time of driving over 200 miles a day to go to and from work. The job is actually harder but it so much more fulfilling and I now see that God had a plan.

Right now I want to sell my house. I have a new house picked out. It would be perfect for me and for my mother, who just turned 96 years old and should not be going up and down the stairs at her age.

The house has been on the market for almost 7 weeks.

Nothing.

My ego is hurt - why doesn't anyone like my house?

My plans are on hold - what about that really nice little house I want?

I am not getting my own way in the time I want - is God listening to my prayers?

I have done two novenas to St Joseph, followed the practice of St Andre Bessette and promised God that I trust His Will in all things.....

except...

except....

This is where the rubber meets the road in the life of a Practicing Catholic. This is when I am so jealous of those who seem to just skip down the road of happy destiny singing, "I trust in Jesus!" at the top of their lungs and never seem to miss a beat. This is when I realize that I have such a huge area within my own life that needs for me to grow in my love for The Lord.

Deep down inside I do know that whatever happens I am going to be okay. I really am trusting Him in all things...I just wish stuff worked the way I envisioned all the time.

SO....maybe the answer is I need to adjust my vision. If I can bring my vision into full communion with Him who knows All and thinks of me all the time, then I will be okay if I do not get that really cute little house in the safe little community that I am SURE will be the right thing for me and for my mother.

Pray for me, Okay?

But if you know anyone who needs a house?

<https://www.pnz.com/homes-for-sale/2704-Tradition-Way-Modesto-CA-95355-9643/s/17056542/?id=&ref=results>

---

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2017/10/buy-my-house.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## **Boldly Catholic [at Boldly Catholic]**

*Our Lord has been on a roll these last few weeks, preaching a gospel message that contemporary Catholics aren't quite used to hearing! Maybe I'm wrong, but my sense is that most of us don't often hear many homilies about the goats, the weeds, the bad fish, the lazy virgins, or the poorly dressed wedding guest. We hear a lot about the sheep, the wheat, the good fish, the well-prepared virgins, and the festively dressed wedding guests. These images better fit a comfortable, American vision of who we hope Jesus was back then, and who we want him to be now. Don't worry. I don't intend to blast you with Hellfire and Brimstone this evening! But I can't claim to be a preacher of the gospel, and then fail to preach the gospel right in front of me. This evening, we aren't hearing from our familiar, comfortable, American Jesus. We're hearing from Christ, our Righteous Judge!*

*We need to get something straight right from the start: you do not have to spend eternity with God. You do not have to receive or make use of the grace you've been given. You do not have to repent, confess, or enjoy freedom from sin. You don't have to go to confession, come to Mass, take communion, say your prayers, do good works, live charitably with one another, or even forgive a single offense against you. You can ignore the grace you've been given. You can stride along the path of rebellion and disobedience. You can remain a slave to sin and do the bidding of your lowest passions as much as you want. You can skip confession, blow off Mass, forget your prayers, ignore the needy among us, hate one another and wallow in self-pitying angry and regret. You can be, if you choose, a goat, a bundle of weeds, a bad fish, a lazy virgin, or a badly dressed wedding guest. God will honor your choice out of His limitless love, and you can spend your afterlife as you lived in this life: without Him. And that's the Catholic definition of Hell: "[a] state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed [...]" (CCC n.1033).*

*In the parable of the Wedding Feast, the guest who arrives poorly dressed is thrown out into the darkness b/c he has refused to put on the garments of repentance. He wears his slave clothes. His rags are a gift from the Liar who has convinced him that he's wearing Gucci! In fact, his rags identify him as a willful servant of disobedience. The master of the house invites good and bad alike. But to be allowed in – good and bad – have on the garments of repentance. Not the garments of absolute moral perfection. Not the garments of spotless holiness. But the garments that identify them as willing – even if imperfect for now – to be servants of the Master Himself.*

*The poorly dressed guest, the unrepentant one, is not tossed out b/c he comes to the feast for the free food, the free liquor, the good company. No, he's tossed out b/c he comes seeking all the benefits of the Master's Truth and Goodness and Beauty, but he himself is unwilling to take on truth, goodness, and beauty in return. In other words, he wants to feast at the Master's banquet table, but he's unwilling to abide by the Master's Party Rules. "Many are invited, but few are chosen."*

*Paul gives us the secret of the Wedding Feast...*

Carry on.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.boldlycatholic.com/2017/10/-you-do-not-have-to-spend-eternity-with-god.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



Today, we celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Luke, Gospel writer and doctor. Luke wrote both the Gospel According to Luke and Acts of the Apostles. Yet, Luke, himself, was not an Apostle. He learned of Jesus' message via tradition, as did many people of the day, in circa 85 A.D. It is Saint Paul who refers to Saint Luke, in several places throughout Saint Paul's epistles. Saint Paul refers to Saint Luke as his beloved friend and co-worker (Col 4:14, Phlm v24, and 2 Tim 4:11). Through the teachings from Saint Paul, as well as the writings of the Gospel of Saint Mark, Luke crafted his two masterpieces.

## **Saint Luke, A Man Filled with Compassion**

Of the four Gospels, Luke provides us with the gentlest of approaches, with words filled with compassion and care. Writing in Greek for Gentile Christians, Luke crafted a message of mercy and forgiveness; calling on the faithful to be Christ-like. In Acts, Saint Luke gives us a ring-side seat to the earliest trials and tribulations of the Church. Acts documents several major decisions of the early Church leadership. For example, Peter decided after visiting with Cornelius, a Gentile, that it is appropriate for Jews to associate with Gentiles. To date, this had been discouraged, because Gentiles ate food that Jews considered unclean.

But Peter came to see, via a vision, that it is not what we put in our mouths that makes us unclean, but what comes out of our mouths (Acts 10:9-29). In this passage, we see Luke's gentle nature in delivering the message of conversion of the Gentiles.

## **Saint Luke, an Evangelist for Conversion**

Much of Acts documents the journey of Saint Paul; a true conversion story, going from the murderous Saul to becoming the Saintly Apostle of Christ. When I teach RCIA classes, for those wishing to convert to Catholicism, I highly encourage people to get acquainted with the Bible by first reading the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Luke, and then read Acts. It is there, that the soul experiencing conversion, truly meets Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you, Saint Luke, for continuing to convert souls to Christ 2000+ years later. Nice job! Keep up the good work!

Saint Luke, pray for us.

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

---

This contribution is available at <http://virginialieto.com/saint-luke-gospel-writer-doctor/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Comfort [at Bible Meditations]



*“Lord, I have given up my pride and turned away from my arrogance. I am not concerned with great matters or with subjects too difficult for me. Instead, I am content and at peace. As a child lies quietly in its mother’s arms, so my heart is quiet within me.”* Psalm 131:1-2

All the peace and comfort of a child nestled in its mother’s arms is available to us. The price? Our pride and arrogance.

“I can be right or I can be happy,” as the saying goes. Although an honest exchange of ideas can be mutually enlightening, arrogance shifts discussions into heated disputes. Is verbal victory worth the price? Why surrender our serenity over a needless contest of egos?

Over-reaching ambition, motivated by pride or arrogance, can also drive away our peace of mind. I once accepted a promotion to a position I detested and was ill suited to perform, because the title sounded impressive. A cloud of gloom surrounded me for several months until I finally came to my senses. I returned to my previous job – where I worked effectively and happily for many years.

When our egos stay right-sized, we fit comfortably in God’s loving embrace.

Prayer: Lord, let me rest secure in Your loving wisdom so that I have no need to cling to my pride.

Reflection for sharing: How is pride blocking your peace of mind today?

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/3267>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# 14 Thoughts on Properly Understanding Church Teaching [at If I Might Interject]

## Introduction

Last week, the Pope gave an address on the 25th anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In it he startled some people by proposing that the section on the Death Penalty be revised, saying it was never legitimate to use. As usual, people went berserk. The usual game was played: The Pope was reported as “changing Church teaching,” and the usual suspects either thought it was good or bad. Very few people I encountered asked whether this might not be a change of teaching in the first place, but actually a deepening of understanding regarding the value of life.

I think the problem is some people tend to know less about how the Church teaches than they think. As a result, whatever doesn’t square with their understanding is automatically a *change*. So these people tend to think that the Church is moving to the “left” or the “right” (sometimes factions accuse the Church of both at the same time).

This article is a response to this problem. I’ve come up with a list of 14 things we should keep in mind to properly understand Church teaching. This list is not done in a particular order. It is more a list that formed pondering the problems I’ve seen. Nor is it an exhaustive article. I could spend more time and come up with more things to consider (in fact, as I finalize this for posting, I think of more I want to add) but that would turn a blog post into a massive tome. Of course it is not a doctrinal article. I’m a member of the laity. I merely offer this as a set of thoughts on what we must keep in mind.

## Things to keep in mind

So here are 14 points I think are important to remember when dealing with the confusion around what the Church has to say.

1) There is a difference between “irreconcilable” and “I cannot reconcile A with B.” The first says that A and B are objectively in conflict and cannot be resolved. The second admits that the inability to reconcile is at the level of the

individual or group, but not necessarily at the level of objective truth.

2) Since we hold that when the magisterium teaches—as opposed to a Pope or Bishop giving a homily or a speech—we are bound to obey, we must either trust that God will protect the magisterium from binding us to error, or we must reconcile our mistrust of the magisterium with Our Lord’s promise to be with and protect His Church always (Matthew 16:18, 28:20).

3) Discipline is not doctrine and, therefore, can change—even if that discipline has been held for a long time. Doctrine cannot change, though it can develop. So, if we think that a Pope is saying or teaching something “against doctrine,” we have the obligation to make sure it is not a change of discipline.

4) We must realize that our interpretation of Church documents is not the same thing as Catholic doctrine. We must also realize that our interpretation is not necessarily correct. We must interpret these things in light of the magisterium, not assume that we are right and the magisterium is wrong.

5) In different ages, the magisterium expressed itself in different ways. Sometimes forceful, sometimes gentle. We cannot assume by the language or the age of the document that something is doctrinal. For example, some believe that the language used by St. Pius in *Quo Primum* (promulgating the Missal of 1570) means it was an infallible declaration, and the Mass in that form could never be revoked. There’s a problem with that claim. Blessed Paul VI used language in promulgating the Missal of 1970 affirming it was law and affirming it superseded previous documents [∞]. If tone is a sign of *ex cathedra* definition, then we already have cases of conflicting doctrine. It’s only when we investigate how the Church understands past teachings that we can determine authority.

6) When appealing to the Old Testament, we must realize that God did not mandate things like slavery, *herem* (putting all inhabitants of a city to the sword), divorce when they did not exist before. God actually put limits on things existing in even harsher forms among the Hebrews’ neighbors. God was moving them away from the barbarisms and towards stricter limits when the Israelites were able to bear them. So, a Pope taking a stand against the Death Penalty is no more going against Scripture than a Pope condemning genocide is contradicting Scripture on *herem*.

7) As the Church develops doctrine and changes disciplines, she sometimes

limits *pre-existing* behaviors and eventually eliminates them. In the time of St. Paul, slavery and divorce were accepted facts of life in the Roman Empire. In Pre-Christian Britain and Germany, burning at the stake was considered a legitimate punishment. When the Roman Empire became Christian, the secular laws on slavery and divorce remained on the books, and continued to be followed. Some Christians justified the existence of these pre-Christian practices. While Popes condemned the reemergence of slavery in the 15th century, Christians continued to keep slaves. In fact, they pointed to the Old Testament to justify it.

8) However, we cannot use Divine Accommodation or the Church gradually overcoming the sins of the world to claim that the moral commandments can someday be superseded. Atheists sometimes attack Christians for following Biblical teaching on sexual morality by pointing to parts of the Jewish Law that we don't follow. Some people try to argue that the condemnation of homosexuality is just as changeable as the condemnation of the eating of shellfish, but that is a false analogy. Divine Accommodation, culminating with the teaching of Jesus Christ has been about closing loopholes and holding the faithful to a higher standard (Matthew 5:22-48)

9) We must base our judgment on what is promulgated, not on what we *fear* will be promulgated nor on what we think *should* be promulgated. When the Pope gives an address or writes a book, that is not a teaching act. It is helpful in understanding how to apply Church teaching, but it is not teaching. In these non-teaching instances, we should listen respectfully and attentively. But we should not view those things as “proof” that the Pope is a heretic.

10) An individual priest, bishop, cardinal, friend of the Pope, unnamed source, etc., who claims to have the ear of the Pope or claims that the Pope is in error is not a proof that the Pope *is* in error. For example, Cardinal Kasper claimed that the Pope agreed with his views on marriage. But actually, *Amoris Lætitia* did not accept his ideas of treating divorce and remarriage as the Eastern Orthodox do, and the Pope has affirmed things that some people have claimed he would deny.

11) There is a difference between Church Teaching and the application of Church teaching. The former is doctrine. The latter is a discipline on how doctrine is carried out. If the Church forbids a certain application, then that application is closed to us until the Church sees fit to change it for our spiritual good. This is not something we can “lobby” the Pope and bishops over. Yes (per

[Canon 212 §2, 3](#)), we can make known our needs and desires respectfully. But if they think it is inopportune or not needed, we cannot disobey without sinning. For example, In the Council of Trent, the Church determined it was not opportune to permit Mass in the vernacular. After Vatican II, it was permitted. But a priest who tried to say Mass in the vernacular when it was forbidden did wrong. The priest who does so today does not.

12) How we think Church teaching *should* be applied is not Church teaching. Some Catholics, including some priests, bishops, and cardinals, believed that all Catholics who were divorced and remarried must be treated as if they gave full consent to mortal sin. The Pope said that confessors must evaluate each case, and if culpability was diminished so that the sin was not mortal, the person *might* be permitted (i.e., not given a *right*) to receive the sacraments if conditions justified it [†]. This is not a change of doctrine or permitting sin. Nor is it a refusal to obey Our Lord on marriage or St. Paul on the Eucharist.

13) *Abusus non tollit usum*. (Abuse does not take away [right] use). The fact that people misuse the teaching of the Church or the writings of a saint does not make those things bad. I have seen people misrepresent St. Thomas Aquinas on Double Effect to try to justify abortion. That does not mean that the concept of double effect is evil. I've seen people misapply the Church teaching on just war. That does not mean that the teaching on just war is evil. People misrepresenting Pope Francis is not something new. It's just that communications were not as swift before the Internet and the smartphone. People had to wait for St. John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor* to be released and read it before they could report on it. People immediately spread errors about Benedict XVI's *Light of the World* interview and so-called changes in *Caritas in Veritate*.

14) The Church is not to blame for your misinterpretation. All of us have the obligation to seek out the truth and live in accord with it. That is different from making a literalistic “plain sense” reading of a *summary* of what the Pope said from a hostile or a religiously illiterate source. All too often I have encountered people who misinterpreted the Pope and, when shown the quote in context, they blame the Pope for “not speaking clearly.” Assuming a negative interpretation from one's words or actions instead of learning what is actually meant is rash judgment [¶].

## **Conclusion**

I believe that remembering these things can go a long way towards remaining

calm as people seek to disrupt the Church by remaking it into what they think it should be. If we realize that the magisterium alone has the authority to determine how to apply Church teaching, and realize that what we want may not be compatible with God's will, we will be less likely to be deceived by those who claim that their claims about what they think the Church holds supersedes what the current magisterium of the Church says (Luke 10:16).

---

[∞] *Missale Romanum*: “We wish that these Our decrees and prescriptions may be firm and effective now and in the future, notwithstanding, to the extent necessary, the apostolic constitutions and ordinances issued by Our predecessors, and other prescriptions, even those deserving particular mention and derogation.”

[†] I personally believe that *if* some bishops are accurately represented as having a “come if you feel called” policy, they misapply *Amoris Lætitia*

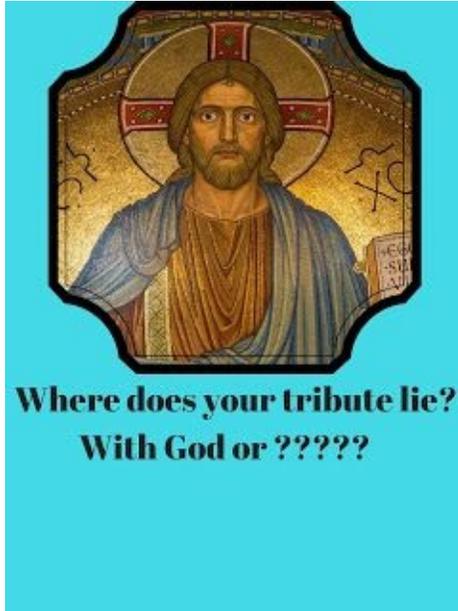
[¶] I think this is another problem that got worse with the emergence of the smartphone. A reporter rushing to be first with something he wrongly thinks is a change in Church teaching gets an out of context quote traveling around the globe before the actual transcript appears. People tend to treat that first report as the truth, and then the official transcript as a “walking back” or “clarification.”

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.ifimightinterject.com/2017/10/14-thoughts-on-properly-understanding.html>

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

## Of Taxes and God [at Walking the Path]



### PAYING TRIBUTE

I find the idea of an angry Jesus intriguing. For me it I see God's only son as quite human and in the case of the disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians deceitfully questioning Jesus about taxes his reaction demonstrates that. And of course what can incite a heated conversation in our nation, but that of taxes, or most recently symbols.

But understanding that the coin that Jesus refers to was a tribute to Cesar is important. The coin was part of a financial system that was part of the Roman Empire, and Jesus does not dispute that. So in a manner his lack of an answer is quite typical of Christ, that is asking to examine one's motives of such a question. Where does one most important tribute reside?

### OF SYMBOLS

In our nation symbols have come front and center to the public arena and rightfully so as debate can draw on a healthy conversation about justice. However, I am not going to even try to address that, but instead focus on our

most important tribute, that of God.

It is quite easy to become to be embroiled in the various debates that inundate our daily life, but in I think Jesus response , “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” pretty much sums up the idea that we should focus on the things of God most importantly ([MT 22:21](#)). This becomes a question of loyalty in a way. Are we focusing on how we can best serve God or are we focusing more on worldly things.

## **DISTRACTIONS**

I believe that if we take a close look at what is going on in our nation with the controversy over the national anthem, the flag and taxes, and then actually listen to the Gospel readings, Jesus is talking to us. Amidst all of these debates where do our loyalties lie? Do we spend as much time reading, watching, talking about or listening to these issues as we do with God? A quick inventory is always helpful. Do I find myself becoming exceedingly focused on any of these issues in comparison to the amount of time that I pray? Do I find myself gravitating compulsively to the latest news story about the issue (my answer is yes at times)? Have I made these controversies a god in themselves by allowing them to dictate my actions. Do I bow to every comment made by a pundit and find myself angry and resentful?



Being it a weekend in the United States of course there is football and the Fall Classic, the WorldSeries. Perhaps an inventory of how much time one spends following these sports in comparison to time in prayer or even confession and Mass is in order as well. All this being said I believe that Jesus is issuing a challenge to us. The question is are we listening?

---

This contribution is available at <http://walkingthepathtoholiness.blogspot.com/2017/10/of-taxes-and-god.html>

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



## REPORT: SOLEMN LATIN MASS FOR THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING IN THE LATIN RITE (EXTRAORDINARY FORM CALENDAR), SUNDAY OCT 29, 2017 @ 3PM EST, ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF TORONTO

Hello everyone,

This past Sunday, October 29, 2017, was the Feast of Christ the King in the Extraordinary Form (aka, EF, Latin Mass,) liturgical Calendar of the Roman Rite in the Catholic Church. On this feast day, the St Patrick's Gregorian Choir (herein, SPGC,) once again organized a Solemn Latin Mass in the Archdiocese of Toronto, on what was their 11th anniversary of formation. The Latin Mass was held in the area of North York in the Greater Toronto Area, at St Edward the Confessor parish at 75 Churchill Ave, at 3pm EST this past Sunday.

### **Notes of importance**

With this offering of the TLM, some notes of importance that must be mentioned, showing how much the Latin Mass is growing and starting to reach an impact in our parish communities. When the TLM is promoted by those who: express solidarity with our Holy Father and the Catholic Church

expressing the positive Joy of the Gospel, and actually practicing what Pope Francis professes in his homilies (including daily "fervorinos") instead of

...fruits of the Holy Spirit (including unity, reverence, etc.) instead of jealousy, detraction/slander, and even declarations of heresy in various forms of communications (e.g. letters, "Tweets," emails,) positive fruits such as the following occur:

- For this solemn Mass, we had a seminarian almost finished his studies, as well as an actual permanent deacon, in the clergy roles of sub-deacon and deacon respectively.
- The seminarian has assisted at Latin Masses in serving roles, but in this Mass, this was his first time as one of the three clergy roles, as the sub-deacon! Another first for the EF!
- The permanent deacon, was actually the deacon of the hosting parish! He had assisted for the first time in a Latin Mass, at the [June 2017 Sacred Heart TLM organized by St Patrick's Gregorian Choir](#). He was happy to assist again with his home parish community!
- We also had another two men in formation, including a seminarian of St. Augustine's in Toronto in his pastoral 3rd year @ St. Edward's, and the other has been in past offerings of the TLM/EF organized by SPGC, who were in choir on the altar! Deo Gratias for the interest of those men in formation who are being exposed and/or willingly seeking out the TLM despite no formal courses in seminary!
- On the serving end of things, our thurifer was another gentleman stationed at the parish who is in formation for the permanent diaconate program at St Augustine's Seminary! Also we had a new young man to the scene of SPGC offerings, a senior in high school who has started becoming involved in TLM serving! Welcome J!

## **Pre-Mass Preparations**

Once the Mass site was confirmed, preparations were underway. The master of Ceremonies, who usually is responsible for server training and providing direction for the clergy roles\* (with assistance from the priest celebrant,) set up practices for both clergy and servers, with an additional practice for the clergy due to the deacon & sub-deacon being new in their clergy roles, or becoming more proficient at their role from their last occasion of doing so in the EF.

The servers, with the clergy, did a combined practice the week before the Mass, where roles were given to the servers based on their experience, and the practice went well between those involved in the liturgy of the Mass on the Altar. Good instruction was given to all parties by the MC and celebrant (a veteran and

blessed soul to all parties in the Latin Mass community in Toronto, Fr. Russell Asch,) alongside a guest Master of Ceremonies who has been helping out with other Mass offerings in the archdiocese. The instruction was well received by clergy and servers.

## **The actual Mass on Sunday Oct 29, 2017**

Prior to starting time of 3pm, all clergy and serving members arrived promptly, and the altar was set up in good time.



**Side view of the Gospel side of the altar, with credence table in the background, as well as the sediliae arranged, and server's seating with Latin/English translation of readings and propers in pamphlets.**



**View of the main altar prior to mass, with some laity in the pews in the nave.**



### **Closer picture of the altar setup for the sacred liturgy.**

Final small notes/pointers/assistance were reviewed in the sacristy for those involved in the liturgy, and all members donned their robes prior to the start time. In addition, the pastor of the parish was able to assist some lay members who requested the Sacrament of Confession prior to Mass (Deo Gratias!) Then, at 3PM EST, we who were to be on the altar of the Lord, processed from the back of the nave of the parish, towards the altar to begin the Holy Sacrifice of all time in the Liturgy of the Mass.



### **Entrance Procession picture 1**



**Entrance Procession picture 2. I, the author, was Acolyte 1, and can be seen on the right side with candle in arms behind the crucifer and next to Acolyte 2.**



**Prayers at the Foot of the Altar with the clergy and the Master of Ceremonies (kneeling). Celebrant/Priest Fr. Asch is in center, with Deacon on the right (in Dalmatic, noted by two horizontal bars on his back), and Sub-deacon on the left (in Tunicle, noted by one horizontal bar on his back.)**

Thankfully, on this occasion, I was able to retain a good portion of points of the Homily from our celebrant, and jotted notes down after the Holy Mass that night. While these points may not be verbatim what the good and Holy Father said, much was remembered, giving a taste of the excellent preaching done in the EF liturgy. The homily from Fr. Asch, was quite interesting, inter-weaving the themes of Christ our Lord and King and children, a take this author has not seen nor thought could relate with this Feast, having served Mass on this feast day in the EF for the past 6 years [coincidentally, the 6th anniversary of my foray into altar serving in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite]:

- Fr. Asch began by re-reading the first lines of the Gradual (*Psalm 71: 8, 11*)  
*"He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth .... And all kings shall adore Him, all nations shall serve Him."*
- The feast of Christ the King should have particular interest to us, particularly as the state of our world appears to be coming more and more dark, for example, in the realm of politics [Editorial note: Fr Asch might have been referring to the USA under Donald Trump as well as Kim Jong Un in Korea, but I didn't ask him for specifics.]
- When we think of this feast day, we might conjure up images, of our devotion to the image of the Infant Christ the King adored in crown.
- Being at the time of year it is, on Halloween weekend, most children take simple delight in this annual activity of trick-or-treating. When they dress up and go around collecting candy, they enjoy themselves, with pure joy in the moment with their treats. They are satisfied in the moment at such an activity. It is this simplicity that one should apply in terms of us approaching our Lord.
  - On a related side note to Halloween, Fr Asch also rightly commentated on how such a fun thing for our children has become so distorted by secular society in many ways, one being making Halloween grotesque. He recalled taking his younger nephew to a Halloween store where a figure of a zombie or a demon was eating the flesh of a human or its own flesh was present and it unsettled his poor nephew in a queasy way.
- Moving onward Fr Asch then began to describe briefly the development of this feast day in the liturgical Calendar, being different from the Novus Ordo in that it is the last Sunday in October.
- Pius XI, in 1925, when he wrote the encyclical [\*QUAS PRIMAS\*](#), has likely

positioned the feast day in the calendar for the last Sunday in October for two central reasons:

- The first was that Pope has such Awe [as in rightful spiritual Fear of the Lord, as per the Gift of the Holy Spirit] for Christ as King of the Universe, he was trembling in instilling such a feast day.
  - The second would be that there were other important feasts in the calendar and focuses in October, such as October being a month of the Rosary and being associated with Mary.
- Mentioning Mary, Fr then discussed the two devotions of the Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart, encouraging such devotions, but also discussing the Hearts and their relation to Christ the King, as well as Mary being full of Grace, the grace needed to carry out God's will (including the birthing of Christ, who would be King.)
  - In discussing this, Father had a visual reference for those present, in a vintage plaque of the Sacred Hearts side by side with a Latin Inscription around the borders of the ovals of Christ and Mary, placed in front of the Pulpit before Mass began, as seen below in this picture of the Homily at Mass:



**Homily at the Mass. While small, notice the picture of the two Hearts below the pulpit on the little table.**

- Fr. also then tied back the theme of children and their simplicity and innocence back to family hood from describing the Holy Family with the devotions. In terms of the kingship of Christ and how we should relate to it, it is analogous to a son who adores his father with genuine and simple love,

no strings attached, and even wants to be part of him via admiration of his profession, being “just like Dad.”

- Our Lord Jesus Christ is like that father, allowing us to partake in that shared life of His via the Sacraments and in obeying His and the Church's teachings. In that, is where our Lord shows his love, compassion, and mercy for us as adopted children of God.
- Most of all, we are given a choice freely in life as to whether we choose to live that life or not in his Kingdom forever. To illustrate that choice, Fr described headstones on a grave site. The birth date and the death date are emphasized, but really the most important part should be the "dash", that whole life of the person.
- Spiritually speaking, we should be making every moment of our lives count to that effect, particularly they should we separate ourselves from our Lord with sin, it will be even one act of Confession that shall redeem ourselves, graciously given by the Lord, to restore and keep us in his Sanctifying Grace.
- We should make every opportunity possible in our lives to adore our King and be willing to be with our Lord in his kingdom, be that prayers, rosaries, sacraments, indulgences ... we should make every effort count!
- **Because in the end, there are but two kingdoms we can choose to partake in, two standards which we can choose one to bear. The first the standard of a tyrannical and ruthless kingdom akin to Babylon, with a merciless King and war and endless suffering, or the second akin to a Eternal “Jerusalem” where by the merciful and loving King, Our Lord Jesus Christ, rules with love and true mercy. Which standard do you choose to bear?"**
- Fr then ended the Homily by praying a Hail Mary, a "tradition I have witnessed enough at the Latin Mass, though this is not something that is forced upon priests to perform as part of the liturgy of the Latin Mass.

As for the rest of the liturgy, despite a few cues here and there for the new clergymen, and this author's usual nerves, the Mass was carried out with beauty and solemnity in my Archdiocese of Toronto that fall day. The rest of the servers carried out their roles proficiently, and all present walked away after the Mass peaceful in our hearts and souls.

of the Christ the King, grants the souls present a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions: Sacrament of confession, communion, and prayers for the Holy

usual conditions. Sacrament of confession, communion, and prayers for the Holy Father's intentions (minimum 1x Our Father and 1x Hail Mary) within 20 days of the indulgenced act (

[see general conditions, "The Gift of the Indulgenced Act"](#)

).



**Exit procession of the servers and the clergy.**

In attendance was about 100 strong, in a Church containing a pew capacity of maybe 400-500, with what was likely a number of local parishioners of the parish, as well as experienced Latin Mass attendees, based on the number of mantillas I witnessed in the pews from the altar.

Many thanks is given to all those involved in the planning and partaking of this liturgy, and even to those laymen who graciously assisted with the collection (Thank you, Ramon and Anthony,) but especially to those deacons, the deacon in formation (our thurifer above), and the seminarians who were present in choir. Your presence is a God-send and a ray of hope for the future of the Church, and in the promotion of sacredness in the Liturgy via your interest in the Latin Mass.

Thanks is also given to the pastor of St. Edward, "Fr. Pat," who graciously allowed this offering to occur in the parish that afternoon, and for providing confessions to those souls who needed the Sacrament of God's infinite Mercy and Love.

Pax Tibi Christi, Julian Barkin.

Footnote:

\* Let me state for the record that this is NOT unusual, in the current state of the return of the Latin Mass, that competent laymen or future clergy who are Masters of Ceremonies, are providing direction to both serving and clergy. Worldwide, the number of competent priests knowledgeable in celebrating the EF, still needs to grow to a large enough number that they will be available to take on the bulk of the training of liturgical roles in the Latin Mass, in addition to their normal parish duties. In addition, it is a primary duty of the MC, to ensure that the liturgy is carried out properly and if necessary, to provide assistance and cues even in the liturgy, to see such a goal is carried out properly. As for the Archdiocese of Toronto, let it be stated that SPGC is NOT the only choir/lay initiative who is allowing for such MC/lay assistance in the training, preparation, and carrying out of the EF liturgy to be occurring in this manner. Let it be the Will of the Lord that one day, that the Church will once again have a plentiful number of competent priests who can be responsible for training in all aspects of the EF liturgy, though it should still be welcome that laymen will continue to take an active interest in the sacred liturgy of the EF, and have such knowledge to be able to assist priests in certain duties.

---

This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2017/11/report-solemn-latin-mass-for-feast-of.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Eschatological Thoughts [at From the Pulpit of my Life]

“I believe in life everlasting.” This is the final phrase of The Apostles’ Creed, which is one of the Catholic professions of faith. Its meaning refers to the last things: death and judgment, heaven and hell, the end of the world, the recapitulation of all in God, and more. The theological terms for these things is eschatology. For Catholic teaching on these matters, go to the [Catechism of the Catholic Church 1020-1060](#).

Here in the Northern Hemisphere nature reminds me of these last things at a personal and spiritual level. Signs of dying surround us. Leaves change color and drop from trees. Insects and reptiles slow down or die. Bears begin to hibernate. Daylight diminishes. Darkness increases. Frost and fog blanket the meadows and valleys. Mystery and melancholy permeate both nature and moods.

*The leaves were falling from the great oak at the meadow’s edge. They were falling from all the trees.*

*One branch of the oak reached high above the others and stretched far out over the meadow. Two leaves clung to its very tip.*

*“It isn’t the way it used to be,” said one leaf to the other.*

*“No,” the other leaf answered. “So many of us have fallen off to-night we’re almost the only ones left on our branch.”*

*“You never know who’s going to go next,” said the first leaf. “Even when it was warm and the sun shone, a storm or a cloudburst would come sometimes, and many leaves were torn off, though they were still young. You never know who’s going to go next.”*

*“The sun seldom shines now,” sighed the second leaf, “and when it does it gives no warmth. We must have warmth again.”*

*“Can it be true,” said the first leaf, “can it really be true, that others come to take our places when we’re gone and after them still others, and more and more?”*

*“It is really true,” whispered the second leaf. “We can’t even begin to imagine it, it’s beyond our powers.”*

*“It makes me very sad,” added the first leaf.*

*They were silent a while. Then the first leaf said quietly to herself, “Why must we fall?...”*

*The second leaf asked, “What happens to us when we have fallen?”*

*“We sink down....”*

*“What is under us?”*

*The first leaf answered, “I don’t know, some say one thing, some another, but nobody knows.”*

*The second leaf asked, “Do we feel anything, do we know anything about ourselves when we’re down there?”*

*The first leaf answered, “Who knows? Not one of all those down there has ever come back to tell us about it.”*

*They were silent again. Then the first leaf said tenderly to the other, “Don’t worry so much about it, you’re trembling.”*

*“That’s nothing,” the second leaf answered, “I tremble at the least thing now. I don’t feel so sure of my hold as I used to.”*

*“Let’s not talk any more about such things,” said the first leaf.*

*The other replied, “No, we’ll let be. But—what else shall we talk about?” She was silent, but went on after a little while, “Which of us will go first?”*

*“There’s still plenty of time to worry about that,” the other leaf assured her. “Let’s remember how beautiful it was, how wonderful, when the sun came out and shone so warmly that we thought we’d burst with life. Do you remember? And the morning dew, and the mild and splendid nights....”*

***“Now the nights are dreadful,” the second leaf complained, “and there is no end to them.”***

***“We shouldn’t complain,” said the first leaf gently. “We’ve outlived many, many others.”***

***“Have I changed much?” asked the second leaf shyly but determinedly.***

***“Not in the least,” the first leaf assured her. “You only think so because I’ve got to be so yellow and ugly. But it’s different in your case.”***

***“You’re fooling me,” the second leaf said.***

***“No, really,” the first leaf exclaimed eagerly, “believe me, you’re as lovely as the day you were born. Here and there may be a little yellow spot but it’s hardly noticeable and only makes you handsomer, believe me.”***

***“Thanks,” whispered the second leaf, quite touched. “I don’t believe you, not altogether, but I thank you because you’re so kind, you’ve always been so kind to me. I’m just beginning to understand how kind you are.”***

***“Hush,” said the other leaf, and kept silent herself for she was too troubled to talk any more.***

***Then they were both silent. Hours passed.***

***A moist wind blew, cold and hostile, through the tree-tops.***

***“Ah, now,” said the second leaf, “I....” Then her voice broke off. She was torn from her place and spun down.***

***Winter had come.***

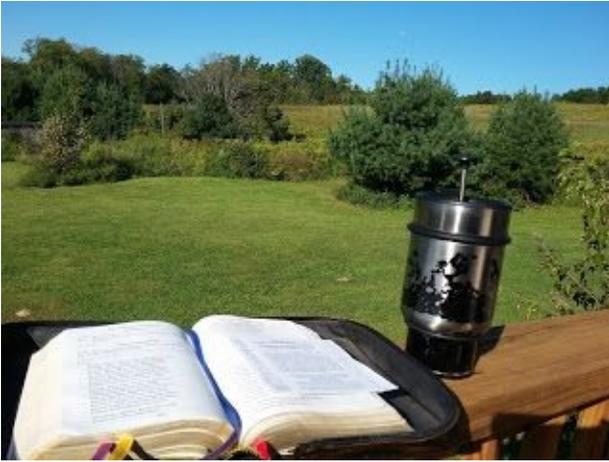
---

This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2017/10/eschatological-thoughts/>

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

## Living like Martha AND Mary [at The Hahn Family Blog]

Tuesday October 10th



Luke 10:38-42

There are days when I completely forget to pray. Well, really, to be honest, I don't forget but I neglect. I look into the day before me and see so many things that need done and reason to myself that I don't have time for prayer. I lie to God and myself by resolving to pray later when I have a free moment or tomorrow when things slow down. That tomorrow never comes.

Today's Gospel reminds me of the need for balance in my life. It reminds me that all work and no prayer makes Jim a dead boy, spiritually dead. On the other hand, all prayer and no work makes Jim a dead boy as well, dead to charity. The reason that Our Lord holds up Mary as an example of a disciple is not because she was lazy and only wanted to pray and listen. She is honored for her choice because

*He*

was her first choice. She put off the work for a little while to converse and listen to God. This could only result in her work being done out of love for Him and not to just "git-r-done."

My goal is to find the balance between work and prayer. What would be even better would be for me to work at finding time for contemplative prayer so that my prayer would flow over into my work and sanctify it. God does not want me to imitate Martha to the exclusion of Mary nor to imitate Mary to the exclusion of Martha. Mary chose the better part first and then moved on to what needed to be done. Martha worked at fixing the meal while Mary feasted on the words of Our Lord and this feast would not be taken from her.

Lord Jesus, I have been raised in a culture that sees productivity as the highest form of accomplishment. Yet, You ask me, "

*What does it profit a man [me] to gain the world and lose his soul?*

" Lord, help me to see what is truly important in my work. Give me the grace to distinguish between necessary work and busy work. Give me the strength to stop making new work for myself and spend that time with You. Pour out Your grace upon me so that I may choose You first. In doing so, I know that my work will be blessed.

## **FROM THE SAINTS**

-

*"You should maintain throughout the day a constant conversation with Our Lord, a conversation fed even by the things that happen in your professional work. Go in spirit to the tabernacle...and offer to God the work that is in your hands."*

-Saint Josemaria Escriva

### [The Forge 745](#) **How to get better at prayer.**

1. **Set a prayer appointment** - Set a time on your calendar each day to meet and speak with God.
2. **Slowly increase your prayer time.** - Don't jump in with an hour right from the get-go. Build up your "tolerance" so to speak.
3. **Commit** - to praying and slowly increasing your prayer time for 30 days. Mark off the days on your calendar. If you miss a day, jump right back in, don't give up.
4. **Pray** - praying is talking to God, it's spending time with your attention

focused on Him. I enjoy spending time with my children regardless of their level of development. God is the same way. Spend time praying as best you can. Use formal prayers if you want or simply speak in conversation.

Don't forget to listen

5. **Journal** - Our newly revised [4 Simple Steps to Better Scripture Meditations: Guide, Workbook, and Journal](#) walks you through 4 easy steps that will help you go deeper in your prayer life. It includes 31 days of workbook and journal pages too!
6. **Read** other good books about how to pray better - [Prayer Primer](#), [Deep Conversion, Deep Prayer](#), [Time for God](#), [The Spiritual Life: A Comprehensive Guide to Catholics Seeking Salvation](#).

\* *Contains*

---

This contribution is available at <http://jamesmhahn.blogspot.com/2017/10/living-like-martha-and-mary.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## St. Paul and the Painted Ladies [at Mere Observations]

For almost three weeks my oldest son was home prior to deploying overseas. At least twice a day I'd go outside to our covered patio behind the garage and find him there, sitting with Buster his beagle, iPhone in hand, smoking a cigarette. Just three years ago I'd have been mortified by the sight of him sitting with no shirt, tattoos on his shoulders, smoking a cigarette. But there are battles to fight in this life that are worth fighting and as he left for boot camp later that October in 2014 I knew those were two skirmishes to be avoided. Three years later I find myself not minding so much.

And as was the case the last time he was sent overseas I'd go outside and be met by the starkness of his absence. It was like being struck in the face to go back there where I prayed a rosary or the Divine Office every day and have that image so fresh in my mind of him occupying that space. Yet I remind myself on a regular basis that he'll return, or at least that's the hope. I know there are hundreds and thousands of parents each day who face an empty patio chair, couch or bed of a loved one who will not be returning as they have left the earth. This sobers me and I'm able to keep myself together.



Yes, I take pictures of ash now.

The Sunday we took him to the Omaha airport to fly back to his base a few days before he deployed, we returned home to a house once again occupied by the four of us. Five counting Buster. I walked slowly outside and stared at the place

we he'd sat just hours before and had "a last cigarette at home" and talked to me about "just stuff." Sitting in his spot I looked down and saw the remnants of his habit: cigarette ashes. When he left for Iraq last year I'd swept the patio rug clean right away. This time, however, I've left them to linger. In a few weeks we'll be sweeping the rug before rolling it up and putting it away for the winter. But for now I decided they could stay. Two years ago he promised me he would give up smoking when his four years were over, and he told me on that final Sunday morning that he was going to use his deployment to do so. Where he's going cigarettes will be hard to come by, so he figured it would be the best time to do it. Right now I don't care. I just want my son back.

The days before he arrived home for his leave my wife had clipped the dying flowers off the row of Black-eyed Susans we have near our deck. During his visit one small, defiant flower emerged and stood watch. I checked this morning in the rain and note that almost a month later it's still there. For reasons I cannot explain this has brought me much comfort and every day when I'm outside praying I focus on that burst of yellow among the drab hues of autumn: the dark greens and the browns.



At her post.

On this, a gray, rainy day, and feeling down, I took my breviary to the Pink Sisters chapel as I try to do each week. I prayed for my family, friends, for peace but most especially for my son and his fellow soldiers. The following passage in the Office of Readings caught my eye and I spent the next 15-20 minutes re-reading and meditating upon it.

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honor, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you. – Philippians 4:6-9

The nuns have a little bookstore at the front entryway and I paged through a book that caught my eye. [\*A Mind At Peace: Reclaiming an Ordered Soul in the Age of Distraction\*](#) contains a forward by Fr. Paul Scalia, son of the recently deceased Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia. He writes:

But we live in a schizophrenic culture. As much as we might want that peace, we still desire the world's distractions. We love the gifts of the digital age: "Big Data," connectivity, constant streaming, and so forth – even as we sense a need for quiet, for relief from information and communication overload. We want both the promises of the digital age and the habit of recollection ("mindfulness," as it is now fashionable to say). It is increasingly clear how difficult it is to have both – to be at once digitalized and recollected.

Finding myself guilty of the above I decided to get the book.

As I wrote earlier this week social media...connectivity...all of the noise has finally gotten to me. I no longer care to participate. While I have not deleted my Twitter account I've started with baby steps and "unfollowed" any and all political pundits or media people outside of one or two. This significantly reduced the clutter on my Twitter feed. It is now mostly comprised of baseball-related organizations, coaches and the like that I follow as well as Catholic priests, authors and media. Facebook is a beast I aim to tackle in 2018 once and for all. I'm also three years in to my old iPhone 5s and early next year am going to "downsize" my phone into a lesser model. Because the opening paragraphs of that book's Introduction asks the same questions I've been asking myself for over a year.

Have you ever regretted sending an e-mail, a text, or a post? Have you recently forgotten an appointment that a year or two ago you would have had no difficulty remembering? Do you catch your mind wandering when you should be attending carefully to the task, or the person, right in front of you?

What about the way you have been spending your time? Is it difficult to refrain from checking your phone or e-mail every several minutes? Are you uncomfortable being alone and quick to look for relief from boredom? Do you find yourself browsing websites or trying to keep up with the latest news? Do you fall into binge-watching television shows, or playing just one more round of a video game? Are you preoccupied with social media to the point of compulsively checking updates, statuses, and likes?

Are you more often ill at ease or anxious than in the pasts? Are you uncomfortable with your own thoughts? Do you feel unfocused, distracted, restless? Are you finding less joy in conversation, reading, and prayer than you used to?

Yes! To all of the above. I remarked to my wife the other day that in 2017 I've read fewer books than I have since we were married almost twenty-five years ago. My lack of sustained focus and ability to read for more than twenty minutes annoys and also scares the hell out of me.

Feeling somewhat buoyed by what I read from St. Paul and the pages I'd scanned in the book, I went outside where the rain had momentarily stopped. While walking to the parking lot I was suddenly surrounded by little butterflies. They bounced off my face and head and I noticed that I had walked right by a flowered area. We've been enjoying thousands of these little visitors throughout Lincoln this fall and have a few dozen that have been squatting on some flowers in our yard as well. They are called Painted lady butterflies and our local paper wrote about them [here](#). I watched them for several minutes and snapped a few pictures. Even after it once again began to rain I stood there watching them. It's a fluke that they are even here this fall and I've not stopped to really notice and appreciate them. I recalled what I'd read by St. Paul in Philippians in the chapel:

*...fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honor, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise.*

And so I will. Tonight I'll look at a lone Black-eyed Susan in my backyard.

I'll watch the Painted ladies.

And then the God of peace will be with me.

– Oct. 6: feast of St. Bruno



Painted ladies on Pink Sisters' flowers.



---

This contribution is available at <http://jeffwalker.wordpress.com/2017/10/06/st-paul-and-the-painted-ladies/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Dancing Before God [at everyday Ann]

Caden is officially one month old, brings tears to my eyes to type that as did it to put away the extra newborn diapers and newborn clothes that he only fit into for 3 weeks! He is literally growing like a weed right before my eyes. I can't believe how fast his first month of life went!

I am begging time to slow down and trying not to allow piled up laundry and a messy house to take away my time from holding him every chance I get. Allowing myself some extra slack when I feel like I should have it all together. Even if it means freezer pizza for the third time in a week, pulling a pair of uniform pants out of the hamper and dust bunnies on my dresser.

I want to cherish this time and have it etched on my heart instead of the stress and sleepless nights that can so often attempt to steal away the moment. Yes our life is busy, crazy and messy, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. Well with the exception when all four kids are having meltdowns in a 30 minute span.

Truth be told I was really anxious and nervous about having a baby. Would I have enough love to go around, enough time to give, enough patience to show. I never imagined how my heart could be any fuller than it already was, it all changed in a second the moment Caden was born. Somehow the love just deepens, expands and becomes more real in somewhat a miraculous way.

We recently celebrated Caden's baptism. What a joyous and beautiful celebration! With four kiddos, including a babe and an active 21 month old I sometimes don't catch all of the readings or the homily during Mass. Snippets here and there, probably just enough of what the Holy Spirit wants to make sure I hear and pay attention to.

On the day Caden was baptized the priest mentioned during the homily dancing before God in praise and gratitude for His goodness. The words couldn't have been any more perfect to reflect the thoughts on my heart that morning. How can I ever repay God for His goodness, His faithfulness, for the gifts He has given. I can strive to always dance before God, during both the sleepless nights, the endless diaper changes and the morning snuggles and hugs. May my heart always be praising, my feet dancing and my life a reflection of His love.





---

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Reunions [at Do Not Be Anxious]

I didn't have any expectations of my elementary school reunion brunch in Chicago last Thursday. The trip to there on Wednesday from Detroit was uneventful, and the hotel and meeting place turned out to be conveniently located nearby an expressway exit. It seems the planners of the event did a good job picking the location.

I arrived the night before the reunion and after checking in at the hotel sought out an adoration chapel for my night prayers. Arriving at St. George's chapel I found a sole person in the chapel, and before I began my prayers I interrupted hers and asked about the time for morning mass (no bulletins or mass times were obvious in the small chapel). She told me morning mass was at 7:30A and, finding I was from out of town, she began a discussion of the church, and her life. She seemed a humble person, working many jobs during her life and still working in her senior years --- "I need the money." I gave her a copy of *The Better Part* I had in my car, and later I prayed for her.

The next morning, I arrived at St. George's at 7AM, the first to arrive, to say my morning prayers. As the clocked ticked away, no one else came. Finally, at 7:45A I told God I'd miss receiving Him in communion this morning, but I trust that this is His will, and so I got up to leave, and then noticed a few others at the back of the church. "I guess there is no mass today," I said. Then a man who had been doing some cleaning in the church spoke up: "Oh, I didn't think you were here for mass; today only the mass is being held in the school at the back of the church!" We all rushed out the door to the school, and arrived just as the Our Father was completed, in time for communion. And I thanked God for having heard my prayers.

The reunion brunch was about a dozen people. The private room in the restaurant made for ready conversations, which were many. Materials provided included pictures of our graduating class, a local newspaper announcement with our names, and the addresses of people present and some who could not attend. About a dozen of the class of 44 people had died. I found myself seated between the one person I had maintained some contact with --- Jim and I had gone to high school together --- and someone who had a number of life experiences (and faith growth) similar to mine. People at the event took turns giving a summary of

their lives --- the summaries often interrupted by long side conversations. Most summaries seemed to me to be a catalog of what people thought important: career success; fame and honors; and, of course, financial success. I guess all these successes could be said to have grown out of the education and faith foundations we received at St. Isidore's school, but that was never mentioned, and when my turn came I said a brief prayer for the gathering and our meal, mentioned a couple of my life failures, and said I was now working to help others with my life. Period.

As I said, I had no expectations of the gathering; I had no participation in the planning on which to set any expectations, but still . . . ., I left feeling a bit let down, but I couldn't tell you exactly why.

My 4-hour drive home was safe, and uneventful.

The next day, Friday, I had invited 9 friends to a fund-raising dinner for a local charity. The friends, for the most part, did not know each other. I know them; I volunteer with them in various charitable works; I wanted them to know each other as I know them, and come to celebrate as I do, God's goodness in giving us opportunities to serve His children --- as all the charitable works do. These were good people, and I wanted them to know and celebrate their works together.

When we arrived, everyone was given an event program and numbered cards to be used on raffle tickets, rather than having to write our name on each ticket. We all joked at my number: 0001. I wasn't sure of the financial condition of all my guests, so I, in addition to paying for the dinner donation, insisted they accept money for raffle tickets: "I invited you as my friends, not to come and spend money." I brought a bunch of raffle tickets, and despite my simple number I found putting it on each ticket tedious. Noticing the nun sitting at the next table I asked her: "Sister, do you feel lucky?" "I feel blessed," she responded, and I gave her half my raffle tickets to put her number on.

After everyone had arrived, I made the table introductions. We had a good dinner and some conversations, but then the 10-piece band started up --- very loudly! There was no more table conversation, except for yelling into the ear of a nearby person. Still, all had fun; some even danced. And, at one point I glanced at my phone and saw that I had a voicemail message. I went outside to listen, and heard that a small donation I made earlier in the week was wired to India, and First Communion dresses bought for 3 girls, whose mom would not

let them (and her?) be embarrassed by their poverty. They now would receive their First Communion, the voicemail said, this Sunday, and on hearing it I smiled, and it seemed the evening had turned into one of joy for me. Later, raffle prize winners were announced and two people at our table won prizes, as did the nun I had provided tickets. Smiling and hugging me, she looked at the blankets and teddy bears she had won and said: “Now I have Christmas presents to give.” That was another evening highlight for me, but there was more.

I won a major raffle prize, as they called out: “Number One???” It was \$800 worth of wine and booze (about 50 bottles). There were lots of jokes about that as I went up and had my picture taken, holding number 0001. Later, while loading my car many joked: “Don’t let the cops stop you on the way home.” They didn’t, but along the way a stopped train blocked our path, and I did a u-turn to go home via another route.

And then that night, at home, I recalled how I had recently become aware that when I see my plans, my path, blocked unexpectedly, I should be asking: “Are You trying to tell me something, Lord, by blocking my plans? Is there something You would have me aware of or do?” And thoughts of the events of these last two days flooded my mind. Was I missing something?

-----

It took a couple of days of thought and prayer for me to be able to step back and see a bigger picture of the reunion events. I was considering the events, and their results, from my point of view, and how I might have desired their outcomes. One of the events I didn’t plan, and the other one I did, but neither came out as I might have wished. Neither brought about some close confidences, some personal sharing time, some “I’m glad we met and understand each other” satisfactions. Things just didn’t go as I expected. But then I remembered that roadblock, and tried to step back.

There were many things that happened that I did not expect, did not plan. The woman in the adoration chapel in Chicago, and the last-minute prayer answered for communion for myself and a few others. There were emails exchanged at the brunch for future contacts. At the dinner, I received phone news of something totally beyond my control, as were the prizes won by so many, including the nearby sister. And contacts WERE made, and emails exchanged there also. Who knows why these things beyond my plans happened; but were

they God's plans that I had some small role in? I now think so.

I did things which I felt were the right things to do, even Godly things. They didn't turn out as I planned, however, I now think that I forgot something which I've come firmly to know and believe: I am not walking alone; He is with me. So, when I think about MY plans I really should be thinking OUR plans. I need to remember and trust that if I try to do the right things, He will be with me in my efforts, turning my mistakes into good results (even if I can't see or understand them), and blessing my good efforts in ways I could never had planned. Together, we can make great results --- each doing our part, and trusting the other to do theirs. That is the lesson I take from these events. I need to remember and trust that I am never alone. And these reunions? They're just a shadow of the reunion He and I will enjoy some day, and the results will be far better than anything I could have planned.

Oh, and all that booze and wine I won? The local Catholic girls high school accepted my donation, and I hauled all the cases over to the school on Monday. So, was this final action a good plan on my part? As it turns out, no, even in this God had me beat. The lady helping me unload my car at the school mentioned how on Friday (at the school) there was a final meeting of an event coordination committee, of which she was part. "The fundraiser will be in two weeks, and all the plans were complete. Still, one of the committee members asked: 'Shouldn't we perhaps buy some booze for the event's auctions?' But she was told by the chairman that 'if God wants us to have booze, He'll give us the booze.' We are done." And so, when I offered to donate the booze on Saturday, I guess my plans weren't totally unexpected. They weren't my plans, but Ours.

So, for the dinner I received a letter telling me of the tax-deductible portion of my donation, and I'll receive a letter from the school for my donation of the booze. That plus the value of all the other prizes won means that the entire evening, dinner for 10, and entertainment was a break-even. I wanted to make a donation to a good cause and to bring good friends together, but you can't out-give God. His donations, and His plans are just awesome. All I really had to contribute was trust.

And ah yes, I DO look forward to that final reunion, and for that I am leaving all the planning to Him.

-----

## **We Belong to God**

None of us lives as his own,  
And none of us dies as his own,  
For while we live we are responsible to God,  
And when we die we die as His servants.

For both in life and death we belong to God.  
That is why, Christ has died for us and come again.  
We shall all appear before the judgment seat of God,  
For it is written “Every knee shall bend before Him,  
And every tongue shall give praise to God.”

---

This contribution is available at <http://do-not-be-anxious.blogspot.com/2017/11/reunions.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Wanting [at bukas palad]



Year A / All Saints (Solemnity)

Readings: Revelation 7.2-4, 9-14 / Psalm 23.1-2,3-4b. 5-6 (R/v 6) / I John 3.1-3 / Matthew 5.1-12a

On the Feast of All Saints, we are bound to have many thoughts. We might think about the saints in heaven. We might recall a favourite saint, or a beloved one who has gone before us. We might ponder on life and death. “What is your image of heaven?” you might ask another.

Our first reading offers us a picture of heaven: of the heavenly multitude praising the Lamb on a throne, of angels and elders, of praise, worship and thanksgiving, even of the cost of heaven, the sacrifice of the Lamb. Many painters have painted this scene; it is etched in our imagination, whether as individual Christians or the Church.

There is another image of “saints”. It is to be found in St Paul's letters; he called the early Christians “saints”. I would like to suggest that it is also good for us to

remember this today because Paul is also calling us "saints" as we read his letters or listen to them proclaimed. I wonder what it would be for us **to want to be saints.**

“Wanting to” is indeed the advice Thomas Merton, Cistercian monk and spiritual writer, received about becoming a saint.

In his biography, *The Seven Story Mountain*, Merton writes about a conversation he had with his friend, Lax, as they walked down Sixth Avenue in New York City. They talked about many things that friends talk about. Suddenly, Lax asked Thomas this question: “What do you want to be?” Thomas replied, “I don’t know; I guess what I want is to be a good Catholic”. “What do you mean, you want to be a good Catholic?” Lax inquired. Thomas provided several lame reasons that Lax rejected

“What you should say”—Lax told Merton—“what you should say is that you want to be a saint.” This is how their conversation ended in Merton’s words:

A saint! The thought struck me as a little weird. I said: “How do you expect me to become a saint?” “By wanting to,” said Lax simply.

Indeed, **becoming a saint has everything to do with wanting to find God—God who always surprises us by finding us first to become his saints.**

And isn’t this what Jesus is teaching his disciples in today’s gospel passage?

First, that they should want to live the promise of the Beatitudes. Such beatitudes as being poor, meek, merciful, and clean of heart are the certain Christ-like ways that will surely lead them to God and to inheriting a place in God’s heavenly kingdom.

And second, that they should want to take up the challenge of living out these beatitudes. This is how the reign of God will flourish for God's children—these who are the blessed ones, the saints on earth and in the present, like those in heaven and of a time past.

On this Feast of All Saints, Jesus is inviting you and me to reflect on the depth of our wanting to become saints. Do we really want to be saints so badly that we are prepared to let go of all that we have and are, and become poor for God to bless us even more?

Do we want to? The saints wanted to. They understood what Jesus really meant when he said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." The saints knew this need for God. We know it too from their life stories of wanting God so much that they threw themselves onto God's mercy?

And what did they find when they did so? That Jesus who came to redeem us had first descended so low that after this no one would be able to fall so low without falling into him (Hans Urs von Balthasar).

If the saints could fall into Jesus, it is because they were first and foremost connected to Jesus and lived in his ways. What about us who call ourselves Jesus' disciples? Do we dare fall in our pains and fears, fall in our failings, and fall in our sinning into Jesus? I believe we can because whenever we fall, we will find Jesus already there for us. There to break our fall. There to catch us. There to hold and uplift us into life again.

I'd like to suggest that it is when we can recognize our desperate need for God that we can truly let go and let ourselves fall backwards into Jesus'

compassionate embrace. This truth is always disconcerting but an exquisite refuge and relief. In this moment we will experience that wanting God the saints had.

On this Feast of All the Saints, let us then remember, celebrate and believe in this kind of wanting. It led the saints to put everything else aside for the love of God in Jesus. And it will help us let God make us saints too.

Preached at St Joseph's Institution

photo: daily express ([www.express.co.uk](http://www.express.co.uk))

---

This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2017/11/homily-wanting.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The hidden meaning of "What good can come from Nazareth?"

What?! Did you just hear that thunderclap? Remember "Joshua" from above? Remember "guile" from the Gospel passage? Does "under the fig tree" sound familiar? Nathanael, too, probably heard that same thunderclap when, at last, he understood Jesus' words, and that he, Nathanael, was now *living* the fulfillment of Zechariah's oracle.

But there's still MORE ... What about this Branch we keep hearing about? How does that fit in with Nathanael and "What good can come from Nazareth?"

### What, Not Where, is Nazareth?

This brings us to the best part. How does the nowhere town of Nazareth fit in to all this? The town of Nazareth is only a couple centuries old at the time of Christ. It's too far from Jerusalem, far removed from the center of action. It's too new to have been mentioned by the Prophets, much less Moses. Or is it?

What are we to make of the following verse from the Gospel of Matthew? "And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, **that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'**"

What? When did the Prophets ever mention "Nazareth"? The town came into existence long after the deaths of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. In fact, there is no such prophesy anywhere in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be called a "Nazarene."

... Or is there? What if the Prophets have been talking about "Nazareth" all along?

The question is what does "Nazareth" mean in Hebrew? Better yet, what is the

word for BRANCH in Hebrew? The answer is the same! The Hebrew word for "branch" is *netzer*, which is spelled NZR, same as "Nazareth." "**Nazareth**" means "**branch**" in Hebrew! Jesus shall be called the "Righteous Branch" - "He shall be called a *Nazarene*."

This realization, along with the significance of sitting "under the fig tree", is what came flooding over Nathanael when he began speaking with Jesus. This is why Nathanael responded with the exclamation, "**Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!**" Jesus is the Branch, the *Netzer*, shooting up from the Stump of Jesse. *He is the New David, the New King of the New Kingdom of the New Israel.*

Can you imagine how foolish Nathanael must have felt later, when he remembered saying to Philip "What good can come from Nazareth?" Can you imagine the facepalm? He had unwittingly made a great pun, but the joke was on him. I'm sure Philip must have reminded his friend of it many, many times. That's probably why it became part of the Gospel!

If you enjoyed this article, you will *love* Dr. Scott Hahn's 6-part Bible study on the Gospel of John. It's available for *free* at the [St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology](#). Also, here are some more great resources that draw out this and other amazing links in Scripture:

**Please remember to share this article and comment below.** To help with the comments, but also to help those of you who are using these posts as a Bible study, I've provided some Discussion Questions below:

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thescottsmithblog.com/2017/10/the-hidden-meaning-of-what-good-can.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## 100 October 13ths Ago: The Miracle of the Sun [at V for Victory!]



All of Satan's fallen host seemed to have burst its bonds during the month of October, 1917. The Battle of Passchendaele had raged since the end of July. Only the day before the children were to keep their final appointment with the Lady of the Rosary, the Allies alone suffered 13,000 casualties trying to break the German defenses outside the rural Belgian village. By November, upwards of three quarters of a million lives on both sides would be consumed; out of the wrack and ruin of Passchendaele, where he served in a Bavarian division, would emerge a young Austrian named Adolf Hitler. Only a few days after the last apparition, the Bolshevik Revolution began. How apt was the nickname of "Red October" that the Communists gave to this fateful month, when the fury of hell lashed the world as mercilessly as the torrential rain that fell on the Cova da Iria on the 12th and 13th.

Perhaps that rain, and the mud that went with it, *were* part of hell's wrath. But if it was a campaign to keep people away from the Cova, it was a colossal failure. Believers and skeptics alike defied the awful weather, choking the Cova and its approaches; Fr. Di Marchi quotes as the most widely accepted figure 70,000 souls. Lucia relates in her Fourth Memoir:

We left home quite early, expecting that we would be delayed along the way. Masses of people thronged the roads. The rain fell in torrents. My mother, her heart torn with uncertainty as to what was going to happen, and fearing it would be the last day of my life, wanted to accompany me.

On the way, the scenes of the previous month, still more numerous and moving, were repeated. Not even the muddy roads could prevent these people from kneeling in the most humble and suppliant of attitudes. We reached the holmoak in the Cova da Iria. Once there, moved by an interior impulse, I asked the people to shut their umbrellas and say the Rosary. A little later, we saw the flash of light, and then Our Lady appeared on the homoak.

"What do you want of me?"

Now the Lady was to keep her oft-repeated promise to tell the children who she was and what she wanted.

"I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honor. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the Rosary every day. The war is going to end, and the soldiers will soon return to their homes."

"I have many things to ask you: the cure of some sick persons, the conversion of sinners, and other things..."

"Some yes, but not others. They must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins."

Looking very sad, Our Lady said:

"Do not offend the Lord our God any more, because He is already so much offended."

Then, opening her hands, she made them reflect on the sun, and as she ascended, the reflection of her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself.

Now the Lady would keep the other promise: to perform a miracle for all to see and believe. How often does it happen that a miracle on a huge scale is promised for a particular date -- and then it happens? Herewith the eyewitness account of Dr. Joseph Garrett, professor of natural sciences at Coimbra University, written in December, 1917 and quoted in Francis Johnston's book, *Fatima: The Great Sign*:

I am going to relate to you in a brief and concise manner, without any statements which would conceal the truth, what I saw in Fatima on 13 October 1917...I arrived at midday. The rain which had fallen persistently all morning, combined with a blustery wind, continued fretfully, as if threatening to drown everyone. The dull and heavy sky, its dark-grey clouds water-laden, predicted abundant rain for a long time to come.

I remained on the road in the shelter of the hood of my car, looking rather disdainfully toward the place where they said the apparition would be seen, not daring to step on the sodden and muddy earth of the freshly-ploughed field. I was a little more than a hundred metres from the high wooden posts mounted by a rough cross, seeing distinctly the wide circle of people who, with their umbrellas open, seemed like a vast arena of mushrooms. A little after one o'clock [footnote omitted], the children to whom Our Lady, as they declare, appeared and appointed the place, day and hour of the apparition, arrived at the site. Hymns were intoned and sung by the people who gathered around them. At a certain moment, this immense mass of people, so varied and compact, closed their umbrellas and uncovered their heads in a gesture that could have been one of humility or respect, but which left me surprised and bewildered, because now the rain, with a blind persistency, poured down on their heads and drenched them through.

Later, I was told that this crowd, who finished up by kneeling in the mud, had obeyed the voice of a child. It must have been about half past one when there rose up, on the precise spot where the children were, a pillar of smoke, a delicate, slender, bluish column that went straight up about two

metres, perhaps above their heads and then evaporated. The phenomenon lasted for some seconds and was perfectly visible to the naked eye...It was repeated yet a second and third time. On these three occasions, and especially on the last one, the slender posts stood out distinctly in the dull grey atmosphere.

While I continued looking at the place of the apparitions in a serene, if cold expectation of something happening, and with diminishing curiosity, because a long time had passed without anything to excite my attention, I heard a shout from thousands of voices, and saw the multitude which straggled out at my feet, here and there concentrated in small groups round the trees, suddenly turn its back on the point toward which, up to now, it had directed its attention, and turn to look at the sky on the opposite side...The sun, a few moments before, had broken through the thick layer of clouds that hid it and shone clearly and intensely. I veered toward the magnet which seemed to be drawing all eyes, and saw it as a disc with clear-cut rim, luminous and shining, but which did not hurt the eyes...

It looked like a glazed circular piece cut from a mother-of-pearl shell...It could not be confused, either, with the sun seen through fog (for there was no fog at the time), because it was not opaque, diffused or veiled...The sky was mottled with light cirrus clouds, the blue coming through here and there, but sometimes the sun stood out in patches of clear sky...It was a remarkable fact that one could fix one's eyes on this brazier of heat and light without any pain in the eyes or blinding of the retina...

The sun's disc did not remain immobile. This was not the sparkling of a heavenly body, for it spun round on itself in a mad whirl, when suddenly a clamour was heard from all the people. The sun, whirling, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge fiery weight. The sensation during these moments was terrible.

During the solar phenomenon, which I have just described in detail, there were changes of color in the atmosphere...Looking at the sun, I noticed that everything around was becoming darkened. I looked first at the nearest objects and then extended my glance further afield as far as the horizon. I saw everything in an amethyst color. Objects around me, the sky and the atmosphere, were of the same colour. An oak tree nearby threw a shadow of

this colour on the ground. Fearing that I was suffering from an affection of the retina...I turned away and shut my eyes, keeping my hands over them to intercept the light. With my back still turned, I opened my eyes and saw that the landscape was the same purple colour as before...Soon after, I heard a peasant who was near me shout out in tones of astonishment: "Look, that lady is all yellow!" In fact, everything both near and far, had changed, taking on the colour of old yellow damask. People looked as if they were suffering from jaundice, and I recall my amusement at seeing them look so ugly and unattractive. Laughter was heard. My own hand was of the same yellow colour...

All these phenomena which I have described, were observed by me in a calm and serene state of mind and without any emotional disturbance. It is for others to interpret and explain them.

Francis Johnson records that the solar miracle was seen over an area of 600 square miles. He relates some eyewitness accounts:

In the town of Leiria, eighteen miles away to the north-west, the miracle was seen as a great red flash due to the restricting contours of the land. Rev. Joaquim Lourenco, a canon lawyer of the diocese of Leiria in 1960, witnessed the miracle in the village of Alburitel, some nine miles distant. He was a schoolboy at the time, and in 1960 he told John Haffert:

"I feel incapable of describing what I saw. I looked fixedly at the sun, which seemed pale and did not hurt my eyes. Looking like a ball of snow, revolving on itself, it suddenly seemed to come down in a zig-zag, menacing the earth. Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world at any moment. It was a crowd which had gathered outside our local village school, and we had all left classes and run into the streets because of the cries and surprised shouts of men and women who were in the street in front of the school when the miracle began.

"There was an unbeliever there who had spent the morning mocking the

'simpletons' who had gone off to Fatima just to see an ordinary girl. He now seemed paralyzed, his eyes fixed on the sun. He began to tremble from head to foot, and lifting up his arms, fell on his knees in the mud, crying out to God. But meanwhile the people continued to cry out and to weep, asking God to pardon their sins. We all ran to the two chapels in the village, which were soon filled to overflowing. During those long moments of the solar prodigy, objects around us turned all colors of the rainbow..."

An American building contractor, Abano Barros, related to John Haffert in 1960 how he saw the miracle in a village near Minde, about eight miles from Fatima. "I was watching sheep, as was my daily task, and suddenly, there in the direction of Fatima, I saw the sun fall from the sky. I thought it was the end of the world."

At least one eyewitness, the poet Alfonso Lopes Viera, saw the miracle from a distance of 30 miles -- at the ocean town of San Pedro der Muel. The author has also discovered at first hand that the miracle was seen in Pombal, some 32 miles to the north. Investigations have proved that it was visible over an area of approximately 32 miles by 20.

As for the children themselves, Lucia relates simply and straightforwardly in her Fourth Memoir what they saw:

After Our Lady had disappeared into the immense distance of the firmament, we beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands. When, a little later, this apparition disappeared, I saw Our Lord and Our Lady; it seemed to me that it was Our Lady of Dolours. Our Lord appeared to bless the world in the same manner as St. Joseph had done. This apparition also vanished, and I saw Our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Carmel.

So ended this dramatic heavenly intervention in human affairs, at the height of the fratricidal fury that swept away the old order of things, and ushered in a new

era of slaughter and destruction previously unknown. But the message behind the drama is quite simple: repent and convert.  
When will we start?

---

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2017/10/100-october-13ths-ago-miracle-of-sun.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Can Coconut-Pecan Frosting Save the World? [at Epiphanies of Beauty]

When I first met my husband, his favorite cake was German Chocolate with coconut-pecan frosting. Not just any coconut-pecan frosting, the kind that you buy in the store. The kind that comes in a plastic tub.

I have never, not even as a child, been able to abide frosting purchased in a can. I can taste the plastic, and it ruins the entire cake. Thus, being the good girlfriend, turned fiancé, turned wife, I set to rid my husband of his terrible taste. This is the way marriage worked, I knew it. We were to help each other overcome our vices and grow in virtue. I would set out to rid my husband of the terrible vice known as store bought coconut-pecan frosting.

At first, I attempted the usual method employed by many a young bride. I attempted to nag the opinion out of him. I wasn't, as you might guess, too successful in this. No amount of taunting or teasing; no amount of dramatic disgust rid him of this fondness for plastic tasting frosting.

Eventually, I thought to set myself on a different sort of method for completing my quest. For his birthday, I would make the coconut-pecan frosting from scratch and serve it to him on his beloved German Chocolate cake. There was no way he would prefer the nasty fake stuff to my fresh and made with love delectable delight. I would win.



But things didn't go quite as I had planned. It wasn't that I had burned the frosting or mixed up the salt for the sugar. Nothing like that. In fact, my first attempt was perfection. The frosting was fantastic tasting and the cake was delicious. My in-laws loved it, my neighbor loved it, I loved it. But my husband really didn't.

The frosting was missing something. That it was missing a bitter plastic after-taste was lost on my husband. He missed the frosting he was used to. Fresh from scratch was no match for years of palette forming plastic.

But I am nothing, if not persistent. And so, for the next 15 or so years on my husband's birthday I made the requisite German chocolate cake with from-scratch coconut-pecan frosting. It became, over the years, a kind of joke. I pretended that I wasn't being selfish trying to turn his taste into my own, and he pretended to hate my version of the frosting. He insisted that still, after 15 years, canned frosting was his favorite.

His taste hadn't changed, or so he claimed, during all that time. He was devoted to his plastic frosting.

Then, one year, the unthinkable happened. My husband, trying to help me out,

went to the grocery store on his birthday and did the unimaginable. He bought a plastic tub of coconut-pecan frosting for the fresh from the oven German Chocolate cake waiting for him at home.

To say I was shocked when he placed the white tub with a red lid on the counter is an understatement. A marriage that is 15 or 16 years old knows better than to dismiss the can of frosting, though. Even if the wife is convinced her husband has absolutely hopeless taste. The canned frosting found its way to the cake. And everyone sang happy birthday and everyone had a piece of cake, my husband gloating nearly imperceptibly.

But a funny thing happened as we were clearing the plates and washing the dishes. There was something wrong with the frosting, he thought. Maybe it was an old can of frosting; maybe it spent too long on the grocery store shelves. I disagreed, only a hint of smugness in my voice. No, the date on the can was fine.

Sometimes, things aren't just a matter of taste. Sometimes, the fullness of flavor can't possibly be understood until someone has experienced it. The Protestant churches I grew up in had many fine qualities about them. But there was always something that just wasn't quite right. While attending the churches, there was no way I could distinguish the canned flavor of sola scriptura or "faith alone."

It wasn't until I found the fullness of faith within the Catholic Church that I could distinguish the fresh from the canned.

My husband freely admits to liking the frosting I make now, and I politely refrain from pointing out that I was right.

The thing is, it might not be possible to account for taste. But it's certainly possible to change it. It just takes patience and love.

Feed your friends the truth; a little bit here and a little bit there. You might see them return to the plastic frosting on occasion, but eventually – somewhere at sometime – the faint and distinctly plastic taste will come through. When it does, have the real thing – dense and sweet – at the ready.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.epiphaniesofbeauty.com/2017/10/31/can-coconut-pecan-frosting-save-world/>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Are you a self-made man who worships his maker?



Raphael – The School of Athens

Like most European Catholics I was born and brought up in the aftermath of the Renaissance influenced by a spirituality that owed as much to the rise of humanism as to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Naturally I thought that if I were to attain the perfection to which I aspired it would be primarily the result of my own efforts. I was in effect a Christian Stoic, a Pelagian who had failed so comprehensively to make myself into the saint of my dreams that I was about to give up the spiritual life for good.

It was then that I came across *Pax Animae* written by a Spanish Franciscan John of Bonilla in 1588. It was a spiritual gem untouched by the spirit of the

Renaissance. Reading it was the nearest I came to a Damascus road experience. It immediately enabled me to see that I had been misled into believing that I could be the architect of my own perfection. On the very first page the author made it clear that:

*With love you may bring your heart to do whatsoever you may please. The hardest things become easy and pleasant, but without love you will find everything not only difficult but quite impossible.*

The rigorous asceticism that I had adopted to make myself perfect did nothing but exhaust me. Now I could see that I would achieve nothing without coming to know and experience the self-same love that animated the man I wanted to emulate more than any other. For the love that John of Bonilla had been referring to was not our love, but the love of God, without which we have no power to do anything.

The trouble was that my Christian education at school made me into a spiritual schizophrenic that totally mixed me up. Although it was a Catholic School run by priests, the Classical education that it provided in the classroom inspired me with the teachings of the Stoics and the great Greek and Roman heroes who were shown to have embodied their teaching. This virile no-nonsense philosophy had its origin in Socrates of Athens, whilst at the same time, the religious education that I learned in religious class taught me the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Unfortunately an arrogant young teenager who thought he knew everything, and could do anything, was more impressed by a philosophy that taught that you could make yourself perfect by your own unaided endeavour, rather than depending on someone else. Inevitably I was drawn to Stoicism. Yet, Seneca, one of the greatest of the Stoics had said, "Show me the Stoic," for he had never seen one in real life; he had only seen them depicted in the idealised heroes of mythology. Cicero wasn't fooled either, for he said, "A stoic is a self-made man who worships his maker." But I was too busy making myself perfect to listen to him. It was only later, much later, when I failed to make myself perfect and I was, as it were, in the spiritual gutter, that I was ready to hear what Jesus had taught. He simply taught that without the power that he received from God, not only would he be powerless, but so also would those who followed him. And the power he was talking about was the love that he continually received himself throughout his life and then gave to us on the first Pentecost day and on every subsequent day. This love was what he called the "one thing necessary," and I knew that I would need a new type of asceticism to enable me to receive it.

Instead of dissipating my energies, as I had done before trying to do the impossible, I had to gather what little spiritual energy I had to enable me to receive the only love that could make me new.

In short, I needed to gather what little resources that I had to create quality space and time in my daily life for the profound prayer that would give me access to the same love that filled Jesus Christ and inspired everything that he said and did. I knew that this love would eventually have to be experienced if it was going to give me the inner security that would alone do for me, in some small measure, what it had done in full measure for Jesus. I discovered a new asceticism with which to substitute the old, and I called it 'the asceticism of the heart'.

The spiritual life seems to have become so complicated over the years that you almost feel you need a couple of degrees in theology just to understand it, before you can even attempt to live it! Yet it is essentially simple, so simple that you need the simplicity of a little child to see it. You see, there is only one thing that is necessary, and that is love. Not our love of God, but his love of us. In other words, Christianity is firstly a mysticism not a moralism. It is not primarily concerned with detailing the perfect moral behaviour that we see embodied in Christ's life, and then trying to copy it virtue by virtue – that is Stoicism, not Christianity, and it is doomed to failure.

Christianity is primarily concerned with teaching us how to turn and open ourselves to receive the same Holy Spirit who filled Jesus. The more we are filled with his love then the easier it is to return it in kind, as the divine suffuses and then surcharges human love so that it can reach up to God and out to others. Then, and only then are we able to Love God with our whole heart and mind and with our whole being, and then to love our neighbours. This means not just loving them as ourselves; that is the teaching of the Old Testament, but to love others as Jesus loves us. That is the new teaching that Jesus gave us at the Last Supper (John 13:34).

The trouble is we make the same mistake with Christ as we do with the saints. We read their lives backwards. We read about their rigorous lives, their superhuman sacrifices and their heroic virtue, and believe that the only way we can be like them is to do likewise. If we would only read their lives forward instead of backwards then we would see that they were only capable of doing the seemingly impossible, because they first received the power to do it in prayer.

If we try to be and do what they did without first receiving what they received, then our brave attempts will inevitably end in disaster. True imitation of Christ or any of his saints, means first copying the way they did all in their power to receive the Holy Spirit who inspired them. That is essentially all we have to do. That is why the spiritual life is so simple, if only we had the simplicity of a little child to see it.

The Asceticism for the beginner then is quite simple. Don't give up anything you like or enjoy except when it prevents you from giving quality space and time to God in prayer each day. If you think it is too easy then try it, and stick to it, and you will soon find it is not quite as easy as you thought. So do not let first enthusiasm fool you into heroics that you will never sustain. Now, when you have persevered for long enough you will gradually begin to receive and then experience the love that will enable you to do what is quite impossible without it.

When a person falls in love and begins to experience being loved, then there is nothing that they would not do, nor any sacrifice that they would not make for their lover. In fact they positively look for things to do, the harder and the more exacting the better, to enable them to show the real quality of their love. What was impossible to self-centred egotists only a short time before, becomes not only easier but also their greatest pleasure. It is exactly the same in the spiritual life. The exemplary behaviour, the extraordinary self-discipline and the heroic sacrifices made by a person who begins to experience the love of God, are not the results of an arrogant stoic trying to make themselves perfect. They are the actions of those desperate to express their love, in behaviour that could not be maintained for long without the love that sustains it. All the little pleasures and pastimes that were thought indispensable before, suddenly become dispensable, and with the greatest of ease, virtues that were noticeable by their absence before, are born of the love that envelops them!

If you, like me, have been deceiving yourself into believing that you can make yourself perfect by your own endeavour, then this is a wake-up call. Carry on dreaming if you like, but sooner or later you will have to wake up to reality.

Reality means that you cannot, and if you will not listen to me, perhaps you might listen to St Teresa of Avila. She put it quite simply:

*There is only one way to perfection and that is to pray, if anyone points in a different direction then they are deceiving you.*

---

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

| [Contents](#) |