

NewEvangelists.org

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evangelists
monthly

March
2018

New Evangelists Monthly #63

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Forward

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

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

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

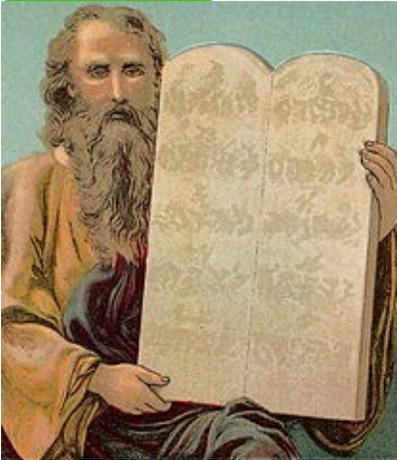
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Thus saith Ellen, part 4 - The 10 commandments [at Catholicism and Adventism]

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10 Commandments

Then there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. Says the prophet, “*The heavens shall declare His righteousness; for God is judge himself.*” [Psalm 50:6.] That holy law, God’s righteousness, that amid thunder and flame was proclaimed from Sinai as the guide of life, is now revealed to men as the rule of judgment. The hand opens the tables, and there are seen the precepts of the decalogue ...

– [The Great Controversy 1888, p 639](#)

The Lord gave me the following view in 1847, while the brethren were assembled on the Sabbath, at Topsham, Maine. ... In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and I saw the ten commandments written on them with the finger of God. On one table were four, and on the other six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six. But the fourth, the Sabbath commandment, shone above them all; for the Sabbath was set apart to be kept in honor of God’s holy name.

– [Early Writings, pp 32-33](#)

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen G. White". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

These descriptions (emphasis mine), given to Ellen White in a vision, prove that the vision was NOT given by God. If it was not given by God, who was it that gave Ellen this vision? And what was their agenda when highlighting the sabbath? And if Ellen was getting visions from someone other than God, can she be considered a true prophet of God?

Proof that the vision was not from God?

Ellen describes the 10 commandments as tables (tablets) of stone, folded together like a book, with the 10 commandments visible on them after Jesus opened them. There were 4 on one and 6 on the other.

That sounds pretty much like many pictures of the 10 commandments, doesn't it? But are those pictures accurate?

If God had given Ellen her vision, what would the tablets with the commandments have looked like in the vision?

In a vision given by God, the 10 commandments would have covered BOTH the FRONT and the BACK of the two tablets. If the real tablets on which the 10 commandments were written were folded like a book, 25% of the writing would be visible on the one side of the closed set, 25% would be visible on the other side of the closed set, and the other 50% would become visible when they were opened.

That is what the Bible says. That is what God would have shown in a real vision from God. That is not what Ellen saw in her vision.

What does the Bible say?

Exodus 32:15 (KJV) – And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

Exodus 32:15 (NIV) – Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.

Even the Adventist Clear Word gets it right: *“Then Moses went down the mountain carrying the two tablets of stone which had been written on, both front and back.”*



Devil, 13th century

Where did Ellen’s vision come from?

- Option 1 – Satan or a demon
- Option 2 – her own mind, which had never paid attention to the Bible’s description
- Option 3 – she made it all up, errors and all

Why was the sabbath commandment highlighted?

1. Option 1 – Satan wanted to lead Ellen and her followers away from the truth, and get them to focus on the Old Covenant sabbath instead of the New Covenant and Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. He wanted a form of pseudo-Christianity fixated on the Old Covenant and avoiding any celebration of any of the important events of the New Covenant – Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection chief amongst them.

2. Option 2 – Ellen’s weak mind wanted to emphasise her own ideas about theology
3. Option 3 – she just made it up

Is Ellen a true prophet?

1. Option 1 – no
2. Option 2 – no
3. Option 3 – no

It’s time to make a choice. God’s version or Ellen’s vision.

This contribution is available at <http://blog.theotokos.co.za/>
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Can you believe it? Lent is only one week away! We've barely left the Christmas season, and we are about to walk the journey, with Christ, to Calvary. Are you prepared to enter the Lenten season? Are you ready to make the most of it?

Things You Can Do to Make Your Lent Fruitful

1. **Prayer:** Make a point to set aside a few minutes each day to pray. If you have enough time to say a full Rosary, great! But, sometimes, the day gets away from us. So, a vow to say a single Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be is a commitment I think we all could easily make. Prayer is talking with God. He wants to hear from you!
2. **Fasting:** At a minimum, make the effort to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. By fasting, I mean a reduced breakfast and lunch, and a full dinner. No desserts! If you can do this on a set day of the week, once weekly during Lent, all the better! Fasting helps us to understand that without God, we are nothing. It is God who provides for us: our homes, our jobs, our food, everything!
3. **Almsgiving:** Make a point to reach out to the less fortunate. Clean your closets and donate some clothes/goods to the poor. Donate your time,

money and/or food to a food pantry. Volunteer for a ministry at your Church. Remember what Jesus said, “*whatever you did for the least of these, my brothers, you did for Me*” (Matt 25:40). Be charitable toward others.

Give, Rather than Give Something Up

Notice how I didn’t speak a word about giving any thought to what you should give up for Lent? That was deliberate. When we give of ourselves, we are more Christ-like. So, give of your time to prayer. Give of your will to God in fasting. And give from your heart in almsgiving. If you follow these tips, you will have a very fruitful Lent!

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/lent-week-away-ready/>
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Society Left Morality and the Devil Smiled [at Catholic Life In Our Times]

One of the best commentaries I have seen, about what is going wrong with society today, is a transcript of the [Todd Starnes](#) radio show. His list of cause and effect can be read like the timeline of past generations. Each new entry – lack of truth – read relativism, God removed from school, porn and the resulting broken families, and violence in all forms of media consumption – is punctuated by the words, “...and the Devil smiled”.

The Devil is in the Details

Seeing this collection of moral debauchery, even though incomplete, is like a punch in the gut. How did we get here? In my sixty years I have experienced both what *was* and what *is now*. The one common denominator is the consistency of the naysayers. Always in the wings, these folks joke and poke fun at anyone who is concerned about moral issues. From the accusations of “[Bitter Clingers](#)” to [Joy Behar’s claim](#) that Vice President Pence is “mentally ill” for believing God speaks to him, these detractors of Truth have a common aim. They deny whatever moral dilemma is exposed and scoff at the idea that the devil is real.

Yet we see more [examples](#) daily.

Godless Society

We have become a Godless nation and it has happened under our watch. When it would have been much easier to nip the idea of legal abortion in the bud, we did nothing. The agenda was set and the plan in place, but enough denial from the devil’s handmaids left us somewhat unconcerned. Anyone who tried to blow the trumpet of warning was delegated to being Chicken Little. And eventually the sky did fall – but not before it was too late to stop the movement.

Again and again we watched as more sacred ground was lost. Removing school

prayer became removing Him altogether. In some instances, only civil disobedience brought prayer to ball games and graduations. Anti-bullying and tolerance of those who are different became rights for the perverse while godly believers were silenced. Mario Brothers morphed into [Mortal Kombat](#) and other horrifically violent games. Inch by inch, year by year, blindness prevented a full comprehension of what we were becoming. What our children were becoming.

God Need Recruits

Now, each day brings a new gasp of disbelief. Yet hand wringing and shock are not effective tools for taking our moral high ground back. What we need now is an awakening. That is happening so some extent, but those of us who wake up first need to recruit others to the cause. We need to sound the alarm and then offer positive action.

Pope Leo XIII said that to be a prophet means to be “born for combat”. “Christians are,” Leo continues, “born for combat.” Not physical combat but spiritual combat. He went on to say

“To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe.”

“The enemies of Truth” are the only winners when Christians remain quiet.

Fr. Richard Heilman continues in this vein, “The silence of Catholics is particularly disturbing because frequently a few bold words would have vanquished the false ideas.” [Church Militant Field Manual](#)

Being Bold In Defense of Truth

Beginning with the Disciples, it has been a part of Christian nature to proclaim His Truth to the world. That these ideas are unpopular and counter-cultural is a given – both in the early years of the Church and now. When we speak Truth to those of the world, their nature prompts them to push back – to attack. If we are caught off guard our mission is in danger of failure.

In order to be prepared, when these teaching moments occur, it is essential for us to be well versed in Truth. A typical lay person does not require a degree in

theology to make an impactful response. Yet, we should continue to study theology and spirituality through reading and self-led research. Remember, a Catholic is never fully formed; there is always more to learn. And learn we must, to continue our path toward Heaven.

Our battle plan need only include “a few bold words”, as Pope Leo XIII counselled. This method is highly successful in today’s society, in both the public relations and debate world. We see how effective brevity in making a point is by observing social media and advertising campaigns. The crusade of spreading the Gospel can also benefit from using well thought out talking points. Having these memorized and ready at a moment’s notice will serve us well.

Prayer Defeats the Devil

Yes, we have all the tools necessary to defeat the Devil – witness and prayer. According to Saint Alphonsus,

“Prayer is, beyond doubt, the most powerful weapon the Lord gives us to conquer evil ... but we must really put ourselves into the prayer, it is not enough just to say the words, it must come from the heart. And also prayer needs to be continuous, we must pray no matter what kind of situation we find ourselves in: the warfare we are engaged in is ongoing, so our prayer must be on-going also.”

One of the best prayers at our disposal is the Holy Rosary. With each decade we are nourishing our souls with a scriptural account of the life of Jesus. However, we must heed the advice of Saint Alphonsus and pray from the heart. Are we simply *saying* the Rosary or are we *praying* it? The difference is key.

Two aspects of our battle plan against the devil have now been identified – “a few bold words” and prayer. While these two promise considerable impact, we can add another – penance. The call for penance lies at the very heart of Catholicism. Sacrifice, regular confession, and fasting will round out our efforts to help bring Christ’s salvation to the world. Together with His mercy and grace, we can effectively help bring society what it so desperately needs – Truth.

“If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new.” [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)

“I can do all these things in him who strengtheneth me.” [Philippians 4:13](#)

This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.com/society-left-moralityand-devil-smiled/>
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I am currently sixty-two years old. I began studying judo at the age of twelve. I have for the past fifty years practiced, studied, and taught martial arts. Officially I am nidan, second degree black belt, as for many years I had no regular instructor to mentor my promotions. I was offered sandan, third degree in both judo and jujitsu, in the early 1990s at a summer camp, but at the time the rank fees were more than I could afford.

I bring up this history to bolster my cred in speaking about a warrior's mindset.

Within the martial arts, the idea of situational awareness is taught. This means being alert to what is happening or can happen around you. In other words, you are prepared for an attack or a dangerous situation (like a car racing toward you).

In addition to my martial arts training, I also have work experience in mental wards with behavior patients where acts of violence were part of the daily routine. You expected the unexpected to happen and were ready to react instantly.

As a father, you need to understand that attacks against your family can come from any source, even those places you expect to be safe and where the staffers claim they want only what is best for your family. One such place turned out to be the obstetrician's office.

About twenty-two years ago, my wife was pregnant with our seventh child. We were familiar with the way her doctor cared for his patients and quite comfortable with his skill and bedside manner. That made what we experienced all the more surprising to us.

They scheduled an ultrasound, which showed everything was normal. The nurse then asked about scheduling an amniocentesis, which we declined. Later, when we met with the doctor, he asked about the amnio, and we again declined. We finished the appointment and went home.

Over the course of the next two weeks, we received numerous calls from the nurse at the office asking about scheduling the amniocentesis. She was quite adamant that it was necessary to check on the health of the child. We repeatedly said no. Amniocentesis is not without its risks to both the child and the mother. The nurse began to speak about how an ultrasound does not always show all the

possible problems with the child and the risk of having a child with deformities. If the deformities are detected early enough, we could do something about it. She meant an abortion, although she did not use the word.

During the fifth phone call, the nurse was browbeating my pregnant wife, who is not the argumentative type. I was standing next to her when I told her to give me the phone. I read the nurse the riot act. I told her we would not consent to the test. The test for us was meaningless, as even if the child had three arms and five legs, we would accept and love them. I told her I understood the risks of both the pregnancy and the test. I told her to go away!

On our next visit, I talked to the doctor, who said he had not instructed the nurse to call us about the test. We had said no to it and he was fine with that.

It was clear to me that this nurse had an agenda. Fortunately, we were able to stop her. My wife had some problems as the pregnancy advanced, but Joe was born healthy, if not a bit early. Unfortunately, at age one, he suffered a febrile seizure that did cause brain injury.

Joe is now twenty-two years old. First, he is alive. Second, he talks, walks, helps with the family newspaper route, is an altar server at church, and is slated to receive his green belt in hapkido, a martial art, this spring.

The nurse was wrong about Joe. After his seizure, some doctors proclaimed Joe a vegetable — *their words* — and suggested institutionalization. That is a story for later. For now, the important point is that no one can predict the future, and all fathers must be prepared to fight to make sure their children have one.

This contribution is available at <http://blog.catholicwritersguild.com/2018/02/all-fathers-are-called-to-be-warriors-the-battle-can-begin-early.html>
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All Fathers Are Called to Be Warriors [at The Catholic Writers Guild]

This is the first in what will be a monthly post on parenting children with disabilities. Up front, I want to get out of the way any idea that I plan to sugarcoat the challenge, hence the use of the word *disability* and not the more PC term *Special Needs*. I will in later articles use that term and others, but to begin with, let's meet the situation head-on.

A child with mental, physical, or emotional issues can, in reality, require more care than any loving parent or family can provide on their own. It all depends on the severity of the condition. Something as basic as bathing can be unsafe for one person to do because of the danger of injury to both the child and the caregiver.

But before we explore that and other issues, I want to answer why articles on caring for a disabled child are even appropriate for the Catholic Writers Guild blog.

All Guild members state they agree with the mission statement of the Guild, which proclaims that we are loyal to the Magisterial teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. A fundamental teaching of the Church is that we are pro-life and there is a preferential choice given to protect the most vulnerable. Those would include the child in the womb, the elderly, and those who live with physical, mental, and emotional problems that make daily living a challenge. Because of this, as a Catholic writer, I feel it is incumbent on me to address the situation.

Why me? First, for those who do not know, I am the father of eight children, with four of my sons dealing with significant challenges. Two have Asperger's syndrome. The third nearly died at age one due to a three-hour grand mal seizure; his cognitive abilities were damaged by this incident. The fourth has a learning disability and is legally blind in one eye and also deals with Tourette's syndrome. So I can speak from personal experience as a parent on this issue. I also worked professionally for thirty-four years with persons living with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses. I can draw on that experience to

give suggestions and also cautions in making decisions.

What do I hope to achieve by writing these articles? First, I hope I am able to help other parents who are trying to help their children. I will admit I do not have all the answers, but by broaching the topic maybe others will be able to offer their insight. Second, and in my mind the more important issue, is to give a clarion call to all who read these blogs of the danger faced by those living with disabilities in our society. The suggestions that abortion or euthanasia is the humane answer to keep persons with disabilities from suffering is so brazenly discussed that refuting it will soon be Politically Incorrect. This is an issue that impacts everyone alive today, because you are one slip and fall away from becoming disabled yourself.

Since it was mentioned, let's discuss the suffering the pro-death sect assumes is felt by those with disabilities. Point-blank, it's a crock. I have known hundreds of individuals with a wide array of diagnoses. In their day-to-day life, they are in no more pain than the rest of humanity. To be sure, they do feel pain, as any other person, when they are made fun of, ridiculed, or worse, protected to the point of not being able to live as they wish to.

That last point is one I will stress often: the tendency to suffocate the disabled with kindness, or, to put it in a different frame, to refuse to allow the disabled to take a risk, to fail, and to try again. The right to risk is fundamental to having freedom. Without it, life is a pale shadow of what it can be. Besides, failure is a good teacher if one is open to learning.

A common misconception is that the learning-disabled are stupid. Trust me, that is totally wrong. I have known persons whose IQs measured below 20 who knew how to manipulate situations and people as skillfully as any James Bond villain. Learning is possible. It requires the right combination of motivation (why should I learn this?), patience (many attempts may need to be tried), and the proper approach (not all learn the same way).

Now seems to be the time to also sound an important warning: *Do not* take the advice of experts as gospel. Persons with lots of letters after their name are experts in a subject, NOT a person. You are the expert on your family member. Use the subject experts for advice, but filter it through your daily experience living with your family member.

My job as a father is to provide the necessities of life, food, clothing, shelter, and love, to protect my children and their mother, and to do what is necessary when the world endangers my family. At times I may have to be a barrier; at other times I may have to go on the attack (legally and morally). With children not dealing with handicaps, the workload eases after eighteen or so years as the kids gain independence. But with children dealing with developmental disabilities, the time frame is much longer and possibly lasts a lifetime. Of course, the ultimate goal is for all of us to get to heaven.

One more vital point, the reality of a Church teaching that is too often neglected in today's world. We are all living in the middle of a battlefield. It is unlike the killing fields of Cambodia or Nineveh but no less lethal. Satan and his army are arrayed against God and His angels. Each time he causes one of us to choose against God, he marks another victory. As the head of our family, we answer the call of duty by showing the way that leads to eternal life.

This requires a warrior's mindset, where you are prepared to lay down your life down for your wife and children. If that sounds extreme, look about in our world and see the carnage wreaked by fatherless homes. Many of the children diagnosed with emotional disabilities are in that state because of AWOL fathers.

It is well past time to change that. The content of these articles will encourage the reader to work to bring about that change, not just for the most vulnerable but for all.

This contribution is available at <http://blog.catholicwritersguild.com/2018/01/all-fathers-are-called-to-be-warriors.html>
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"Music always wins" S. Beckett [at Catholic Deacon]

Since the first of the year I have been immersed in writing what I am sure is an extremely mediocre paper on Samuel Beckett. But I don't let the mediocrity, or downright horrible nature, of my work interfere with a taking a journey. Writing this paper has been a great journey. The works of Samuel Beckett have fascinated me for the better part of the past 15 years. I really came to Beckett through his dramatic works, his plays, especially his later plays. In fact, for my paper, entitled "Samuel Beckett: Good Friday's Child," I undertake an analysis of sorts of his play

That Time

but also draw from the work for which he will best be remembered,

Waiting for Godot

, as well as

Not I

.

Why am I writing a paper, let alone a paper on Beckett? I am pursuing a doctorate of ministry through Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon. The paper is my term paper for an amazing class (I have only had amazing classes in the program),

The Catholic Imagination

. It is a paper on the theological/pastoral phenomenon of hopelessness, despair, and the anxiety that arises from experiencing these things, something very common in advanced societies of late modernity. One aspect of Beckett I was able to mention only in passing was the profound effect music, especially music from the classical (the actual era, not just the general grouping of all musical compositions that are not folk, rock, punk, country, New Wave, rap, rhythm, etc.) and romantic periods.



Samuel Beckett, Photo by Jane Brown

Here is my passing mention of this:

The play features three voices: A, B, C. In his stage directions, Beckett specified “*Voices A B C are his [the Listener’s] own coming to him from both sides and above.*” He further stipulated that the voices “*modulate back and forth without any break in general flow except where silence is indicated.*” The voices are those of the Listener at different times of his life. A is the voice of middle age attempting to recall youth. B is the voice of childhood seemingly verging on adolescence. C seems to be the voice of old age. The play runs continuously, except for two 10 second pauses during the play, a seven-second pause at the start of the play and a 15-second pause bringing *That Time* to its end.

From the beginning of *That Time* to the first 10-second silence, the voices alternate in the pattern ACB ACB ACB CAB. Between the first and the second silence, the pattern is CBA CBA CBA BCA. Between the second silence and the play’s conclusion that pattern is BAC BAC BAC BAC. On my reading, this final pattern is chronological: youth, middle age, old age. In each of the play’s three sections, every voice speaks four times, which means each voice speaks 12 times total. In this way, *That Time* takes the form of musical composition. According to a number of commentators, Beckett wrote the lines for each voice separately, each in its entirety, prior to integrating them

Beckett was also deeply influenced by painting (see

["Coming to terms with density of what we see"](#)

).

Today, I ran across this piece by Sean Doran, which ran in

The Guardian

several years ago:

["Why music struck a chord with Beckett."](#)

Doran begins his piece with a three word quote by Beckett: "Music always wins." Apart from noting that Beckett had a great fondness for several modern composers, namely Debussy, Ravel, and Poulenc, he was most drawn to and influenced by Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert, whom Doran described as Beckett's "holy trinity." I like Beckett all the more based on his distaste for Wagner, whose music has never done anything for me. I would disagree about Mahler, however. I love his

Resurrection Symphony

(Symphony No. 2).

Our

traditio

for this First Friday of Lent, an Ember Day during an Ember Week, is the second movement of Beethoven's

Sonata Pathétique

(Number 8 in C minor,

Opus

13). The pianist is Daniel Barenboim playing the piece live in Berlin in 2006.

As odd, perhaps even as offensive, as it might sound, Samuel Beckett is a member of my Community of the Heart.

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Get Your House In Order [at beautiful thorns]

Last week the kids and I met Tom at the church for an event. Fifteen minutes before we had to leave a neighbor kid came to the door. It was her birthday so she brought everyone cupcakes. She left and my kids were scarfing down the chocolate cupcakes before we had to leave. Thick globs of chocolate icing ended up on my new rug. We were supposed to leave the house by this time but instead I was frantically scrubbing my rug trying to get the stains out. In the hectic chaos, I guess I forgot to lock the front door.



We arrived home around 9:30 at night and pulled in the garage. My 7 year old daughter went in the house first and discovered that the front door was wide open. Tom coaxed her back in the van, we backed out of the garage and parked down the street. Tom proceeded to call the police. Out of great distress, I tried to stop him! I explained that I would rather risk my life than have a police officer go through my house at that time! You see, with the busyness of the week, my house was in total disarray! There were toys and clothes on the floor, dirty dishes in the sink, piled up laundry on the couch and there may or may not have been underwear on the bathroom floor.

Tom didn't listen to me begging him not to call. As the man of the house, he felt it was his duty to protect us. Well, not only did one policeman show up but FOUR! I was mortified! I ducked down in the van and let Tom deal with them.

Finally after 4 police officers walked through every inch of my house with flashlights, we discovered nobody was hiding and nothing was stolen. Let me tell you though, that next day I was very motivated and put it in full gear to get my house clean!

Next week is the beginning of Lent. This is a time for us to get our spiritual house in order. Scripture says we do not know the day or the hour when Jesus is coming back and we need to live each day as if he could come back at any moment (Matthew 24:36). During the season of Lent, there is tremendous grace to draw closer to Christ through our sacrifices.

Why sacrifice? What does it do?

I think there can be a lot of misunderstanding regarding sacrifice. After all, scripture does say that God does not desire or need our sacrifices (Psalm 40). Some might also think offering sacrifices is like striving to earn God's approval instead of receiving his grace.

I like the analogy of a child who doesn't want to eat his broccoli. The parent might then coax the child by saying, "Will you do it for me?"

Does the parent really need the child to make that sacrifice? No! But the parent might say that to the child because the parent knows it would be good for the child to eat his broccoli and the child might possibly be willing to do it out of love for the parent.

Lent is a time to fast. Fasting is a way to cleanse our spiritual palate and make more room for more of God. Fasting creates more of a hunger for God and helps

us to value the Lord alone as our banquet!

This season of Lent, let us not be caught off guard or unprepared! Let us take advantage of all the graces available through fasting, sacrifice and prayer to draw closer to Jesus!

This contribution is available at <http://www.beautifulthorns.com/2018/02/get-your-house-in-order.html>

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The secular world desperately needs to hear the perspective of Catholics on pressing issues, especially on the sanctity of human life. However, most religious authors write in a small niche, read mainly by fellow Catholics and perhaps a few other critics we would secretly love to block. An amusing analogy came to me the other day which clarifies this dilemma.

Consider the life of an ant, not a queen ant, a worker ant.

Worker ants scurry about, hauling loads of food that are bigger than they are. They are completely oblivious to the world around them, fixated solely on their own tiny society. Often this narrow viewpoint leads to disastrous results, with whole colonies wiped out of existence when the macrocosm surrounding them crashes into their little world.

Unfortunately, it is impossible for people to communicate with an ant, or to warn an ant of danger. Any offer of help frightens him because an ant perceives anything which intrudes into his microcosm as a threat. I cannot help an ant because I cannot communicate with him.

Much of my religious life resembles the routine of an ant.

I run around busy with tasks, keeping my nose to the proverbial grindstone, oblivious to the realities of the rest of human society. Never mind the universe or even the God whom I declare as my Lord. I have my routine; I rush to attend mass, read spiritual books, squeeze in prayer and fulfill all the duties of the moment, including writing about my tiny microcosm

When secular society, the wider Body of Christ or even the Holy Spirit Himself, tries to break through to warn, change or help me, I panic, feel threatened and run away, returning to labour in my little world where I feel safe. My earnest striving is counterproductive because it isolates me from larger realities that surround me. Most importantly, my striving isolates me from the work of the Holy Spirit within me because I am in control.



Fortunately, God is better at communicating with me than I am at communicating with ants. He only needs a sliver of an opening in my heart, a quick glance in His direction, or a fleeting thought to make a connection with me. In fact, God became one with all of us, in a sense he became the equivalent of an ant so He could speak, touch, love and become visible to "ants" on earth.

Living the Life of a Child of God

Thank God for Christ, because He offers an easy way out of ant prison. As Catholics, we must break out of our microcosm and listen to the rumblings in the world and in wider the Body of Christ. Most of all, we are invited to become in sync with God and what He wants to do through and in us.

The answer to our dilemma is the opposite of what you might think. 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 says,

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matthew 19:14

And in even stronger terms,

“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

A relationship to the living God is child’s play and is not dependent on us acting like a worker ant.

Listen to this exchange between my young children:

One afternoon, I was making dinner, standing at the counter with my back to our three youngest children. Grace and Daniel were lounging around the kitchen table, with three-year-old Rebecca perched like a little elf on a high stool, happily swinging her legs.

Simply making conversation, Grace who was eight, asked Rebecca, “Who’s your favorite, mum or dad?”

Rebecca replied, “Both!”

Still facing the counter, I looked over my shoulder and intruded on their conversation, I commented, “Smart answer, Rebecca.”

Rebecca was not done, though, “But she’s not my real mum, Mary is.”

Grace rolled her eyes, slapped her forehead with the palm of her hand and said incredulously, “Where does she get this stuff?”

I tried to explain as simply as I could, “Well, the Holy Spirit is in her heart and she listens to His voice.”

Rebecca jumped right back into the discussion and chanted in a sing-song, lilting voice, “That’s right. God the Father in my heart. Baby Jesus in my heart. Holy Spirit in my heart. Mother Mary in my heart but I still like mum and dad the best!”

Grace rolled her eyes and plunked her head down on the table with a loud sigh, “Where does she get this stuff?”

I just laughed.

A few weeks later, as I crouched down to tie Rebecca's shoelace, she picked up the small gold cross I wore around my neck and said, "This is the cross of Jesus and the glory of God shines all around it."

Grace rolled her eyes again, slapped her forehead and asked, "Where does she get this stuff?"

If adults received this sort of "stuff" in prayer, they would consider it a rare gift of profound revelation. Yet this child of three simply received such infused contemplative insights with ease, right from the source of all truth because she was open and relaxed in the presence of God. Children are not yet conditioned to strive and scurry around like worker ants.

If I want to do something about world peace, abortion and the state of the Church by writing articles which will touch hearts and move secular mountains, then it is time to stop acting like a worker ant and time to start writing like a child of God who only writes what her Heavenly Father tells her to write.

connecting with [theology is a verb](#)

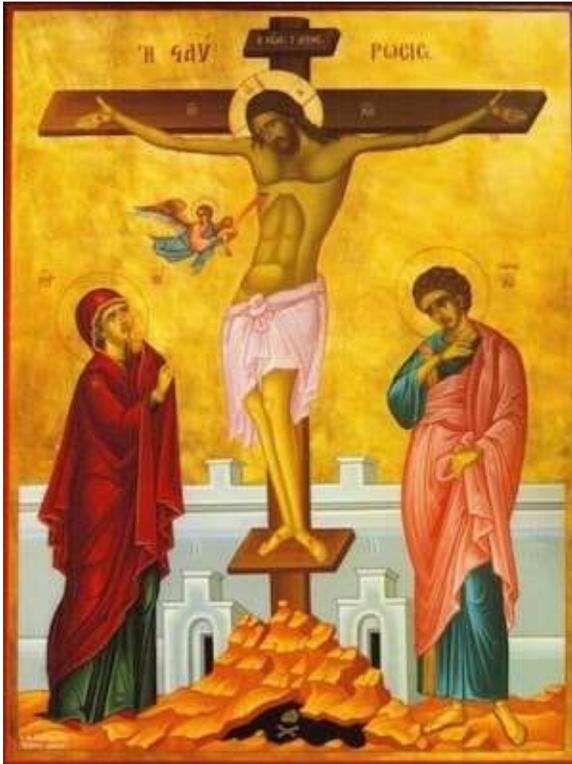


Published by melanie jean juneau

Melanie Jean Juneau serves as the Editor in Chief of Catholic Stand. She is a mother of nine children who has edited her kid's university term papers for over a decade. She blogs at joy of nine9 and mother of nine9. Her writing is humorous and heart warming; thoughtful and thought-provoking. Part of her call and her witness is to write the truth about children, family, marriage and the sacredness of life. Melanie is the administrator of ACWB, a columnist at CatholicLane, CatholicStand, Catholic365, CAPC, author of Echoes of the Divine and Oopsy Daisy, and coauthor of Love Rebel: Reclaiming Motherhood. [View all posts by melanie jean juneau](#)

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Christ Of The Margins: The Importance Of Looking For Christ At The Periphery Of Our Vision [at Monks and Mermaids]



icon of Christ on the periphery of life

to gain all others on the periphery

There were “bad times” under the Romans too. But Jesus came. He did not spend the years of His life complaining or denouncing the “bad times.” He cut it short. In a very simple way. By building Christianity. He did not end up indicting or accusing anybody. He saved. He did not indict the world. He saved the world. (Charles Peguy, Veronique)

Pope Francis is misinterpreted especially by two lots of people, the "world" with its secular media that interprets his words according to its own presuppositions and his "conservative" opponents who identify Christ's moral teaching with the code of Canon Law and who are only too willing to accept the secular interpretation of his words as this makes it easier to refute him. Of course, there are also Catholics and other Christians who have discarded Catholic Tradition and accept modern, liberal, secular morality hook, line and sinker: they are delighted to believe that Pope Francis is one of them.

Instead, we find a traditional Catholic who wants to reorientate the Church's focus of attention from itself to the peripheries, from the orderly and smooth running of its institutions to the disorderly or badly ordered world of sin and to those who are in various degrees entrapped in it, either as victims or as participants.

The Church is, by its nature, a missionary Church, as the last four popes have taught, and all its members are called to be missionaries. This is especially so now that the secular, liberal elite is taking over. In the past, the Church was the moral legislator for western society, and Canon Law reflects that role. Now the rules must be adapted to its main missionary role.

Pope Francis has said:

There is a tension between the center and the periphery.... We must get out of ourselves and go toward the periphery. We must avoid the spiritual disease of the Church that can become self-referential: when this happens, the Church itself becomes sick.

“A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put

aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37)"
(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 46, 49)

When Frs Luke, Paul and I arrived at the small town of Tambogrande in northern Peru to take over the parish and to found a Benedictine monastery in August 1981, the people met us with grateful delight. Communion time at Mass was highly spectacular as people crowded in front of the altar to receive the host. They jostled and pushed "like hungry dogs", as Graham Greene put it in *The Power and the Glory*, and many whispered urgently, "A mi, Padre, a mi!" as though we were about to pass them by.

It came as a bit of a shock that very many of them were not married in church, that some were in more than one relationship and that one of the most pious, a daily Mass-goer, was mistress of a married doctor. We learnt that the Spanish colonized Peru before the Council of Trent made it mandatory that all couples should marry in church, whether they were rich or poor and that the Council of Trent was too far away for it to make much difference to the illiterate peasants, however pious they may have been. We also learnt that, while civil marriage and simple co-habiting did not require the families to put on a large fiesta,

religious marriage does, and people simply can't afford it. It was also a sad fact that the average parish priest in the old days had simply been content to give the sacraments and made no real attempt to teach them.

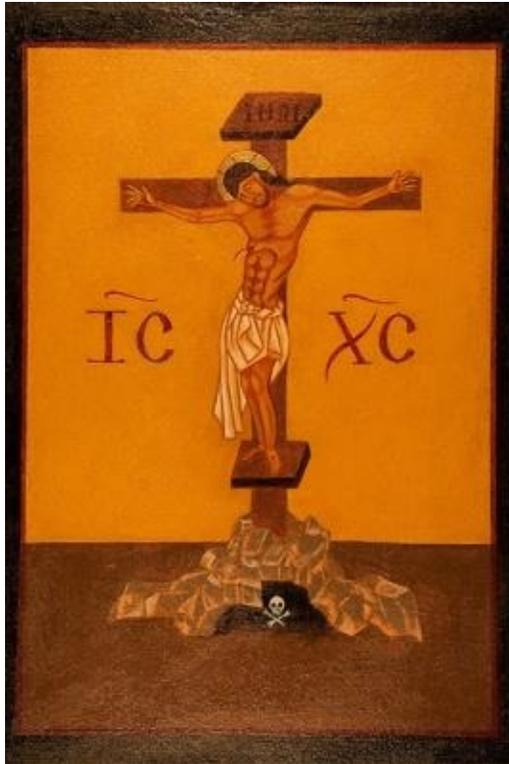
Father Luke, Paul and myself had no special theory about the sacraments and marriage other than the ordinary teaching of the Church. For us, the question was simply this: should their obvious need and desire for Christ be met first by what we had come there to give them, leaving it to Christ himself to sort things out, or should we first meet them with Canon Law? There was no time to theorise: they were there in front of us, whispering, "A mi, Padre, a mi!" The question was: Do we now, at this moment, give them Jesus or the Law?

Father Paul, as the parish priest, went to consult the Archbishop who, like us, was no liberal. He asked him about second relationships, especially when this has taken place after a previous marriage in church. The archbishop told him that it was his opinion that most first marriages in Peru do not fulfil the conditions necessary for a valid marriage and that the processes for annulment are both too complicated and too expensive for the majority of people. Very often, the second marriage is the one that has the natural ingredients essential for validity. Under the circumstances, we should give second marriages the benefit of the doubt. Church discipline does not fit the real situation.

As the years went on, with the introduction of catechesis in which ordinary Catholic doctrine was taught and as we organised marriages in the village fiestas when the whole village was celebrating anyway, which made them very much cheaper for the families and with the training of catechists who instructed people in preparation for the sacraments, Tambogrande became, little by little, an ordinary Catholic parish in which the ordinary rules made sense.

The truth is that Pope Francis' controversial views are neither right wing nor left wing: they are the product of a normal Hispanic American pastoral experience. According to the last four popes, the Church must be missionary, must reach out and not be content until all have the chance to enjoy a living experience of and relationship with God in Christ. In the vocabulary of Pope Francis, we must reach out to the peripheries. Our theology, our language and our rules must be adapted to this end.

Firstly, we must identify those on the periphery. From the point of view of our centre who is Jesus Christ, that includes everybody, including ourselves, but some are more on the periphery than others. Here it is worth quoting Archimandrite Aemilianos of Simonpetra, a monastery on Mount Athos:



"Think of it: Jesus Christ, the Life of all, the Creator of the universe, the only One ever to have been born without sin, was all alone, left in a common grave, outside of Jerusalem. He was alone even among his closest friends, since they never really understood Him, and thus He asked them: Do you not perceive or understand? (Mk. 8.17) Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me? (Jn. 14.9). At the time of His passion, His isolation became acute. In the garden of agony, when His sweat became like great drops of blood, His disciples drifted off into sleep (Lk. 22.44). One by one His friends deserted Him. He stood alone before the judgement seat of Pilate, alone on the cross, alone in the grave: everywhere alone. He went alone into Hell. Alone, always alone. Why? So that you might learn that you have to be alone with God in order to become His dwelling place.

Then the Lord will say, at the Last Judgement, to those on His left, whom He will send away into Gehenna, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels: "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me" (cf. Mt 25:33-41). Do you see? He's a stranger, somebody who's alone, who's ignored: I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was alone in prison and you did not visit me (cf. Mt 25.42-43)...For many of us, this can be a rude

awakening: after beholding Christ in our dreams, we find it annoying to open our eyes on a world filled with other people. Immediately we say: "I wasn't looking for you I want Christ," forgetting that the stranger, the poor man, the prisoner, the sinner, and especially my enemy - especially the person who seeks to harm me - is Christ for me."(Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonopetra, *The Way of the Spirit*, pp. 244-245, 254)

If the Church is to have an open door to those on the periphery, it must be clear in itself that it cannot be one of the forces that puts people on the periphery. **Secondly**, it is not there to judge people. As the fathers of the desert used to say, the One who condemns adultery also condemns judging others:

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matt.7, 1...)

We must be clear that our function is to show others that God loves them unconditionally, right where they are and that this is revealed by Christ on the Cross. The famous "Who am I to judge?" of Pope Francis about homosexuals must be interpreted in that context. When Jesus asked the woman taken in adultery if there was anyone condemning her and she replied, "No one" and he said, "Neither do I condemn you," no one suggested he was going soft on adultery: condemnation was not his role and neither is it ours.

Thirdly, by getting to know them, we must discern and discover what God is already doing in their marginalised souls, for you can be sure that the Good Shepherd is already there, working away. Anyone who has come to know the true devotion, the genuine love, even the heroic self-sacrifice present in many objectively invalidly married families will know what I mean. And you will come across invalidly married couples who stick together by some miracle of grace and families which, if there were to be a separation as Canon Law obliges them to do, would bring about another human tragedy. Often these are marriages that should be valid if annulment were a realistic option, but this is not always the case. Of course, there are also invalid marriages which should end with separation. We are talking about marriages, but there are many other moral situations which require the same treatment: we must discern what they are, avoid judging the people involved as far as possible, and discern what God is already doing within the situation and collaborate with Him: after all, He is the boss.

The object of the whole exercise is to invite people through the open door into

the Church and, where this is not possible, to allow them to experience the love of God through us and through the Church.

By going out to the periphery, the Church and we as members of it grow in our understanding of life in general and of Christian life in particular. Only by moving around and seeing from different angles, by looking at what the Good Shepherd is doing among the poor and those whose contact with him is weak or non-existent can we put our own understanding of the Christian economy into its proper context. However, when peripheries are given the importance they deserve, this may naturally result in the adoption of different pastoral solutions in different contexts, cultures and areas. Pope Francis says:

I am convinced of one thing: the great changes in history were realized when reality was seen not from the centre but rather from the periphery. It is a hermeneutical question: reality is understood only if it is looked at from the periphery, and not when our viewpoint is equidistant from everything. Truly to understand reality we need to move away from the central position of calmness and peacefulness and direct ourselves to the peripheral areas. Being at the periphery helps to see and to understand better, to analyze reality more correctly, to shun centralism and ideological approaches....

This is really very important to me: the need to become acquainted with reality by experience, to spend time walking on the periphery in order really to become acquainted with the reality and life-experiences of people. If this does not happen we then run the risk of being abstract ideologists or fundamentalists, which is not healthy.

Patristic theology bears the mark of the pastoral experience of bishops and other ministers in the towns as well as the deep spiritual experience of monks in the deserts. Scholastic theology became of value when friars following the humble Christ of Scripture crossed over to the margins where people were becoming all the more estranged from the Church while studying Aristotle and other Greek philosophy. The friars like St Thomas Aquinas studied their theology, often on their knees, within the context of this alienated scholastic movement and drew

the two movements into one. We the Church must grow in understanding of the Church by rooting it in the pastoral contact with people in the peripheries.

When after Vatican II the Church has directed its attention from its centre in Rome to what Christ is doing in the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, we have made discoveries about our own Church in ways that revolutionise our understanding of it while remaining in continuity with our past. We find our unity with other Christians in a living contact with Christ. We will come to realise that the whole of Catholicism is implicit in that personal union with Christ, ready to become visible as we, patiently accepting our differences, we grow in ecclesial love. Our Catholicism is not static: it grows as we cross frontiers in charity and seek Christ in the other. Pope Francis writes:

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: “Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace”.

Ten Things To Know About Pope Francis (George Weigel - Acton Institute)

A very good video of the inclusive truth of Orthodoxy/Catholicism is by Father John Behr:

The Shocking Truth About Orthodoxy

Pope Francis could not put this better. He says that when the Holy Spirit is around, diversity is no longer a threat but a means of growth as we reach out for

a God-given Synthesis in and through our personal contact with Christ. In fact, for Pope Francis Catholicism is a synthesis of opposites, opposites because human beings think in different ways and in different contexts, having different experiences and different cultures and customs, and synthesis because, for all that, we are being formed by the Spirit to have one heart and one mind in Christ. Whether we speak of the Incarnation or the Trinity, God's omnipotence and human freedom, collegiality and primacy, or anything else, Catholic teaching is a synthesis of opposites in tension with one another. It is not "either...or" but "both...and". In this process, there are always "conservatives" who resist the new synthesis in favour of ones already reached, and there are "progressives" who adopt a new position that seems to attack the status quo. Then there is the Church that, by accepting both, gradually forms the synthesis. This process can only happen when ecclesial charity, the created sign of the Holy Spirit's active presence, prevails. Ecumenism is the process of synthesis when ecclesial charity breaks down and schism has resulted. Authentic ecumenism can only properly take place within the context of repentance and the restoration of ecclesial love.

This contribution is available at <http://fatherdavidbirdosb.blogspot.co.uk/2018/02/christ-of-margins-importance-of-looking.html>
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Wonder: a thought-provoking film for the whole family [at The Koala Mom]

Wonder has been sparking discussions in our home since we watched it several weeks ago. This film, about a boy with facial deformities who goes to school for the first time, is a great way to discuss bullying and friendship with your kids. Our family enjoyed the story and characters as much as the family-friendly nature of *Wonder* and the positive messages it promotes.



Based on [the best-selling novel](#), see why critics are raving about *Wonder*! Starring Julia Roberts, Jacob Tremblay and Owen Wilson, it's [a perfect film](#) for the whole family. Now on Blu-ray™ and On Demand!

Augie Pullman (played by Jacob Tremblay) was born with rare facial

deformities. He's had nearly 30 surgeries to correct them. Despite that, he still looks... *different*. His space helmet lets him hide while immersing himself in his favourite daydream. But this year, Augie's mom (Julia Roberts) has decided it's time for him to start private school. Leaving behind homeschooling also means leaving behind the helmet.

At school, Augie meets three kids who help show him around: Julian, Jack, and Summer. Julian is the perfect kid—when the adults are around. Along with some friends, he begins making fun of Augie and bullying him, sending cruel notes. Unable to hide in his helmet, Augie instead hides in his imagination, thinking about how Chewbacca would be received if he showed up. He does become friends with Summer and Jack, and is supported by an amazing teacher and the principal.

One thing I loved about *Wonder* was its very positive portrayal of family. Augie's parents remind him over and over again how much they love him just the way he is. He and his sister Via have a typical sibling relationship, but she's also protective and worries about him as much as his parents. They aren't a perfect family, but they are a close family.

It was also neat to see a film that features a homeschooler. Even though Augie is ending his homeschool days, [homeschooling](#) is given a positive light. It allowed Augie to thrive academically while undergoing his surgeries. At the school, Julian tries to make fun of Augie for being homeschooled—until Augie corrects Jack's pronunciation of “supposedly” and offers, “Maybe my mom could homeschool you too.”

Sunshine said *Wonder* is a movie about a boy who was “ordinary and extraordinary at the same time.” In many ways, Augie is a normal kid. He likes astronauts and *Star Wars*, annoys his big sister, jumps on his bed. He's extraordinary in the ways he touches those around him. Julian, Jack and Summer each have different reactions to Augie and learn a lot from him. (Hmmm, that could be a great discussion or report topic!)

With [Pink Shirt Day](#) coming up on February 28th, *Wonder* would be a great way to talk with kids about how Augie is treated at school, how he could have reacted to the bullies, and how others respond to the bullies. I chatted with the girls about how we treat someone who is different from us. As Sunshine said, Augie is an ordinary kid. He just looks a bit different, but as Summer and Jack learned,

that doesn't matter. We can still be friends with people who are different.

The girls were also excited to learn that Jacob Tremblay is a Canadian actor. They thought it was cool that he was born right here in Vancouver and that most of the movie was filmed here. Like Augie, Jacob is eleven years old and a big fan of *Star Wars*. He's also a Vancouver Canucks fan. As an actor, he's played some tough roles; his breakout performance was *Room* in 2015. He's been nominated for multiple awards for his performance in *Wonder*.

Finally, I really appreciated being able to take my girls to see [a good, clean, family film](#). It's hard to find movies these days that don't have any questionable content. While this movie was about a boy around Sunshine's age, I checked PluggedIn's review before going to the theatre to make sure it was okay for her. I was thoroughly impressed by *Wonder* and hope that its success will convince other film companies to continue making family-friendly movies.

“*Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson earnestly pour their hearts into this poignant, realistic story about a young son who is different. It stitches together a heartfelt world populated with loving parents, admirable teachers, and kids who believably struggle with who they are and what they need.” ~ [Bob Hoose, PluggedIn](#)

If you missed *Wonder* in theatres, you can [grab it now on DVD](#) or watch it on-demand. Sunshine and Lily keep asking us when they can watch it again and Sunshine wants to [read the book](#). Your kids will love it too!



This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2018/02/wonder/>
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A Birthday, a deathday, and bluegrass for both [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]

Celebrating our daughter's 23rd birthday today, I wanted to share the story I wrote a few years ago about my father-in-law on a very special day that happened 10 years ago today, February 21, 2008.



Rebecca's first year of life was spent in the dotting arms of her paternal grandparents as I went back to work. The many pictures of Rebecca with her papaw playing, cooing, and smiling from ear to ear on his lap are immeasurable. She talked more about her papaw than anybody else, he even taught her how to write her name when she was three.

When Rebecca was four, at a family reunion, The Quebe Sisters, (2nd cousins, twice removed) fiddling everything bluegrass, introduced her to the violin and the music. Soon she was mastering her own fiddle, playing everything from "Turkey in the Straw" to "Orange Blossom Special". Her grandparents loved her concerts. As country dancers, square dancers, and "Grand Marchers" from way back, having their granddaughter playing these songs was a real treat for them.

A few years later, papaw suffered a stroke. In the hospital, Rebecca would sweetly butter his roll for him, hold his hand, and covered all the walls of his room with her artwork. Eight years later, when the time came for his passing, it was in the early morning hours on Rebecca's birthday.

Many told Rebecca how sad that her grandfather died on her birthday. I heard someone say to her, "That sure wasn't fair, was it?" She didn't say much. I thought about this and remembered how impressed I was when Norman Vincent Peale, the great author/speaker of "The power of positive thinking" and "Expect a Miracle" died on Christmas Eve, some years ago. Both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, fathers of our country, died on the same day hours apart on the 4th of July, and my great uncle, Fr. Samuel Haughton, died celebrating Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Countless other death date coincidences that are only known by those touched by their timing prove that there is something to my theory.



At her papaw's funeral, Rebecca played "Lover's Waltz" by Jay Ungar. At the graveside service, she played "Tennessee Waltz" and as the veterans' flag was folded and presented to her grandmother, "Faded Love". She played perfectly despite the events and her young age of 13. As she bowed the last note of Faded Love, I saw her quickly and quietly fall apart. Large "crocodile tears" streamed down her face without a sound. There had been no time to weep before.

Explaining to my daughter that this was not a sad coincidence, I told her that soon after she was born, I went back to work and her grandparents volunteered to baby-sit. What joy and love they had for her, so when it came time for Pawpa to go to be with Jesus, her special day was the best pick. A glimmer of brightness came over her face as she realized what I had said.

Rebecca's papaw deeply loved family and his special bond with his granddaughter will stay with them both forever. As our daughter celebrated her 13th year of life, her grandfather celebrated his first day in eternity.

This contribution is available at
<http://acatholicmumclimbingthepillars.blogspot.com/2011/02/birthday-deathday-and-bluegrass-for.html>
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Authenticity and Loss in the Blogosphere ~ Rest in Peace, Denise [at Campfires and Cleats]

The opinion of the masses --- that social media and the blogosphere have taken the place of sincerity and superseded authentic friendship? I content quite the opposite.... If not for the virtual landscape that irrevocably is interwoven through our lives, would we not be blessed by crossing paths with certain individuals? What starts as a simple comment of introduction across many miles, sometimes continents, gradually becomes a solid and very "real" friendship.

~ Born in cyberspace, but very much the opposite of virtual.~

If not for social media and the blogosphere, I would never have been blessed by certain souls who've woven their care, their knowledge, their *selves* into my life in the truest sense. Think about it.....you must have these same experiences, no?friends who do everything for you from prayer to recipe swap, to chatting up the latest Stars Hollow binge watch obsession. And when one of those dear genuine people is suddenly *gone*..... we're faced with a deep gaping hole. True grief for a "real" friend. That's why it's taken me a month to write this... to process the loss of our friend one month ago when [Denise](#), entered into Eternal Life after a very long battle.....



The news created shock waves of sadness across social media channels and within the blogosphere. My friend, Denise, was a blogger and encourager. Her words and her online presence was grace to me.....to many. No, I'd never "met" her. Nor did the droves whose lives she graced with her words. But, wow, those phone conversations, those emails, those fb messages. Over this past decade of my friendship with Denise, we shared sooo much....inside jokes, parenting hacks, love of our Catholic faith, homeschool adventures, admiration for The Bard. And of course, our favorite and most fun subject~ all things Whovian. There wasn't enough time to hash it all out and I can't even speculate on how often we'd lament those pesky 500 or so miles between us. She always

seemed to "know" just when to check in.....to chat about the journey. Perpetually minimizing her effect....her calm assurance, warm advice. Recently, during a particularly difficult time in my life, Denise reached out, offering encouragement, telling me I was in her heart and prayers and she'd reply when she was capable of lengthier, more meaningful talk. That's what friends *do*, yes..... And that message was her final one to me. There was no mention of her pain, which I'm told was abundant. Only that I was comforted. That was Denise's true gift to all who knew her within the myriad of relationships, ministries, volunteer organizations. Denise thought always of how she could help others... she was out there managing youth events in her Ohio parish or sharing her musical talent in her parish's choir or coordinating her local library's Doctor Who anniversary by building..... you guessed it..... a full sized TARDIS...and yes I do believe she actually used Sherwin Williams "TARDIS blue" paint! or hosting weekly Whovian gatherings for her kids and their friends in full costume, with themed snacks.

But the most important, and I know the most meaningful role that Denise lived is right there in a short, simple "bio" [on her blog, St Elizabeth Ann Seton Exchange](#) *I am a homeschooling mother of four living in rural northeastern Ohio. It's as simple as that.*

Despite Denise's accessibility to and love for her parish and her community, her devotion to her children, her advocacy for the best education possible for them and the cultivating of the homeschooling experience for all four of her precious kids.... that's her legacy. Denise's [blog](#) header, too, summarizes the essence of how she lived her life:

Spiritual reflections, family, home educating typical and special needs children
~ Dedicated to: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn. "Rejoice in hope, persevere in tribulations, be constant in prayer." Romans 12:12 Certe bonum certanem! Fight the good fight!

The last time Denise updated her blog was in her revealing and now-prophetic post, [Time, Precious Time](#) I urge yougo read her words.....you'll be rejuvenated by her honesty, her pride in her kids, her humble fight against her illness and her love of the Lord.

Denise entered Heaven and received her reward a few weeks before the Lenten season began, but now that we're *living* this season, I can't help reflecting on *this* passage~ *God promises beauty from ashes* (Isaiah 61:3)

God always keeps His promises.

While we mourn Denise, we thank God for the privilege to know her virtually.... for the blessing that our world's technology offers. We were gifted the honor of genuine friendship with one who sought no fame, no name, no recognition,

nothing more than, as her blog states, "simply" being a "homeschooling mother of four." *Rest in Peace, my friend. The honor is ours.*



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?

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BTW, I'm offering picture services and customized
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In the Wake of Parkland [at Clinging to Onions]



Here's a post from my friend Mike:

Curious question, with no comment desired other than indicating your response. Debate is not welcome on this thread. What do you think is the primary reason for mass shootings in the US?

- A. Gun availability and proliferation*
- B. Violence in entertainment*
- C. The breakdown of the family*
- D. Lack of mental health resources*
- E. Other (please specify)*

Mike got scores of answers, if not hundreds (I stopped counting after a while), and they ranged all over the place, including many who wrote in some version of “All the above.” So did I – here it is:

Abortion, euthanasia, mercy killing, capital punishment, targeted killing, drone warfare. We're immersed in the culture of death, and we've all grown accustomed to solving problems by killing people. So, yes, all of the above (A, C, and D especially), but also a zeitgeist that implicitly condones

destroying human life as an acceptable means to reach a variety of ends.

That was on Friday. On Saturday morning, I snagged my

Wall Street Journal

from the curb and located Peggy Noonan's

[column](#)

: "The Parkland Massacre and the Air We Breathe." In it, Noonan articulated and expanded on the same point I was trying to make in response to Mike's question – a point the column's sub-title succinctly summarizes: "What's gone wrong with our culture that produces such atrocities? It's a very long list."

Noonan answers her own question with another question:

"What has happened the past 40 years or so to produce a society so ill at ease with itself, so prone to violence?" Her list overlaps my own, and she adds some more: "The family blew up—divorce, unwed childbearing. Fatherless sons. Fatherless daughters, too. Poor children with no one to love them. The internet flourished. Porn proliferated. Drugs, legal and illegal." Noonan speculates that all this cultural upheaval is responsible for a pervasive moral illness in our body politic. "A nation has an atmosphere. It has air it breathes in each day," she writes. "America's air looks clean but there are toxins in it, and they're making the least defended and protected of us sick."

What caught my attention, however, was the 40 year figure – why forty? A quick scout around the internet finds other retrospectives since Ash Wednesday's horrific events in Florida utilizing a similar reckoning, more or less. Some go back to just 1999; others go back to the mid-1980s; few go back further than 1978 – that 40 year mark mentioned by Noonan. In fact, according to

[CNN](#)

, only two of the worst mass shootings in U.S. history occurred before then: Austin in 1966 and Camden in 1949.

Why? What happened around 1978?

Consider: Abortion on demand was legalized in this country following the Supreme Court's Roe

v.

Wade decision in 1973. Since then, abortion on demand has become part of the fabric of our cultural consensus – that is, a medicalized form of killing has become a normalized means of addressing challenging human dilemmas.

And it's not just an American phenomenon.

A friend recently gave me an

[essay](#)

by actress Patricia Heaton about Iceland's "success" in eliminating Down syndrome. Heaton astutely observes that Iceland "was not, in fact, eliminating Down syndrome. They were just killing everyone who has it."

So, without excluding questions of easy access to guns, lack of mental health resources, and the breakdown of traditional mores, here's my own curious and honest inquiry: Could it be that we've just gotten used to killing as a way of life, especially since Roe

v.

Wade? Could it be that we're raising one generation after another with that mindset?

And, if that's the case, what can we do about it? What ought we to do?

This contribution is available at <http://clingingtoonions.blogspot.com/2018/02/in-wake-of-parkland.html>
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Thank you Allison Gingras at [Reconciled To You](#) and Elizabeth Riordan at [Theology Is A Verb](#) for hosting Catholic bloggers at *Worth Revisiting*. It is a privilege for us to share our work with you and your readers. [Stop by for a visit now](#).

Life Is A Warfare, A Battle

(Originally posted June 25, 2014)

[If we are to enjoy the Beatific Vision for all eternity, we must, as so many spiritual writers teach, first know and identify who our enemy is. Who seeks to sever our relationship with the Source of eternal life? Who is it that seeks our eternal damnation? How do we defeat this enemy? Father James F. McElhone, C.S.C answers these questions with some specific and sage advice about spiritual combat, prayer and the acquisition of virtue:]

“...to acquire any virtue, pray. Life is a warfare, a battle. The greatest battles have been fought, not on fields reddened with blood, but in the soul, where the battle is intensified by the powerful forces of good and evil striving for the priceless gift of God - the human soul. The history of the soul shows records of success and failure, for souls generation after generation have been fighting a battle that is constant, that death alone ends, and which is vitally important; a battle not against flesh and blood, not against brothers in Christ, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of darkness, against the wickedness of the archfiend, who holds at high command the very elements of daily life to wage the deadly conflict.

The gifts of God can be employed by the individual soul for its own good or for its destruction. Those very powers which God gave to assure salvation can be used to make eternal loss possible. The soul feels the waves of angry passion; it discovers the law of the mind; it finds the flesh lusting against the spirit. It realizes that the faculties of the mind - the memory, the understanding, reason, imagination, free will can awaken elements of strife; it understands that the senses can arouse the latent enemy.

How subdue the waves of angry passion? How control the law of the members ever pulling down? How bring the flesh into subjection? How combat seductive charms? It cannot be by merely physical means; it cannot be by natural power alone; it cannot be by any force except the spiritual, for the resistance must be superior to that used by the enemy. The attack and defense must be one of prayer. The prayerful man can move mountains; the prayerful man can do all things. No one denies that the battle may sometimes be hard, but only the coward succumbs; and it should be remembered that any virtue can be had if we pray for it, and the harder we pray, the sooner it will come.”

(From *Particular Examen – How to Root Out Hidden Faults*).

This contribution is available at
<http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2018/02/worth-revisiting-life-is-warfare-battle.html>

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Homeschooling with a 13, 9, 4, and 1 year old [at Veils and Vocations]

I have been following

[these posts](#)

and enjoying a glimpse into what it really means to homeschool. It's relieving that most don't look like the polished books and pamphlets but more life real life. When an opportunity came up to share my own, I decided to jump at the chance.

Here is a day in our life, of course it is not according to plan but, it works anyway!



It's 4AM, Lovie Lu is up to nurse yet again. At 14 months old, her night time nursing has only decreased slightly since we was an infant. I enjoy the snuggles but I am tired and this new love for waking up to nurse at 4 AM is wearing me out. I know that by the time I get her settled again and start to drift back to sleep, my alarm will go off. Still I try to cherish the moments because she is growing so quickly and try not to think about the long day ahead.

As predicted, I am barely asleep and the 5:15 alarm goes off. I attempt to stretch a bit to wake my fuzzy head and sleepy body but this starts to disturb the little miss, so I continue on with my morning routine.

I say a decade of the rosary, almost silently, but know that God can hear. It's my little time to focus. I take a deep breath and reach over for my tablet that I stash next to my bed. I had been actually getting up at 5:15 and working in our classroom, but Lovie Lu soon caught onto me and has devised ways to keep me

from getting up. If I don't start working by 6 AM, there is no hope it getting the rest of the day done, so my tablet with her cuddled in the crook of one arm is how I get the first part of my work done.

I am making progress despite only having one hand to type and copy links for my social media work, when she demands more of my attention. In a classic Lovie Lu move, she drapes herself fully across my chest and falls to sleep as I pat her back with one hand and scour the Feedly feed for more articles to share. Its about 6:20AM and the light is filtering through the windows as I hear the high school bus roll by.

I make a mental note that both World Book Day and Read Across America day are this week, have to plan something special for my preschoolers at co-op on Wednesday!

7:06 AM and I am still trapped but almost done with what I can do on my tablet. Little Man starts crying and Hubby gets up to see what the problem is. He gets him settled back down then gets himself up for the day. At 7:20, the nursing begins again. She has woken up crying, realizing that she is no long fully attached to me. I nurse her down and finally can slip out.

I quickly get dressed, fill out the kids work notebooks with today's assignments, get together a plan for breakfast and grab a handful of sunflower seeds. I pour a shot of apple cider vinegar into my water glass and top with some cayenne, ginger, and turmeric. It's my drink to get me going. Everyone is up now except for the baby. I entrust Cowgirl to making up the breakfast cookies and head downstairs to finish working.

On my way down, I start a load of cloth diapers in the washing machine. I get down to the classroom/playroom, which of course is a mess although the kids "cleaned" it last night. I sigh and move on, I can't do it all. I'll have a talk with them later.

Two minutes later, Little Man arrives to hang out. I love him but want to get my stuff done, thankfully he goes back up with Hubby who brings me some tea. I can finally work with two hands. Better getting moving before the next interruption--it's 8:15. Yikes, I still have a lot to do!

It's 8:49 and Little Man is back telling me endless stories. I don't want to miss them but have to get my work done, especially since I have 3 deadlines to meet

today and I am still wrapping up social media. It's a constant balancing act.

At 8:53, I finally log out of social media and try out Little Man's "night vision goggles" (broken sunglasses). I head onto deadline number 1. There is a flurry of activity in the kitchen above me then I hear everyone walking to their various work stations for independent work--I hope.

Today is Hubby's day "off." Since we both work our own businesses that term is very relative. We had a meeting of the minds and calendars last night. He has been out of the house working his business for the past 5 days. He promised me the morning to let me catch up on my own work. I have until lunch at noon.

I keep working. Cowgirl shows up at 9:06 looking for one of her textbooks. She offers to bring me a breakfast cookie--I eagerly say yes and remember that I haven't really eaten yet. At least I know the kids are working.

It's 9:27, Buddy joins me downstairs. He tells me that Lovie Lu is up. My time is ticking--let the games begin! Little Man is not far behind. Buddy gets him set up on "school work." Buddy had taken up the challenge of being Little Man's tutor. He's doing a pretty good job. I need to make sure that Buddy doesn't get lost in teaching and forget about his own work though. I hear Lovie Lu singing in the kitchen.

By 9:52, Buddy has brought a crying Lovie Lu downstairs. She happily plays with her dollhouse and the boys keep up their school work. This may be a very good day!

I finish up my work for the morning, and then do a quick math lesson with Buddy. I leave him to do his homework and pick up the baby. Little Man is building a marble run as I leave to go upstairs to change Lovie Lu's diaper and get her dressed for the day.

I suddenly realize I have no wipes and a very poopy diaper. I can overhear Little Man having a very animated discussion with himself in the living room. I call to him to bring me a new pack of wipes, his response, "How do you know I am here?"

Cowgirl overhears my plea for help and gets me the wipes. I get the baby all dressed and then touch base with Cowgirl. Her one book is still missing (I do have systems for books and school supplies but they only work when the kids

actually use them.) I head off on a frantic mission to find the lost book. I can't find it and realize that it is getting later.

Today I have the very rare treat of sneaking out for a little bit to get some work done. I've been juggling working/homeschooling/caring for the kids simultaneously for weeks. I have a deadline I have to meet and Hubby is available so I gather my laptop, notes, and jacket to head out the door.

On my way through the kitchen, I straighten up the counters and clear off the table. Hubby takes the little ones downstairs to get them interested in a few toys before he begins morning read alouds at 11. He first goes over Algebra with Cowgirl. It's 10:35, I have to be back by noon for lunch. If I don't leave soon, it just won't happen and the last time I had any time without kids was in October when I volunteered at the book sale.

I work amidst the hum of a local diner. I could have gone to the the library but the prospect of an egg over easy and gluten free toast is too appealing....until my laptop battery dies and there is no outlet to use. (Better be more prepared next time!)

I take out my trusty notebook and pen to write up my article for today's deadline. It's almost noon, so soon, but the break has done me good and I got a lot done. When I arrive back home, the two youngest are playing in the living room while the older kids are busy working at their desks. I nurse the baby then take her for a diaper change.

We sit down for a quick lunch of leftover rice, collard greens, beans, and ham. I catch up with the kids and then get up to wash the dishes from the morning and the lunch dishes as they trickle in. At 1PM, we all get on our shoes and jackets to head up to adoration. Hubby sits down and starts his work.

Our parish has added extra hours for Lent and it is a tradition of ours to spend some time each week at adoration for Lent. I wish I could do it more often but I tell myself at least we get there a handful of times each year.

It's a 20 minute drive to church. The kids bring along a bit of their unfinished work, I also have them each narrate what they each read for the day. Little Man plays on the flash pad to keep from falling asleep and Lovie Lu takes her first nap of the day. We spend as much time as we can in church praying and the little ones are as quiet as an be expected. We get back to the car a little before 2PM.

On the way home, we drop Cowgirl for her weekly sewing lesson.

On the way back, the carschooling is over and the boys chatter in the back seat. As we wind through the wildlife refuge near our house to get home, they are entranced by the vernal ponds, waterfalls, and streams. It's a February thaw and I am trying hard not to get my heart set on spring being here because I know there is still plenty of winter to get through. We get home at 2:30.

The boys want to play basketball and I can't blame them after being cooped up so much the past few months. Buddy will go out in any weather, but my summer baby, Little Man, just can't handle the cold and it has been a cold winter. I tell them they can play for awhile but Buddy still has some work to complete. I sit down to check emails and address a few work related items. I consider calling them back in, but it really is just too nice out. I grab my bowl and scissors instead and head to the garden with Lovie Lu. I had set up low tunnels in the Fall and am dying to know what survived and if there are any fresh veggies I can use for dinner.

As Lovie Lu gets her first taste of "running" around the back yard, I discover that there is a nice stand of rainbow chard (one of my favorite vegetables). I cut a bowlful and snip off some lemon thyme, too. I'm pleased that despite the super cold winter, a few small head of lettuce survived, along with four Brussels sprout plants. My garlic is coming up...I again remind myself that it isn't spring yet!

After heading inside with my bounty, I check in with Hubby who is still working. I open the back door and keep an eye on the kids, Buddy is carrying Lovie Lu around to show her all the amazing "creature adventures" our big yard holds. I get a bit of typing done on the article I hand wrote. It's now almost 4PM, the boys show up with the mail and I tell them it is time to come in.

Little Man heads downstairs for his requisite daily dose of Wild Kratts and I put Lovie Lu in her seat for a snack. Buddy and I begin researching the Kratt brothers, ironically, for his 4H presentation. He has never done this big of a research project (a 5-7 minute presentation) and it is slow going teaching him how. We research and he writes up notes. About a half hour later, Little Man appears to practice his knife skills on a rice cake and have a snack. Lovie Lu wants down and toddles into the living room to continue playing with her Green Toys bouquet set. Buddy and I wrap up a note taking session around 5 PM.

I scour the pantry for dinner ideas, chiding myself that I didn't complete the weekly meal plan yet. I sit down to get a bit more work done and then head out the door at 5:30 to pick up Cowgirl from her sewing. She is working on a 19th century dress for her little sister for an upcoming living history day. I can't wait to see how it turns out. She finished her own dress last week and it is beautiful.

At 5:56, I pull up the drive to my friend's house who is a retired seamstress and now gives lessons. The dress is mostly done, I can't wait to see Lovie Lu in it. We chat a couple minutes then head back home. At 6:30, I walk through the door and start pulling dinner together. Cowgirl has swapped her regular chores for cooking dinner. Once I have her set on what we are making, I start to straighten up but Lovie Lu is losing it and wants to nurse for the sixth time today. I sit on the sofa and continue to talk Cowgirl through cooking. Buddy finishes his chores and gets his basketball uniform ready.

Little Man starts to melt down and Hubby picks him up. Lovie Lu is falling asleep. The quick nurse has turned into a deep nap after a day of hard playing and fresh air. Little Man collapses asleep on Hubby's shoulder. Buddy is practicing guitar in his room. We are now both sitting in the living room with sleeping little ones, it's the first time either of us has stopped all day. I tell Cowgirl she is going to have to make the chard as well, and start giving her directions.

At 7:26, dinner is finally ready. Hubby puts Little Man in his bed snoring. Cowgirl and Buddy set the table. We say Grace (with me praying from the living room) and they sit down to eat. It's only 9 minutes until the guys need to leave for basketball practice and Lovie Lu is nursing again.

She is finally done, as I get to the table, the guys leave. The girls and I continue with dinner. After dinner, the girls go to play in the living room, I put on congee in the slow cooker. I start washing the dishes and cleaning up the kitchen, but Lovie Lu is getting restless and I know my time is short. I decide to focus on putting away the food and leave the last couple of dishes for the morning, along with the soaking fry pan.

I get myself changed for bed, pick out clothes for tomorrow, change the baby into pajamas and head to the bathroom to brush my teeth, toddler on my hip. Hubby already had his wardrobe laid out in there and I add mine. It's nearly 9PM and Little Man wakes up and has a meltdown because he is all out of sorts. I am

trying to figure out what his problem is but he is just whining and not really saying anything. Lovie Lu, who was settling down and nursing is now fully awake. As I cradle a writhing preschooler, she goes to play with her flowers, again.

I finally convince him to lie down in my bed until Hubby gets back--I will not miss these late night practices. Lovie Lu is not interested in bed now thanks to a very late nap and too much excitement. I remember the article I have to finish and wish I had charged my laptop so I didn't have to write it up twice. I decide to knock it out while everyone is distracted. That lasts about 2.5 seconds. Little Man realized that he didn't eat dinner and is looking for a snack. He asks for a carrot which I wash and give to him. He cuts it into bite sized pieces and starts snacking.

A few minutes later, Hubby comes home with Buddy from practice. We begin the task of getting everyone ready for bed and in their rooms. Soon, it is 9:45 and Hubby begins making the rounds to pray with each child and tuck them in. Lovie Lu is fighting between wanting to sleep and wanting to be by the other kids, she squirms and flips all over my bed.

Hubby shows up in our room about 10PM, we read through the daily readings and do our prayers together. Lovie Lu still isn't settled down and I am out of steam. We decide to watch a quick episode of a favorite show on my tablet. I set the alarm and fall asleep around 11 PM, before the show is over.

This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2018/02/a-day-in-life-homeschooling-with-13-9-4.html>
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When You Fast: Jesus Has Provided the Solution Blog Tour [at Carolyn Astfalk, Author]

With Lent about to begin, I can't think of a better time to read this short book and to implement it in your life.

About the Book:

There are many references to fasting in Scripture. In Saint Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5, Jesus puts the solution in front of us when he says, "*When you fast.*" He doesn't say "If you fast," but "*When you fast.*" As Christians, we're supposed to imitate Jesus. Jesus fasted before every major event in His life.

Jesus also tells us that "*nothing is impossible for us.*"

Fasting was so important that Jesus taught it to His disciples to be used as a special deterrent against evil. These are the same evils that plague our world today: the attack on life, the attack on the family, the attack on our religious freedoms, and the attack on Christianity as a whole. It's especially important to recognize that our actions and our participation can change all of this evil. This is why we are being told by Jesus that "*nothing is impossible for us.*"

In this short booklet, you'll learn how fasting is a spiritual weapon. You'll also learn the basics of fasting, what saints, prophets and popes have had to say about fasting, and testimonials of people whose lives have been changed through fasting.

Reviews:

"The power of fasting with prayer is biblical (Matthew 17:20 from the St. Joseph Bible, New Edition). Jesus said that there are certain demons that cannot be cast out but through prayer and fasting. The two are a powerful team and Andy LaVallee, through his book, provides us with means to accomplish this goal."

Jim and Kerri Caviezel

“*When You Fast* isn’t just one of the best and most thorough books on fasting. In a word, it’s inspiring. Author Andrew LaVallee shares both the physical and spiritual benefits of fasting, from calming our own anxieties to bringing peace to our troubled world. From healing family rifts to opening another’s heart, mind, and soul to the idea of conversion. *When You Fast* can be a key—can be your key—to a closer relationship with God.”

Susan Tassone, author of *St. Faustina Prayer Book for the Conversion of Sinners*

“Andy LaVallee has provided the method, the motive and the means for the spiritual discipline of fasting. His book explains why fasting is important and encourages many to take part in this vital aspect of spiritual warfare in the world today.”

Fr. Dwight Longenecker, pastor, speaker, blogger and author of *Mystery of the Magi: the Quest to Identify the Three Wise Men*

My Review:

Praying and fasting go hand-in-hand, yet most Christians are big proponents of prayer while all but ignoring fasting outside of the mere two required days of fasting set by the Catholic Church.

Andrew LaVallee is a cheerleader for fasting and its integration into the Catholic life. *When You Fast* makes the case for its value, spiritually as well as physically, using LaVallee’s personal conversion and adherence to regular bread and water fasts as examples.

Some points are repeated, and there is frequent reference to the alleged Marian apparitions at Medjugorje throughout. Even if you are skeptical of the apparitions, you won’t find anything here contrary to the consistent messages of the Gospel, the Church, and the saints in promoting fasting.

LaVallee’s insights helped me to think about fasting in new ways, and as he says, the most important part of fasting is to start. That being the case, this book is a good primer and motivator. I hope the book is successful in convincing more people to adopt fasting as a regular practice. Our fractured world needs it.

About the Author:

Since 1969, Andy LaVallee, has been working in the bakery industry and in 1977, he started LaVallee's Bakery Distributors. LaVallee's is New England's premier provider of artisan breads and other bakery offerings to clients such as the InterContinental Boston, the Four Seasons, Boston College, and the Chateau Restaurants.

LaVallee's is known by their customers and colleagues for their excellent product mix, legendary customer service and business model based on servant leadership. With Live the Fast Breads, Andy brings his knowledge of top-end; highly-nutritious artisan breads and applies them to the ancient practice of prayer and fasting. They have selected multigrain rolls for this endeavor. These breads are made with no GMO, unbleached and untreated flour, with no additives and preservatives and with flavorful, nourishing ingredients that will help one maintain and finish a bread and water fast. He and his team desire to spread this practice — so beneficial on a number of levels — to greater New England and across the United States.

In recent years, during trips to Medjugorje, Andy grew to a deeper understanding of the practice of prayer and fasting, a practice that is common in this small village. He realized that he had a unique role, perhaps even a duty, to provide high quality breads to those in America who were interested in prayer and fasting. Andy has consulted with Sister Emmanuel Maillard who wrote *Freed and Healed Through Fasting*, Fr. Charles Murphy author of *The Spirituality of Fasting* and others knowledgeable about the practices of a healthy fast and the ingredients of fasting breads. He has also steeped himself in the teachings of the late Father Slavko Barbaric, who integrated into his many noble works, was his role as a humble practitioner and educator of prayer and fasting.

His first book is [*From the Hub to the Heart*](#).

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Violets in Snow [at Pauca Verba]



Robert Henry Newell (1836-1901) was an American magazine humorist or satirist. He could laugh, poke fun, call out the ridiculous, see the bright side. He wrote:

Surely as comes the Winter, I know there are Spring violets under the snow.

And here is photograph of just such a violet. In flower symbolism, violets signify: *"Let's take a chance on happiness."* Can you feel it? Is that the violet's message here - little survivor of the single digit winter, poking its head up from under the ice, stretching for the light to see if the coast is clear and to share its bright yellow and delicately painted face? *Taking a chance on happiness.*

St. Therese of Lisieux lived in a French Carmel (1889-1897). Upon entering religious life she discovered the nuns to be elderly, odd or cranky, sickly or lukewarm. The flu epidemic took the lives of many of the sisters. The water in the wash basins froze; there was no electricity; the food was limited and of poor quality, the sisters suffered chilblains from the cold. Still, Therese chose to sit next to the sisters who were emotionally disturbed or irritable and wrote about herself, *"I try to look on the bright side."*

A friend, recently returned from a trip abroad, had an airport layover where she noticed a cleaning lady standing outside the bathroom, gripping the mop and leaning with her chin on her hands. While she looked out at the stream of women coming and going, her eyes appeared vacant or exhausted.

Maybe she was thinking about when she could go home and put her feet up, or maybe she was worried that the children at home alone were okay, or how many more bathrooms she had yet to clean before she could call it a day, or how was she going to be able to pay the bills off her minimum wage. But no one stopped to greet her, let alone thank her for cleaning the toilets, but my friend who made eye contact, smiled and nodded to her. The silent greeting was returned.

"Let's take a chance on happiness," the violet suggests

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Gossip about the Prophet

Forms the Basis of the Quran

by Lawrence Fox

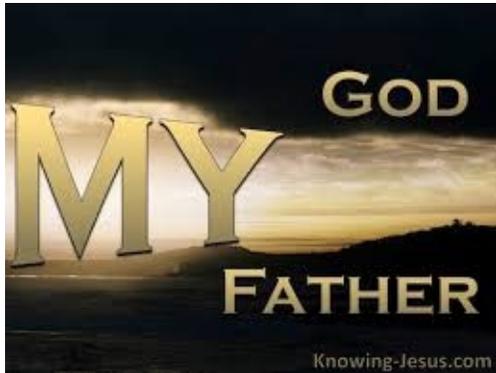


Mohammad is not your father, neither is Allah. Within the Quran there exists the recital, “Mohammad is not the father of any man among you.” (Surah 33: 40) What does this have to do with Divine Revelation and the life of Muslims? Like most verses in the Quran, it has very little context apart from the life of Mohammad as found within Islamic Tradition, according to Christian convert from Islam Mark Gabriel PhD., *Jesus and Mohammad, Profound Differences and Surprising Similarities*. (p.221)

Without context, the passage seems benign and yet it touches upon lust for another man’s wife, the nature of marriage, divorce, polygamy, and the fact that Allah has divinely nullified human adoption. That’s right, the Muslim god has said there is no adoption. If you take orphans into your home, do not give them your name. They do not have the inherited right of son or daughter.

This is a catastrophe of epic proportions for all of humankind’s relationship with

God as Father. For Islam — with 1.6 billion adherents — is the second largest religion in the world. Without God as Our Father, man devolves into practical agnosticism because there is no relationship in



religious practice. Instead religious practice is oriented to oneself and not to God, who is our Creator and final end.

Allah's decree that Mohammad has no son (natural or adopted) has ethical and theological consequences. Developed monotheism focuses on character development, but Allah promotes both divorce and polygamy. Let us also look at passages in the Quran where Mohammad has no son (Surah 33: 40) and where Allah has no son. (Surah 2:110) Allah's negation of human adoption seals the deal on the manner in which Muslims relate to Allah in the Quran. Allah cannot be worshipped as father by creation nor by divine adoption. So why is Mohammad not the father of any man? Let us dig through the gossip, which is the religion of Islam.

Context is Everything. Mohammad desired to marry the beautiful wife of his adopted son, Zaid, according to Gabriel (pp. 178-9) and Counter-Jihad specialist Robert Spencer (*The Truth about Muhammad, Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion*, pp. 59-60). There are problems with such desires even in the desert of Arabia.

In order for Mohammad to marry the wife of his adopted son, three things must be revealed and resolved: 1) Mohammad's adopted son must divorce his wife, 2)

Allah must not recognise human adoption, and 3) Allah must reveal from all eternity he willed that Mohammad marry Zaynab, the wife of his adopted son Zaid.

Allah tells Muslims, “Forbidden to you are married women, except those who are in your hands as slaves.” (Surah 4: 28) It should be clear here that married Muslim men are granted

permission by Allah to take possession of enslaved married women. But Zaid’s wife is not enslaved by Mohammad, although Zaid was a freed slave. (Spencer p. 59) However, as an adopted son, Zaid’s status is tenuous.

Moses on Mount Sinai revealed to the people of Israel the command, “*You shall not commit adultery*” and “*You shall not*

covet your neighbor’s wife.” (Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:1-22) Zaid is as close to the Judaeo-Christian concept of neighbour as one can get. Yet Mohammad is coveting his neighbour’s wife.

When the children of Israel are ready to enter the promised land, the Lord God warns the people, a King “*must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.*” (Deut. 17:17) The message is clear. Multiple wives demean the institution of marriage and lead to idolatry. But what about adultery?



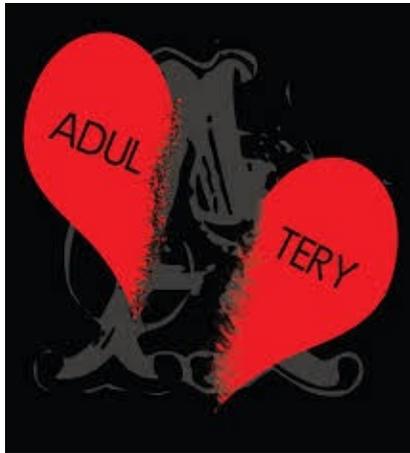
In the Quran, the spoils of jihad redefine adultery. According to Allah, woman captured as slaves can be used for sex amongst married Muslim men. Five centuries earlier, Jesus of Nazareth said bluntly, “*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” (Matt. 5:28) One can overcome one’s desire by practicing virtue, **OR** one can manipulate his circumstances to get what he wants. Adultery is only one problem; Mohammad faced another challenge, incest.

This following passage was inserted into the Quran after Mohammad’s indiscretion. It strictly limited the definition of son to one’s biological children: “Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters...your step-daughters, and the wives of your sons *who proceed out of your loins.*” (Surah 4: 27) This whitewashed Mohammad’s behavior toward his adopted son’s wife.

Take the Wife of Your Adopted Sons. This is the revision of the Quran. Zaid was a free slave. His original name was Zaid bin Harithah and with adoption he became Zaid bin Mohammad. Zaid had a beautiful, but older wife named Zaynab bint Jahsh, who married against her will in order to show equality among Muslims. She was of the noble class while Zaid was the son of a slave adopted by Mohammad. (Gabriel pp. 178-9, Spencer pp. 59-60)

By Islamic tradition, Zaynab was not pleased with the arrangement and had to be reminded by Allah, “It is not for a believer, man or woman to have any choice in their affairs, when Allah **and his prophet** have decreed a matter and whoever

disobeys Allah and his apostle (Mohammad), sins with palpable error.” (Surah 33: 36) So, according to the Quran, both Allah and Mohammad *decreed* the marriage between Zaynab and Zaid, and Zaynab should have quietly submitted herself to the arrangement. But Allah and his revelations change when the Prophet no longer wants to be bound by it.



Islamic tradition states that one day Mohammad went to the shelter of Zaid only to encounter Zaynab alone. (Gabriel p.179, Spencer pp. 59,60)

She invited him in and he left in haste muttering, “Praise be the one who changes the hearts and sights.”

That was not a good sign. As a result of this encounter, Mohammad now has a torn heart. Surah 33:4 states, “Allah has not given a man two hearts within him....” Mohammad wants Zaynab, but she is married to his adopted son. He quickly runs back to his own shelter with these thoughts.

Mohammad’s demeanour towards Zaynab changed. It was no longer father and daughter-in-law. It is argued by Islamic Scholars that Mohammad’s desires were noble. Yet, the Quran reminds Mohammad, “It is not permitted for you to take other wives hereafter, nor to change the present wives for other women, though their beauty charm thee, except slaves whom your right hand shall possess.” (Surah 33:53) Mohammad’s attitude toward women matched those of King Solomon, “*But king Solomon loved many strange women...*” (1 King 11:1)

(Note: Before Mohammad died, he had 11 wives at one time.) So what was Zaid's response to these events?

Some traditions suggest that Zaid was not happy with the marriage; others suggest that Zaid continued to love his wife. (Gabriel p.179, Spencer p. 60) My opinion is that Zaid was simply dedicated to Mohammad and was grateful to have a



beautiful wife. The argument that Zaid did not love his wife is meant to protect the prophet.

A movie made in 1985 about King David shows Uriah the Hittite as cruel towards his wife Bathsheba with whom David has an affair. The purpose of this bit of fiction is to whitewash King David's adultery, making it look like he was rescuing her.

King David's adulterous affair and his orchestrating the death of Uriah in battle is history; the cruelty of Uriah is revisionist history. Uriah was greatly dedicated to his King and the cause of Israel. Such dedication actually caused his death. (2 Sam. 11:5-27) Zaid's story is no less tragic. He is dedicated to Mohammad and Islam. Within three years after Mohammed marries his wife, Zaid dies in battle for the cause of Islam. It is my judgement that Mohammed orchestrated Zaid's death, just as King David orchestrated his loyal soldier's death so he could have his wife.

What is Zaynab's role in this matter? She recognised Mohammed's desire for her, and related the encounter to her husband. Was Zaynab scheming to move up the ladder? Was Mohammad scheming to move into Zaid's bedroom? "They plotted and Allah plotted...Allah is a plotter."(Surah 8:30) Islamic tradition says that Zaynab's attitude toward her husband grew colder after she realised that that Mohammad desired her. A similar exchange can be found in the Book of Genesis, "*So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt.*" (Gen. 16:4)

We cannot ignore the fact that Mohammad was already in his 50s and married to six-year-old Aisha and six other women when these events unfold. Mohammad's first wife Kadija, who was 20 years older than himself, had passed away leaving Mohammad with one living daughter named Fatima. By giving his adopted son, Zaid, an older women, he recreated the events of his own life. It appears that Mohammad did not care so much about Islamic equality, but acted out of a psychological problem. Zaid died without issue. (Gabriel p. 177)

Again, Islamic tradition records that Zaynab -- after the encounter with Mohammad -- increasingly mistreated Zaid. As a result of dealing with an agitated wife, Zaid proposed to Mohammad that he would divorce her. Mohammad told Zaid to keep his wife saying, "Keep your wife to yourself and fear Allah." (Surah 33:37) Mohammad wanted Zaynab but feared displaying such an attitude among his followers lest they say, "Did you hear Mohammad desires the wife of his adopted son?"

According to the Quran, it was Mohammad who should have feared Allah and not the opinions of men, "And you did fear man; but more right had it been to fear Allah." (Surah 33:37) Finally after the divorce, Mohammad instructed Zaid to tell Zaynab that he wanted to marry her. Zaynab wanted the prophet to tell her directly and not through her ex-husband, whom she still regarded as a slave. Was Mohammad willing to throw his adopted son Zaid aside in order to possess Zaynab? Zaid was indeed stripped of his filial relationship with Mohammed.

The Quran recounts the event as follows, “and remember when you (Mohammad) said to him (Zaid) -- unto whom Allah has shown favour and to thou also have shown favour -- ‘Keep thy wife to thyself and fear Allah’ and though you did hide in your mind (the desire to have the wife of his adopted son) what Allah would bring to light and thou didst fear man (wondering about the scandal marrying the wife of his adopted son); but more right had it been to fear Allah.” (Surah 33: 38,39)

The recital suggests several things: 1) Mohammad clearly desired Zaynab before her divorce, 2) Mohammad clearly worried about the stigma marrying the divorced wife of his son, and 3) What about Mohammad’s adoptive son? How would he take his change of status?

Zaid divorced his wife and Mohammad ponders the matter, and Allah reveals, “Allah has not given a man two hearts within him . . . nor has he made your adopted sons to be as your own sons.” (Surah 33:4) Mohammad was now free (by divine revelation) from all accusations since he was never a father to Zaid, and this marriage was planned from all eternity.

Zaid was not Mohammad’s carnal son but he was clearly known as “my son” and Zaynab was clearly known as “my daughter by marriage” amongst the various Arabic people. Allah rectified the situation by telling Mohammad he never had a son; that adoption was simply a non-binding human contract just like the institution of marriage. Did this convince all of Mohammad’s followers? Probably not the ones who lingered lustfully around his shelter on the day of Mohammad’s wedding to Zaynab. (Surah 33:53)



Poor Adoption A reasonable person would wonder how Zaid felt about the whole ordeal. No doubt he struggled (little jihad) for three years knowing his ex-adoptive father was having sex with his former wife, whom he still loved. He struggled realising he was no longer Zaid son of Mohammad, but again Zaid bin Harithah (the son of a slave). Zaid like a good Muslim turned his internal struggle to good use by embarking upon military struggle (big jihad) and dying for the cause of Mohammad on the battle field three years later.

But what does this has to do with human adoption? As a result of recitals Surah 33:4 and 33:37, Islamic Scholars argue that it is forbidden by Islamic law to adopt a child (take the child as one's own and give the child the family name and right to family inheritance), but permissible to take care of another child without family privileges. Islamic jurisprudence still argues that adoption -- as practiced by the Arabs in the days of Mohammad -- was rooted in [*Pre-Islamic ignorance*](#). Allah removed this ignorance during the life of Mohammad. Only Islam identifies a father giving his name to an orphan as an act of ignorance. This contradicts not only Arabic, but human history.

Adoption in Secular History. In Europe and Western Society, adoption was framed by the Roman Empire and Christianity. Augustus Caesar was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. When the Roman Senate crowned Julius with divine



status (posthumously), Augustus identified himself as being “son of god.” The Roman Empire was forever changed as a result of adoption. No Roman citizen ever questioned the dignity of Augustus’ adoption; it was strong enough to make a man emperor.

Adoption is mentioned in the Code of Laws of Hammurabi (1745 BC), “If the wife bears sons to a man or his maidservant have born sons and the father while still living says, “my sons” and he counts them with the sons of his wife; if then the father dies, then the sons of the wife and of the maiden shall divide the paternal property in common.” (Hammurabi’s Code of Laws, translated by L.W.King, #170) Notice the strength of the words “my sons.” Even when the father dies, the dignity of adoption remains. It should also be noted from this context, that all it takes for a man to become an adoptive father is to say, “my son.” This was the custom of the people in Arabia prior to Islam.

No doubt in history, human adoption was changed, promoted, and sometimes discouraged due to economic, cultural, demographic conditions. Be that as it may, Christianity viewed human adoption as an expression of the mind of God, “*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*” (1 Jn. 3:2) But there are theological reasons for Mohammed’s god dismissing adoption. It creates a break with Jewish and Christian history.



Adoption in Sacred History. Adoption is an integral part of Salvation History. Judaism identifies God as Father and Israel as His adopted family. God is identified as husband of Israel at least 26 times in the Old Testament.

God remembers his covenant with Israel when He brought her out of Egypt: *“My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD.”* (Jer. 31:32) This is the manner in which God spoke to his people through the prophets and psalmists.

Christianity identifies God as Father and the Church as His adopted family in Christ Jesus. Christianity also identifies Jesus as husband and the Church as His bride, *“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’”* (Rev. 22:17) Such imagery reveals God’s familial relationship with men. He is Father and Husband.

In the Old Testament, Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were adopted by their grandfather Jacob as his own, giving them full inheritance with their uncles. *“Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.”* (Gen. 48:1-22)

Moses was adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter; which is fortunate for the life of Israel. (Ex. 2:10) In the New Testament, Joseph — by taking Mary as his wife — adopts Jesus as his son, *“Is this not the son of the carpenter? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?”* (Matt. 13:55, Mk. 6:3) and again, *“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and*

mother we know?" (Jn. 6:42) In the Old Testament, the people of Israel are identified as firstborn, children, son, and family of God. A person reading the infancy narratives of Jesus and the words of Allah captured in the Quran "nor has he (Allah) made your adopted sons to be as your own sons," (Surah 33: 4) realises that Islam is not a continuation of Judaism nor Christianity. In fact it is a complete break from salvation history.

Israel was identified by God as His firstborn son by adoption, "*Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.'*" (Ex. 4:22) and again "*You are the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead.*" (Deut. 14:1) Moses identifies God as Father when speaking to his people, "*Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your father who has brought you forth? He has made you and established you.*" (Deut. 32:6)

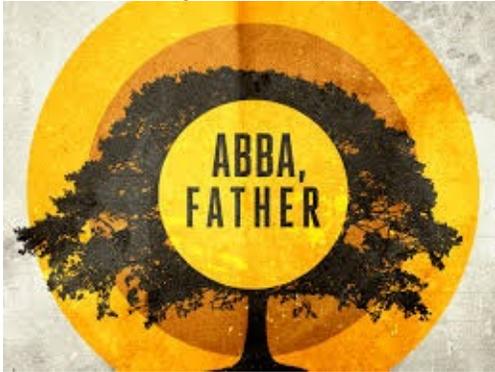
The Fatherhood of God is reiterated through the Prophet Hosea, "*When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.*" (Hosea 11:1) and again through the Prophet Jeremiah, "*Then I said, 'How I would set you among My sons And give you a pleasant land, The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!' And I said, 'You shall call Me, My Father, And not turn away from following Me.'*" (Jer. 3:19) The people of Israel are children of God by adoption. God uses the practice of human adoption to describe His relationship with His creation.

Finally, in the book of Esther, the young woman of the same name is adopted by her uncle Mordecai. Esther plays a pivotal role in the safety of the people of Judah, showing the good fruit of the practice of adoption. (Esther 2:7)

We are Children of God by Adoption. In the Christian Epistles, the baptised are identified as adopted sons and daughters of God, "*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you*

received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Rom. 8:15) Jesus taught his disciples to address God as "Abba" (Daddy), *"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'*"(Matt. 6:9)

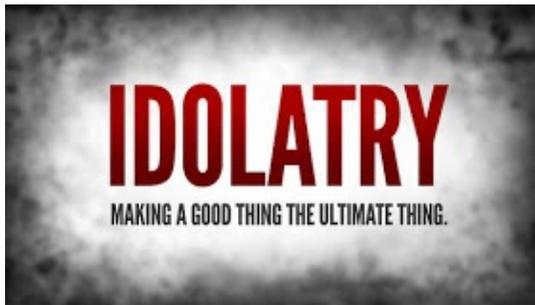
and again *"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*



(Matt. 6:6) and again *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."* (Matt. 5:9) and finally *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:12-13)

The various recitals given by Allah in the Quran negate advances in secular and sacred history in relation to the dignity of adoption and marriage. The Quran seeks to distance God from man as much as possible. A Muslim does not know the opening lines of Genesis, *"Let us make man in our own image and likeness."* (Gen.1:26) The promotion of divorce, polygamy, adultery, sexual slavery, and removal of adoption all represent a monotheism heading in the wrong direction.

When Jeroboam was made king of the 10 tribes of Northern Israel, he thought to himself, *"The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam."* (1 Kg. 12:27)



And so he built temples to other gods so that the people would not turn towards Jerusalem. It is my contention the Mohammad through the Quran does something similar to prevent Muslims from reuniting with Jerusalem. Marriage and adoption cut too close to Judaism and Christianity.

Allah the Fatherless has no Son Amongst Men. The recital, “Mohammad is not the father of any man among you,” (Surah 33: 40) parallels a plethora of recitals which emphasise that Allah is a fatherless creator, “And they say, ‘God has a son,’ No! Praise be to Him. But His, whatever is in the Heavens and the Earth! All obey him.” (Surah 2:110) again, “In their ignorance they have falsely ascribe to him (Allah) sons and daughters . . .” (Surah 6:100) and again “It seems not so that Allah beget a son.” (Surah 19:36) and finally, “They ascribe a son to Allah (God of Mercy), when it seems not that the God of Mercy beget a son.” (Surah 19: 92) This tone is not coincidental; there are emotional connections between Mohammad not knowing his own father, not giving birth to sons, and Allah being a fatherless deity.

The Quran is not simply arguing that Allah has no consort in order to sire a child (as in the case of the *semitic Allah* who sired three daughters Al-Lat, Al-Uzzah, Al-Manat). The Quran is arguing that Allah is not a father in opposition to what is revealed in Jewish and Christian sacred texts.

It is a Carnal Revelation. The Quran understands the terms “begets, begotten, and son” only in a carnal sense. When Mohammad hears Christians saying,

“Jesus is the only begotten son of God,” he thinks carnally. No doubt Mohammad’s contact with Gnostic Christians, Jews, and Ebionite Christians fostered this prejudicial understanding within the Quran. When Mohammad hears Jews identifying themselves “as children of God,” he thinks carnally. Christians identifying themselves “as children of God” by adoption must also be something carnal. Allah doesn’t sex, hence he has no son.

Mohammad who sires only female children through multiple wives and slave women publishes the recital, “Had Allah desired to have a son, he would have surely chosen what he pleased out of his own Creation.” (Surah 39:6) and again, “And He (Allah) ...has taken no spouse neither has any offspring.” (Surah 72: 3) Mohammed is not a father to a son, so he can’t see Allah being a father.

Allah Mirrors Mohammed’s own Insecurities. Allah is not able to be a father figure to Mohammad, who never really knew his own father as a little child. Mohammad’s father died when Mohammad was about two years of age. (Gabriel p.35-38), leaving a wound that made fatherhood unpalatable. He was shuttled around with his mother between several families. Allah was not a father figure to Mohammad but a master. Nothing could be further apart than the manner in which Mohammad approached Allah versus the manner in which Jesus approached His Heavenly Father. “*I always do what pleases Him,*” (Jn 8:29) and again, “*Now, Father, give me glory in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.*” (Jn.17:5) When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray Jesus responded, “*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven....’*” (Matt 6: 8-10) There does no “Our Father” recital in the Quran. The religion is empty of fatherhood.

The Fatherless Faith and Idolatry. While pondering Mohammad’s situation, I was struck by the divergent confessions revealed in the New Testament and what is found in the Quran. Christianity teaches, “*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son -- born of Mary -- that whoever believes in him shall not*

perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16 with slight adaptation) The Islamic Profession of Faith is simply, “Allah is Allah and Mohammad is his prophet.” The Muslim’s entrance into paradise is a profession of faith in Allah and Mohammad. Mohammad replaces Allah as the visible father amongst the people.

The Quran has little context apart from the life of Muhammad. Like the Ring of Power in Tolkien’s trilogy, “The Lord of the Rings,” Muhammad and the Quran are essentially “one substance” as observed by the Islamic profession of faith, “Only Allah is Allah and Mohammad is his Prophet.” Since the word Allah means god -- without any other qualification -- then the profession of Islamic faith consists of one saying, “Only god is god and Mohammad is his prophet.” It a confession which reveals fundamentally nothing about god and everything about Mohammad, “If you obey Allah and his apostle (**Mohammad**), he will not deny you the reward of your labours.” (Surah 49:14) and again, “It is not for a believer, man or woman, to have any choice in their affairs, when Allah and **his prophet** have decreed a matter and whoever disobeys Allah and his apostle (**Mohammad**), sins with palpable error. (Surah 33: 36) and finally, “You must not trouble **the apostle** of Allah, nor marry his wives after him for ever. This would be *a* grave offence with Allah.” (Surah 33: 53)

While Allah was willing to get rid of the wives of the prophet, (Surah 33:28; 65:1, & 66:1,5), but the idea that another man would marry one of the wives of Mohammad after his death is a **grave offence**. To marry one of them after Mohammad’s death would prevent a Muslim from going to paradise. The reasons for this recital are 1) To insure a male son is not conceived through his wives, 2) to enshrine Mohammad with divine status.

In the Quran, eternal paradise is dependent upon fidelity to Mohammad, more so than knowing the essential nature of “god.” In fact in Islam, like other unitarian movements, the essence of god cannot be known. What can be known is the essence of Mohammad and the recitals which come from him — unadulterated and dictated.

Recitals of the Quran, which are binding upon Muslims, are essentially unknowable without the “revelation of Mohammad’s life.” The profession of faith, “god is god” reveals nothing. Divine revelation in the Quran is Mohammad; the Quran is patently idolatrous. The notion that Mohammad is the perfect man is idolatry. Islam’s jihad against idolatry is actually a jihad against itself. The words of Jesus to the Pharisees seem most appropriate, “*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*” (Matt. 7:5, Lk. 6:42)

Let us question the foundation of Islam. “Mohammad is not the father of any man among you.” (Surah 33: 40) Sadly, this recital has only human origins. Islam’s prophet desired the wife of his adopted son. He had to change the “revelation” of Islam to get her. The circumstances leading up to this recital as well as the catastrophic theological consequences within Islam and Islamic Societies should not be overlooked. If the law was changed so that Mohammad could marry the wife of his adopted son, then is not the foundation of Islam itself built on sand?



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This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.co.at/2018/02/allah-fatherless-creator-has-no-son.html>
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A Dollar Store Valentine's Day [at Shifting My Perspective]

**Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.
Romans 12:10**



My kids come up with the craziest ideas. Although I nod my head and say, “Hmmm... maybe...,” I know it’s not feasible to box up their dinners and send them to the starving children in Africa. I also presume Taylor Swift is never going to come to a birthday party, no matter how much we want her to. And, despite appreciating their creativity, I’m positive that building a water slide from their bedroom window to a pool we don’t even have just isn’t feasible.

But every now and then, my kids come up with a great idea that’s actually doable. Jocelyn did just that for Valentine’s Day this year.

She suggested everyone use their own money to secretly buy one gift for each member of our family. Then, in the days leading up to Valentine’s Day, we anonymously leave them for each other in our Valentine envelopes. We all loved the idea, and agreed to do it.

So off we went to the Dollar Store. It filled me with such joy to watch my kids wander around the store on their own, with this mission in mind. The thoughtful

looks on their faces told me they were choosing items with the likes and dislikes of the receiver in mind. Whenever I checked on them, they'd hide what was in their baskets to maintain the element of secrecy.

What's been even more fun is how the gifts have been given. Because most items couldn't fit in the Valentine envelopes, my kids had to think outside the box. Jocelyn left notes with clues that led Zack to where his gift was. Zack drew a map to lead Mason to his gift, but first Zack cut the map up and hid the pieces around the house. Mason set up a baseball diamond in the garage, and then wrote a poem that led my husband there. My husband had to hit a baseball and run the bases before he discovered his gift. And on and on...

In their effort to be creative, my kids took all the focus off themselves, and put it all on each other. What started out as a fun idea, turned into a labor of love: one that reminded them how much joy there is in giving, and just how much they love each other.

This little project was like a big gust of love sweeping through our home. It blew away all the irritation and impatience we felt from being cooped up during the dreariest month of the year. Obviously the gifts we gave weren't worth much, but the love they inspired was priceless.

Thank you for your wonderful idea, Jocelyn! We plan on making it our new family tradition!

Happy Valentine's Day everyone!



What I received from my Mystery Giver!

Questions for Reflection:

**** What ideas can I help my kids come up with to show their love for each other through small gifts and/or actions?***

This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2018/02/14/a-dollar-store-valentines-day/>
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You and your fiancé are discussing marriage, and you raise an important question regarding faith and religion because one of you is a Roman Catholic Christian and the other is a Muslim. First, congratulations to you and your fiancé for your good news... it takes love and courage to want to live marriage and family life today when so much of our western culture emphasizes individual success and personal comfort. Marriage implies children and family, and both require selflessness and considerable devotion and generous service out of authentic human love.

I invite you to obtain and to read our general Parish FAQ sheet for Marriage, which will answer many of your questions.

MUSLIM VS CHRISTIAN

First, I commend you for asking such an important question, namely: "What do we do now that we want to marry, but we are of two very different faiths?"

Muslims and Christians both believe that there is only one God, but how they understand God is very different. For Muslims Allah is a fierce and judgmental god who very clearly demands submission and only submission on the part of humanity, not love. Whereas for Christians, God is a single, unique divine Being who exists in three equal and united divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the second Person, the Son, took on a human flesh and came to be known as Jesus in order to reveal the Father's love to humanity and call for a return of love after the example of Jesus. For Muslims this is outrageous and unacceptable, even offensive for the more radical Muslims.

However, Muslims who have decided to "accommodate" themselves to western society and to respect other faiths without condemning them, can actually be capable of entering into marriage with a Christian, or as in your case, a Roman Catholic Christian, without holding the faith of their partner in contempt.

On the other hand, Muslims who have been "fired up" by the "reform" begun by the "Muslim Brotherhood" in Egypt in 1928, or by other such reform movements, are inclined to go back to the original sources of their Muslim faith, when in the first century after Mohammad Islam took the form of an Empire sweeping across north Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and eastern Europe. For such zealous Muslims, no accommodation with Christians is possible or

tolerable, only submission to the one authority of Allah and in the one name of Mohammad his prophet.

Now, Muslims can be "militant", that is, zealous for Islam, without being "terrorists". Here our interest is only in Muslims who are anything except terrorists; so we're talking about fervent or militant, or cultural, or accommodating Muslims only.

For militant or zealous Muslims, Christians are "heretics", that is, they are convinced that Christians have deformed the Jewish Scriptures and the Gospels, because, they say, "God has no son." They do not understand or accept the Incarnation of the Son of God in Mary's womb as Jesus, who is both a divine person - the Son of God - and a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. Christians accept the mystery revealed by Jesus that God is his Divine Father while at the same time Mary is his human mother. We believe in the Holy Spirit as the "third divine person" in the one divine Being who is God.

This is a deeply divisive difference between the Christian faith and the Muslim faith. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for a fervent Muslim and a fervent Christian to enter into a strong and united marriage, without one having to surrender to the faith of the other, or at the very least, keep their own faith hidden or private.

While the "falling in love" early stage of such a couple's relationship might blind them emotionally to those differences as well as to the long-term difficult and painful consequences of those differences; the pain of their differences can only grow more intense and divisive with time as the full reality of their situation becomes unavoidable.

However, if one of them is willing to subordinate their faith to that of their spouse, then it is possible for the marriage to work, but that would depend on the stability of that decision on the part of the one who would accept to eclipse his or her faith. Still, even in that case, that person's family - especially if they are also fervent in their faith - could put such pressure on the other party that he or she would feel harassed if not persecuted, and certainly pressurized. It would be difficult, uncomfortable, and in time intolerable to live under such conditions.

In conclusion, marriage between a Muslim and a Christian is possible, but usually, because of the nature of the religious cultures specific to each of these

faiths, the Christian is required to "submit" to the faith of Mohammad simply because as we go around the world we find that in our day it is Islam that is far more militant, judgmental, firm, and unyielding than Christianity or Catholicism. Actually, the name Islam literally means "submission", and Allah is a divinity who demands submission, unlike the Holy Trinity who ask us to love them in return and at the same time that we love our neighbors, even our enemies, as ourselves. Otherwise, it is the Muslim who must accept to keep their faith to themselves or to lay aside its demands in order to accommodate to the Christian spouse. This can happen in the West but not usually in a majority Muslim country where the Law of Sharia is the only code of law for both civil and religious matters.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN?

You begin to understand the importance of the couple having a very clear mutual understanding about who God is and how they are going to live and practice their respective faiths when you stop to consider the children to be born to this couple. Will the children be raised Muslim or Catholic and Christian? Children cannot be brought up to be both, because no one can be both. A Muslim who practices faith as a Christian and who loves Jesus is not fully practicing faith as a Muslim, because Islam refuses to accept Jesus as Son of God. A Christian who practices faith as a Muslim cannot really be Christian because Jesus revealed God to be One divine Being composed of three equal but distinct divine persons.

A child brought up "in between" will be living in ambiguity, and that would be a very unhealthy environment for a child to grow up in. Children need clear answers until, as adults, they can formulate for themselves what they truly believe.

Children are fragile and need the strength, union, peace, love, and stability of their parents, and they must also have a very clear idea of their own identity, including their faith identity, in order to thrive.

If such a couple - Roman Catholic Christian and Muslim - fully realize that their union will not be possible because each of them chooses to remain fervent in the practice of their respective faiths; then they can take consolation that as they go their separate ways they will not lose their wonderful human capacity to discover another person worthy of their love and with whom they will be able to form a more united couple in view of Marriage and family life. True love is a choice and not really an accidental "falling" as western culture around romance would have us believe.

This is not to deny the value and beauty of romance - because inasmuch as it is truly human, then it is beautiful and has its own value - but rather to affirm the greater value of love as a free decision and as a generous gift of self. By far this first dimension of human love is more substantial and more lasting, and it is such love that is fruitful and life giving. Romance merely adds more color to what is already beautiful and eternal, and romance is merely the early season of married love, the Spring time. After that, human married love is called to enjoy the other seasons of life and to accept to be changed by them as it grows and expands, building and enriching human society.

This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2018/02/what-about-marriage-of-roman-catholic.html>
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Reconciliation: Facing a tyrant, or being held by a merciful God? [at Peace Garden Passage]

Recently, I sat in on a discussion on the sacrament of Reconciliation with a group of teenagers.

At one point, I locked in on a certain young lady with an expressive face. As the priest explained more about the sacrament, her eyes became big, as questions formed. You could see her mind churning through his presentation.

Finally, an opportunity for questions came, and she raised her hand, asking what many through the ages have, I'm sure, wondered along the journey toward Reconciliation.

“What will it really be like inside the confessional? Will the priest know who I am? Will he remember my sins later? I'm scared.”

The priest did well in allaying her fears, but as he talked, I had some thoughts of my own tossing about regarding two basic ways we tend to approach this sacrament: reconciliation as either a movement of judgment, or a movement of mercy. Over time, I've come to conclude that God's approach, at least, tends more toward the mercy end of things.

But I think most of us are prone to think more about the judgment aspect. Our own sins convict in and of themselves. The thought of saying them out loud can be quite unsettling. But in focusing on that, and God's disapproving look, we miss the main reason for Reconciliation. The sacrament doesn't exist to shame us, or hold our sins over us, but to free us from them; to unbind that which keeps us bound so that we can live, and love, more freely.

My friend Ramona Trevino, whose story I helped tell through her memoir, [“Redeemed by Grace: A Catholic Woman's Journey to Planned Parenthood and Back,”](#) talked with me quite a bit about the significance of Reconciliation in her conversion back to her Catholic roots, especially regarding her first Confession after recognizing that her work was in serious conflict with her Catholic faith. Although she initially was filled with trepidation in approaching the priest in Confession like so many of us, in the end she found the experience transforming.

Rather than finding a judging tyrant in the Confessional booth, the experience allowed her to feel as if she were nestling into the arms of her Father.



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And though, yes, God is just (“...because of your just punishment...”), his main motive surrounds a desire to draw us to him, not push us away. Offering renewal with him through Reconciliation connects more to his desire to bring mercy. God wants us to approach him not with undue shame, but contrite hearts, in order that we might live a fuller, more abundant life. Sin weighs us down; he’s ready to relieve us of all that.

He wants us to receive us in mercy, and help bring us back into the light.



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If we look at Reconciliation from the perspective of mercy — which is the way I fully believe God does — it makes all the difference, and helps us approach this beautiful sacrament not in fear and trembling, but in hopeful expectation of what might be possible once we've laid down our missteps.

And remember, God already knows what we've done wrong, so nothing we say will be new to him. He just wants us to say it so he can nudge us beyond it.

What an incredible gift, and one highlighted at this time of Lent. With this in mind, let us not walk, but run, into the Confessional, ready to be held by God, and released with more hope than ever.

Q4U: What are your ideas about Reconciliation? Might this Lent be a good time to consider a new, more hopeful approach?

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2018/02/reconciliation-facing-a-judging-tyrant-or-being-held-by-a-merciful-god/>

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Mankind's Greatest Challenge Is... [at A Spiritual Journey]

is not to land on Mars, solve the energy problem of or wipe out poverty in the world, or anything like that. Rather, it is to submit ourselves to God, our creator and loving Father. This tests our obedience or rebelliousness, and the result will determine our eternal destination.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2018/02/mankinds-greatest-challenge-is.html>
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Zaccheus and Dirty Dishes [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

For the past 45 years, I've read the story of Zaccheus without much more thought than that he climbed the tree to get a better look at Jesus. But when I read it this time, I discovered more to that story than had met my eye. (How can it be that I can read something in Scripture a hundred times and then see something new on the 101st?).

Anyway, here's what happened in Luke 19:

"[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way."

"When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly."

If you remember the story, a few verses later, Zaccheus experiences a bona-fide conversion. But his conversion is not what I saw this time around. What caught my attention is that the Lord invited Himself to the man's house. And He wanted to go home with him now.

I put the Bible down for a few moments and thought about that scenario – and

how I might have felt. I mean, the guy didn't even have a chance to first run home and straighten things up. Maybe he had dirty underwear lying on the floor by his bed. Or dishes in the sink from last week. Or dust-bunnies hanging out in the corners of the living room.

And now Jesus summarily invites Himself home with him. Right now. No time to clean the house.

As I pondered the scene, Revelation 3:20 came to mind. *“Behold,”* Jesus said, *“I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”*

And the Holy Spirit made the application for me.

When Jesus invited Himself to Zaccheus' house, the man scampered down the tree and, we are told, “gladly received Him” – even if his house was not ready to receive such an important Guest.

The point?

As Jesus invited Himself to Zaccheus' place, He is right now knocking on the door of your conscience, inviting Himself into your 'house.'

You may think your house is not ready for such an important Guest. That's okay. He doesn't care about the dirty clothes or the dirty dishes or the dirty corners of our lives. He'll take care of those things when we let Him in.

All He asks of us, is that we receive Him gladly.

This contribution is available at
<http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2018/02/zaccheus-and-dirty-dishes.html>
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Waking Up to Lent [at Theologyisaverb]



Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
Isaiah 60:1

A purple sky gradually taking on the coral, rose and gold tones of the break of day, what a spectacular sight to behold. Since I was quite small, I have cherished the soft warmth of a sleepy awakening nestled under the protective covers of a new morning. It is where the day before has been put to bed and the new day awaits to be discovered. Hushed stirrings of hope and a renewed resolution to seek a will other than my own. Where my heavenly Father has my undivided attention, and discernment takes shape in the freedom to surrender any preconceived notions of completeness.

And while it may be so tempting to remain where we are, undisturbed by the demands of others, our Father calls us onward constantly to a graced life of encounter. Eyes opened to see Christ in one another and hearts prepared to experience the deep contrition for our failure to love. Here, we are called to live out our discipleship not cloistered away but in the very midst of community. Where knees are made firm, hearts rended and hands strengthened for the work ahead.

In these moments Father, you are lovingly and continually recreating me.

Lent comes to us in the drowsiness of winter and beckons us to be awakened recreated anew. [“Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die..”](#) And still to do so, we must take this essential time with God to search our hearts and steps, to even see the need for change. To embrace this given space to delve into the commonplace, the habitual, and the un-examined parts of our life to reveal the invitation for conversion. To unearth the sin from the darkest corners that has slowly made its home, to be restored to what God has created us to be. For, [“everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.”](#)

Now is the time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving...

Prayer:

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions... be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” Prayer is a light that reveals, and directs that without it we are truly without a compass in our desire for change. Using this time set apart to pray is likewise an opportunity to reconnect with God. Who, in the hustle and bustle of life may not be our closest companion in our journey.

Fasting:

Why fast? Scripture has a lot to say about the practice of fasting and the benefits of doing so. First of all, it expresses a desire on our part to offer sacrifice and penance for wrongs committed. Yet, it is also proven to be a quickening agent to prayer, providing the perspective to see God’s direction and will. And if done with also an awareness of community, it can lead to the directed efforts to offer the allocated money for food to others who may be in greater need.

Almsgiving:

The giving of money, time, and talents to assist the poor is to be a outward expression of our inner desire for charity. ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Therefore, the Christian understanding carries with it more than just helping one another, but in doing so we actually are serving Christ. In this way, it becomes a visible

witness of love in action. You need not travel far to identify ways to answer this call to charity. In the inspiring words of St. Teresa of Calcutta, ” Stay where you are, find your own Calcutta...”

Reflect:

Is there a need in my life to wake up this Lent? Where might God be calling me to grow or serve?

Peace,

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

This contribution is available at <http://theologyisaverb.com/2018/02/19/waking-up-to-lent/>
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The Value of a Lost Soul



This is an updated post from August of 2013. Currently I am finishing the manuscript for my second book, [Making it through Hard Times: A Storyteller's Guide](#). While away from blogging, I will be featuring some posts from the [archive](#) that you may not have ever had a chance to read. I'll have all new stories beginning in April.

I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. Luke 15:7

“In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10

“But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” Luke 15:32

As the female inmates entered the classroom, I couldn't help but notice that one of the inmates was pregnant, and from the looks of things, was close to her delivery date. As the service began, I had a feeling that we should offer prayer for her and her unborn baby.

When I asked if we could pray for her and her baby, her eyes began to tear up.

She said, “No one has ever asked me that before, no one has ever prayed for

me.”

As we spoke softly, she told of how she was always told that she was worthless, that she was useless, and no one even cared if she were dead or alive. I could see that she wasn't suffering from LOW self-esteem, but NO self-esteem!

It reminded me of something a good friend once shared;

The value of a lost object doesn't lessen just because it is lost. A lost \$20 dollar bill is still worth \$20 dollars. Its maker determines its value, not its situation.

The same is true for a lost soul, it still has great value, because its Maker, God, establishes its value, and God doesn't make worthless or useless souls!

“First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” 1 Timothy 2:1-4

In Luke Chapter 15, Jesus shares three parables about lost things and their value. In all three, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, he ends each story with his concern for the lost and God's love for a repentant sinner. Jesus values lost souls.

This poor girl has been beaten down for so long she doesn't realize that she has great value in God's eyes. Like the shepherd who left the ninety-nine to go after the lost one, we should all join in rejoicing that this lost sheep has been found.

I asked the other inmates and ministry team to lay hands on this inmate and pray for her and her baby. As we began to pray, several of the other inmates prayed aloud for her and for a healthy baby. They prayed that she would get her life together and become the person and mother she was meant to be.

She was in tears, but the good kind. She realized that she was loved and the concern for her and her baby was genuine. For the first time, someone said she was special, a loving person, and would be a great mother. She wasn't worthless or useless. People cared for her.

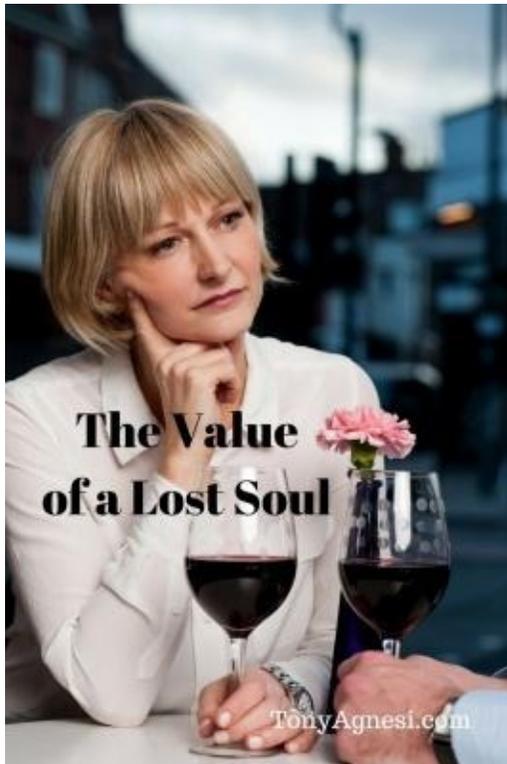
Most people have never witnessed inmates praying for another inmate, but I can

tell you that these prayers are very powerful, offered through the power of the Holy Spirit.

These may be lost souls NOW, but they still have great value. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, we learn that Jesus wills everyone to be saved, even those in prison.

Before we begin to judge others, please remember the story of the \$20 dollar bill. Its value is not diminished because it is lost. And when a lost soul is found, there will be much rejoicing in heaven.

If we judge less and love more, we can all be an instrument to make this happen. Jesus, make me an instrument of your peace!



This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2018/02/the-value-of-a-lost-soul-3/>
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There's Just Something About Valentines and Ashes [at Making It In Vermont]

This Valentine's Day, this Ash Wednesday, over tired from being up too late the night before, and overwhelmed with many little and big things, my heart broke open.

I had lain down on the couch to close my eyes for a few minutes early this morning, something I never do before the kids get on the bus, my preschooler wasn't even dressed yet... I just needed to stop for a minute.

While laying there, eyes closed, my 3 year old sidled up next to my overwhelmed heart, sucking his thumb and snuggling into every curve... and I remembered. I remembered two decades ago when I was 22 laying on the couch just like this with my own mother, right after we found out about her stage 4 cancer diagnosis and with the declaration of "6 months" just hanging in the air. I remember crying and crying such ugly desperate tears holding on to my mom like she was my air and feeling like the wind was cruelly blowing her away.

And this morning exhausted and curled on the couch with my 3 year old, quiet tears stream down my face and in my heart I yell at God for taking her away from me, this woman that loved me so so purely and that I felt so at home with.

And yet and yet as much as I ache for my mother and lament the 19 years she has been gone, I trust that there is more. More than this ache, more than death, more than ashes.

After the tears I feel a little better and am able to get up, usher little ones dressed, hugged, and kissed onto the school bus. I take a shower and then at the request of the 3 year old begin to build an animal puzzle with him.

I continue.

It is what we are called to do, and when we do, we see that beyond our sorrow there is more than sorrow. We see that there is resurrection in our ashes and redemption in our love.

Happy Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday friends.

With love from Vermont,

~Lisa

This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2018/02/something-about-valentines-and-ashes/>
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The Real Problem [at Beware Yon Dragons!]

"Men can always be blind to a thing so long as it is big enough." G. K. Chesterton.

I have been thinking about this for a long time now. All right; here goes. I am going to go ahead and say it, even though I suspect that I am going to make a few new enemies. The "school shootings problem" is not about gun laws; it is not about tighter security; it is not about making mental health care available. It is not about any of these things. And the more that I read people screaming about problems that are "out there" the less convincing they are in what they are saying. People always scream about "out there" problems when they do not want to accept responsibility. The problem is not "out there". The problem is the schools themselves, and you do not heal a disease by protecting it. My grandmother used to say "if your recipe tastes like dirt, you don't make it the same way the next time" (only she did not use the word "dirt").

The "problem" that has led to students bringing guns to school and killing other students and staff is caused by the culture of the schools. Only when that culture is changed will the shootings stop. What, you may ask, is "that culture"? It is the culture of nihilistic abandonment. Nihilism teaches that there are no absolutes, there are no objective moral standards, and there is no point in anything. The result of this perspective being taught (whether intentionally or unintentionally) in public schools for the last 50 years (or more) can be nothing other than violent and immoral behavior. This leads, almost unavoidably, to children showing less and less concern for the well being of others. Once you teach them to hate God (which is what you are doing when you try to teach subjects from an atheist perspective [school subjects without God are, by nature, atheist subjects]), then the necessary consequence is that they will hate mankind.

When you tell each student, "you can be whatever you want to be" you set them up for failure and the resulting depression that goes with the realization of reality. When you tell each student that God is not a significant subject for knowledge, you destroy all moral objectives and stab at the heart of any faith that they may have had. When you tell each student that personal pleasure and individual fulfillment is all that matters, you create spiritual evil in their hearts (often, mistakenly, referred to as "mental health issues"). I attended public

schools from elementary through my first two years of college, and I was (even back then) taught nihilism. It has only gotten worse today. People talk about bringing prayer back to schools, but prayer will not matter if you are also teaching children that God does not matter.

As the quote from Chesterton that I cited above shows, modern American society is blind to this problem because it is

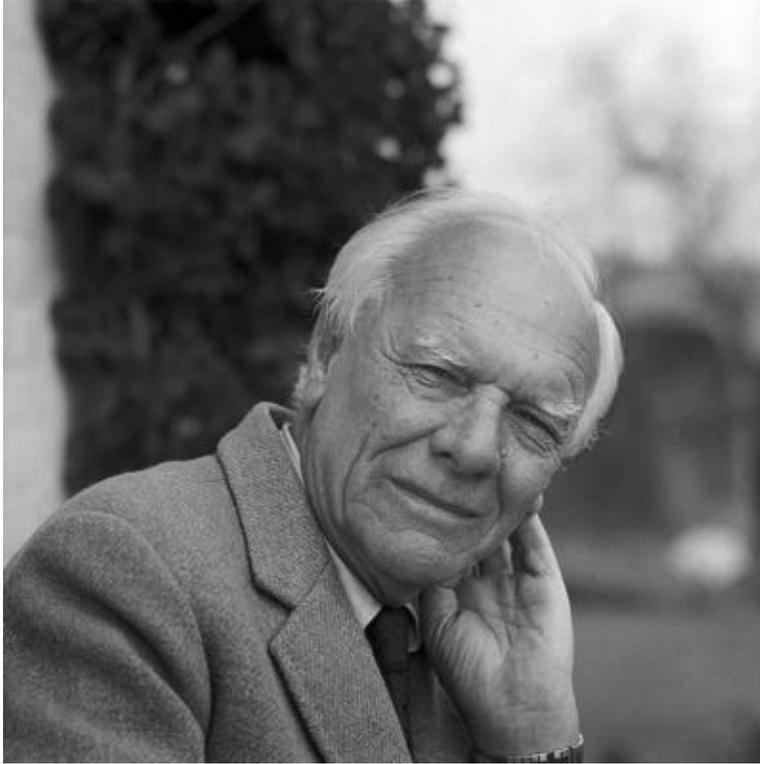
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obvious; it is staring everyone in the face. When there was a surge in postal workers being violent (and "going postal") the US postal service saw a need to change how they treated their employees; and many other corporations followed suit. Yet, today, when children are "going postal" the solution is not to fix the schools (oh no, don't touch the schools, it cannot be their fault!), the solution is always "out there". This is just a further denial of responsibility, because they do not want to give up nihilism. This is what nihilism has done to our children (and many of the teachers who were taught by it as well), but most refuse to admit it. Better security and tighter gun laws are not going to solve anything because they have nothing to do with the actual disease (and kids will just find another method to be violent).

I am crushed at seeing the violence. I sobbed in tears on Ash Wednesday as I watched events unfold in Florida. I thought many times "children should not be in a place where that can so easily happen". I laud those who want to "do something" about it, but most of what people are talking about doing is like giving a Motrin to a cancer patient; it only delays the inevitable, and it will not stop the real problem. I pray that America will see what the real problem is, and stop putting so much effort into swatting a fly while there is an angry bear in the house.

This contribution is available at <http://bewareyondragons.blogspot.com/2018/02/the-real-problem.html>
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A Review of [at New Sherwood]



“In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more.” – St. Augustine

“Christ has created you because He wanted you. I know what you feel – terrible longing with dark emptiness. And yet He is the one in love with you.” – St. Teresa of Calcutta in a letter to Malcom Muggeridge

Generally speaking, modern people choose their religion so as to conform to the lives they are living. They believe as they live, rather than live as they believe. This attempt to quiet their consciences can seem like a brave act of individual liberty in a society that glories in religious pluralism. But in a more Christian age, men did not deny the incongruity of their faith with the follies of their own

lives. They knew that truth wasn't going to change to suit them, and they forced themselves to live with the tension in the hopes that one day they would reform. Malcom Muggeridge was this pre-modern type of man. He lived badly for many years, but God refused to permit him the illusions modern men seem to enjoy.

The outline of Muggeridge's life is well known. The son of a middle-class Fabian socialist, Malcom became impatient with the gradualism and hypocrisy of a socialist elite that didn't have the stomach for revolution and, despite lip-service paid to egalitarianism and the plight of the working class, enjoyed lives of globe-trotting luxury and indulgence. He became a staunch communist and an open admirer of the Soviet Union. Upon graduation from Cambridge he traveled to India where he taught in the colonial schools, studied Hinduism and Islam, sympathized with Ghandi, and promoted Indian nationalism. Returning to England, he found work as a journalist and was assigned foreign correspondent to Moscow by the Manchester Guardian. He relished the opportunity to see Soviet communism up close. But what he learned in this revered "worker's paradise" turned his enthusiasm into horror. Despite his own rhetorical excesses, Malcom discovered in himself a fierce hatred of cruelty and injustice. The barbaric inhumanity he witnessed in the name of atheistic communism turned him against every kind of mass ideological movement. He was furthermore aghast at the calculated dishonesty and, in some cases, the self-delusion of the Western intelligentsia when it came to the Soviet Union, upon which they projected their hopes and aspirations. It was also clear to him that these westerners relied upon the "success" of Marxism-Leninism for their reputations.

Malcom was the first to break the story of the Stalinist famine in the Ukraine, wherein four million perished by starvation and disease while their food – not only grain, but the food in every pantry! – was hauled away to feed more cooperative Russians. Those who resisted, or who were suspected of resistance, were simply shot. To keep the word from getting out, the border was sealed so that Ukrainians had no escape. On a clandestine and unauthorized trip to the Ukraine, Malcom watched starving peasants being loaded onto cattle trucks at gunpoint with their hands bound behind their backs. The story was censored at first, but Malcom would not be silent and became an implacable foe of communism for the rest of his life.

This courageous but unpopular act nearly cost Malcom his career. Still a man of the political Left, by this time the Left would no longer have him. He was barely employable as a journalist in England in all but the most pro-establishment Tory

publications (which he detested politically) and gossip columns. His family struggled as he tried to pay the bills with various desperate writing gigs. The war came and he joined the armed forces as an intelligence officer, serving honorably. He returned to England and, by a series of unlikely employments and promotions, ended up a media star himself, landing finally at the BBC. During this time his politics moved further away from those of any party and developed into something that resembled a pragmatic libertarianism. He was clearly a gifted wordsmith, a master of the language, and an incisive commentator. The quality of his writing was recognized as superb. He was surprisingly adaptable as a compelling television presence. Malcom became widely respected – and also reviled – for his piercing criticism of those in positions of power and authority. His transparent sincerity was part of his appeal, once admitting “I *hate* government. I *hate* power. I think that man’s existence, insofar as he achieves anything, is to *resist* power, to *minimize* power, to devise systems of society in which power is the *least* exerted.” Toward the end of his career his wit, humor, and voice were known to all Englishman. His highly televised face was recognized everywhere.

And yet, beneath all of this worldly success, Malcom had long been miserable.

Malcom read the Bible secretly as a child, enthralled with the Christ-figure. While at Cambridge he embraced the religious skepticism of the day, but found himself drawn to mystics and even to the devout. His best friend was a serious Christian who became an Anglican clergyman. Malcom especially admired his asceticism and religious discipline. At the same time Malcom had fallen into the casual homosexuality of the elite, a phenomenon that was rife in England at the time, though he was still in love with a girl back home. (The extent to which casual male homosexuality was a staple of upper class English life has always eluded me, but it seems to have been ubiquitous for several generations even as it remained illegal. This must have had severe psychological effects on many of its practitioners.) His passions became unruly, particularly his sexual passions. When he married Kitty Dobbs, as good Fabian socialists they seriously considered having an “open marriage”. It might as well have been. Malcom’s sordid infidelities are too numerous to count; Kitty’s are less numerous but no less tragic. This compulsive behavior went on for decades, all through the highs and lows of his career. It always left him feeling empty, despairing, and lost. He and Kitty fought bitterly and constantly. As his family grew, he sought escape in projects that took him far from home. He attempted suicide at least once. He agonized over religious questions, and though he couldn’t bring himself to

believe, he couldn't bring himself to reject God altogether either.

Part of Malcom's inner torment was his self-image as a permanent outsider. Painful in his youth, he tried hard to belong without success. Later he came to see his outsider status as having important advantages. He was in that sense a free man. As a writer he could say what he wanted to say, without worrying about who it might offend. He relished attacking the "establishment" and its acolytes, but extended his range of targets to anyone whom he felt exercised undue influence over others. Maintaining this posture required a spirit that lacked generosity. He was outside by choice now, and developed a sort of contempt for insiders. This gave him his freedom. Insiders are not free: they have to bow to their institutions and defend their absurdities. Or so Malcom thought. As applied to the Church, Malcom could not see himself accepting a set of doctrines that were above criticism or deferring to churchmen who were, in his estimation, just party men like all the others. The extreme patriotism after the war ended turned him off for similar reasons. You would never find Malcom Muggeridge waving a flag or a pom-pom. But his independence came at the price of arrogance, to the point where, after his acceptance of the Christian faith, he could no longer stand to watch himself on television, deploring this "terrible man" with a "certain arrogance about myself" and "completely lacking in humility".

Malcom's exceptional intelligence, energy, and productivity was driven by a force he didn't understand. The sheer volume impresses – books, plays, documentaries, interviews, hundreds of articles. He interviewed everyone from Churchill to MacArthur to Stalin's daughter. His literary circles included all the men of letters of his time, being closest to George Orwell. He described his friend Graham Greene as a "saint who is trying unsuccessfully to be a sinner"; Hilaire Belloc as "not at all a serene man" nursing decades old grievances, and of whom, "having written about religion all of his life, there seemed to be very little in him"; and of Evelyn Waugh he said "I have formed the impression that he does not like me", which was evidently true, although in fairness Waugh was a misanthrope who didn't like anybody. Apart from Chesterton, whom he admired, the English Catholic literati did not impress Malcom as men whose Catholicism had changed them for the better. They left him curious but uninspired.

Behind the scenes of this busy public life was a titanic internal struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Even as Malcom gave in to the flesh, he would not

surrender his mind. He began to see with increasing clarity how the ethos of liberalism had poisoned his own life, making himself and his loved ones miserable. What was previously a slow awakening became a torrent of awareness. He decried the comfortable materialism of his circumstances and longed for poverty and asceticism, for “the simple life”. He saw the rise of sexual promiscuity (with the implied dismissal of marriage), contraception, abortion, and euthanasia as signs of a decaying civilization with a Freudian death wish. He understood that the decline of Christian faith and respect for the Church was the source of these evils. He professed these insights publicly even as he continued to live according to his old habits.

Malcom plunged himself into research about this Jesus, this Man who haunted him all of his life and wouldn't leave him any peace. The painful alienation and longing for God expressed in St. Augustine's “Confessions” resonated with him acutely. He recalled with amazement the serene faith of the peasants he encountered in churches behind the iron curtain. He traveled to Lourdes and Palestine and was inspired by the faith of the Christian pilgrims, mostly of humble origins. He befriended a holy priest who ministered to the severely disabled. Finally, he sought out Mother Teresa, bewildered at this woman who accomplished so much with so little, who didn't shrink from loving the unlovable, or touching the untouchable, and not for an idea or a set of abstract social principles, but for the love of a *Person*. The publicity-shy nun permitted him to make a television documentary about the works of her Missionaries of Charity, and to write a book about her – “Something Beautiful for God” – bringing her then obscure work to the attention of the world. Still unable to grasp Christ directly, Malcom was permitted to see Him through the life of a genuine saint, and in the faces of the world's forgotten ones.

And then, in the twilight of his life, the old familiar pain of being an outsider looking in returned to him. He wanted what these Christians had, *Who* these Christians had, but didn't know how to possess Him. He wanted to be counted among them, but still couldn't bend the knee.

Malcom spent the remainder of his career defending and promoting a Christian worldview at every opportunity. Yet he remained apart. Malcom's difficulties with the Catholic Church were a surprising combination of two things: 1) He was shocked and disappointed at the changes in the Church that seemed to have resulted from the Second Vatican Council. He saw religious life collapsing everywhere and moral teachings abandoned. 2) He was still a theological skeptic

himself. Despite the post-conciliar liberalism that had no regard for doctrine, he was an honest man and would not join the Church if he didn't accept its dogma. It's not clear that he connected theological orthodoxy or liturgy with the moral precepts that concerned him. Nor is it clear that he worked very hard at theological understanding. This biographer suggests that Malcom was bored by theology. Although a reluctant moralist, he was fundamentally a poetic soul who seemed content with a mystical approach to the person of Jesus Christ.

Despite his distance from the Church, he began to call himself a Christian and tried to live like one. He established a daily prayer regimen. He gave up his womanizing, and further still, his drinking and smoking. He ate sparsely and became a vegetarian. He repaired his marriage to Kitty and tried to make things up to her. Their marriage became something beautiful and attractive, a hard-won prize. Their final years were spent in love, enjoying one another's company and the company of friends, often reading the Psalms aloud to each other. Kitty would later write: "It is inevitable that in the course of time trouble and strife between man and wife should occur. This is for the most part due to our human vanity and egotism; but these differences can be overcome, and every reconciliation strengthens the bond of love."

At long last, Malcom and Kitty received a letter from a respected priest and friend. In between formalities, the letter contained only one substantive line: "It is time." Now 79 and 78 years old, respectively, this was all they needed. Malcom and Kitty Muggerridge formally entered the Catholic Church in November of 1982, finally at home and at peace. In July of 1990, Malcom suffered a crippling stroke. The state of his soul as a Christian penitent is manifest in the words he shouted that first night in the hospital: "Father, forgive me! Father, forgive me!" He died from complications four months later.

This contribution is available at <http://culbreath.wordpress.com/2018/02/27/a-review-of-malcom-muggerridge-a-biography-by-gregory-wolfe/>
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The Little Flower and Our Lady of the Smile [at Cradling Catholic]



St. Therese; ‘The Little Flower’

By Larry Peterson

St. Therese was born January 2, 1873, and since it is still January, I thought I would mention my favorite story about this Saint. It happened when she was ten years old, and the result was not just the “Little Flower’s” miraculous recovery from an unknown and life-threatening illness, but it also was the beginning of devotion to what became known as Our Lady of the Smile.

Therese’s mom, Zelig, had begun to complain of breast pain in 1865, eight years before Therese was even born. In 1876, doctors told her of her condition. Zelig died of Breast Cancer on August 28, 1877. She was 45 years old. Her youngest child, Therese, who was four years old, was crushed. Years later she would write *that “the first part of my life stopped that day.”*

Zelie Martin had asked her husband, Louis, to have Pauline look after Therese after she had passed. Pauline was twelve years older than her little sister and had been acting as a surrogate mom for Therese while their mom was sick. Therese loved Pauline very much and felt safe and secure with her by her side.

In October of 1882, when Therese was nine years old, Pauline entered the Carmelite monastery at Lisieux. Pauline was the child's "second mother" and, once again, Therese was crushed. She believed that since Pauline was cloistered, she would never see her again. She cried, "*—in the depths of my heart, I know Pauline is lost to me.*"

Therese began to show signs of illness. Pauline's leaving for the Carmelites had jump-started her memories of her mom's passing. She wanted to join the Carmelites right away, but she was much too young. The three forces collided and Therese got sicker and sicker. Convulsions, fever, and hallucinations, began to overwhelm her. Her body exhibited tremors and her teeth clenched, and she could not speak. One doctor suggested that she was "emotionally frustrated and was experiencing a neurotic attack. She was ten years old.

The Martin's had a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Victory. Louis Martin had been given the statue by a lady who knew him, and he placed the statue in his garden. When he and Zelie got married, the statue was moved into the house and given a place of honor. When the children were old enough, the entire family would pray before the statue.

The statue was three feet high and covered with a varnish that made it look like marble. The children loved that statue, and they would decorate it with flowers from the garden. Their father told them they might wear the statue out from kissing it so much.

Therese was now suffering from severe headaches, strange apparitions and everything seemed to terrify her. She thought her bed was surrounded by steep cliffs and for a short period of time, Therese could not open her eyes.

During this time the statue was in the room with Therese. On May 13, 1883, Marie, the oldest sister, was sure Therese was dying. She fell to her knees before the statue begging Our Lady to cure her baby sister. Leonie and Celine came in and joined Marie in prayer.

Marie looked over at Therese and noticed that her little sister seemed to be

transfixed on the statue. Therese was not looking at the statue. Rather, in a state of ecstasy, the Blessed Virgin was standing near her and that is who she was looking at.

Therese said later that Our Lady's face glowed with a glorious beauty, but it was her wonderful smile, which filled the girl with joy. It was like a warm ray of sunshine. When everything was over, a period that lasted about five minutes, Therese Martin, was cured. Her sisters noticed two large teardrops fall from each eye. Later, when Marie asked her why she cried, she answered, "*I cried because Our Lady had disappeared.*"

Thus began the devotion known as "[Our Lady of the Smile](#)."

In St. Therese's autobiography, the "Story of a Soul," on the first appendix page there is a prayer she carried with her the day she took her vows as a Carmelite. The date was September 8, 1890. (Interestingly, that is Our Lady's birthday). The last paragraph of that letter is as follows:

Jesus, allow me to save many souls,

Let no soul be lost today.

Let all souls in purgatory be saved.

Jesus, pardon me if I say anything I should not say, I only want to give you joy and to console you.

St. Therese of Lisieux; Please pray for us all.

This contribution is available at <http://cradlingcatholic.com/2018/03/03/the-little-flower-and-our-lady-of-the-smile/>
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Weight of the Cross [at Prayer to Pen Catholic Blog]

In many ways Christianity can be seen as a sort of paradox. And its effects on the souls of men are best embodied by people like St. Lawrence, a martyred Deacon who told his captors to “turn him over” as they grilled him alive. Christianity is always best manifested when its faithful members have internalized their beliefs to the degree that they can mock the world and the peace it offers.

Recall our history. [Our early members were among those meeting lions in the Colosseum armed only with faith.](#) And our present ones clash daily with a culture that inundates us with all that is antithetical to our beliefs. We are called close-minded, and our own government sometimes attempts to prevent us from practicing our faith. Nonetheless our Bishops carry us forward, back into the Colosseum, where we again confront people who oppose our beliefs.

These members of the early church, who “walked by faith and not by sight,” had only the light of faith to illuminate their way. Which of the apostles on Good Friday knew the glory that was to come on Easter Sunday? Did our martyrs go to their death knowing the profound effect of their witness? And yet God is a sort of master chess player, bringing order out of chaos and love out of hatred. Consider the Roman soldiers who tortured Jesus on his path to Calvary. God uses even the most violent of men to bring peace to the world. With our faith there is always assurance; there is always hope.

And although our faith may be a sort of paradox, its truth is also seen quite clearly in each person’s path to holiness. This is why we understand and believe Jesus when He tells us “[His] yoke is easy, and [His] burden light.” Even under the seemingly heavy burden of the cross, we still find rest in our encounter with the Lord. On the heels of Holy Week, it’s applicable to say that we are all Simon of Cyrene, helping Christ carry His cross as we ourselves all venture to Calvary. And we are all Mary Magdalene, discovering in the empty tomb that Jesus is risen and experiencing daily the sacramental graces flowing from this reality.

So we enter Easter season swimming upstream in the world’s many currents. Amidst our struggles we notice the now light weight of the cross, which has been conquered. In living out our faith we like St. Lawrence mock the world

while embracing the peace that God gives us. We hold fast to a faith experienced so powerfully during Holy Week. And we move forward as a Church of resurrection with trust in our God. As it turns out Jesus was right. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

By Ryan Bilodeau

Weight of the Cross was last modified: March 3rd, 2018 by ryanbilodeau

This contribution is available at <http://www.prayeropen.com/ryan-bilodeau-weight-cross/>
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The Past is the Past - Until It Isn't [at Quiet Consecration]

We will not regret the past, nor wish to shut the door on it.

A foundation piece of most 12 Step programs is the idea that our past, our ugly, destructive past, can become an asset. We are encouraged to share, in a general way, about who we were in contrast to who we are today. What we hope is that a newcomer will see that the desperation that brought us to the tables of the local fellowship hall propelled us forward. That gift of desperation gave us the ability to feel compassion and empathy while still demanding of the newcomer and ourselves a change in attitude, perspective and behavior.

Most people who have read my stuff over the years know I am an alcoholic in recovery and a post abortive woman. I share that part of me with other alcoholics - both men and women - because I want people to know two things: first, that one can recover from alcoholism and second, that one can recover from perpetrating horror upon another human being - in my case, choosing to terminate the lives of four of my own children for the sake of convenience.

That last sentence was difficult to write. I could sugar coat it. I could tell you how frightened I was, how alone I felt, that no one tried to talk me out of it and that I thought it was my only choice at the time. The reality is I was, at that time, deeply mired in a life of sin and I was horribly ill from Alcoholism. I could not practice birth control because that took too much effort and clear thinking and my body didn't work right anyway because of the abuse it was suffering at my hands.

Why do I share this with you all again? Why not just let it go and move on?

Two reasons:

1. It is important that I remember what and why so that when a woman comes to me and expresses her sorrow and her belief that she is no longer worthy of respect I can share with her my journey.
2. Other people will never let me forget - and will often try to shame me with

my past when I dare to express a political or philosophical or religious belief different from their own.

Recently I submitted a letter to the editor of the Modesto Bee in support of a candidate for Governor of the State of California. His name is Desmond Silveira (
(

<https://ca.solidarity-party.org/desmond-silveira-governor/>

) and he represents the American Solidarity Party in California.

The party is Pro-Life.

I am Pro-Life.

Yes...I am now Pro-Life, Catholic and no longer silent about the horror I inflicted upon my children and myself. I have been forgiven, am active in my Parish and fully embrace all Catholic Teachings as TRUTH.

The first comment under the letter online was from the wife of a man who has hated me and my politics for over 15 years. He hated me when I wrote for The Hive, the now-defunct blog site he and his cronies drove into the ground with their relentless personal attacks on people. She has joined him and several of the less than stellar 'community activists' in our area to essentially go after people they do not like and one of the methods they try to use is shame.

Her comment, in short, stated that it was ironic that someone who had had four abortions should now be forcing her religious beliefs on other people.

Apparently the hope was that by stating I am a post abortive woman my credibility would come under fire and no one would look into the candidate or the party because of my past.

The woman believes sinners like me should not have any opinion other than this: our past sins define us and should be available to all of you - for us to speak out against those sins is wrong and must be stopped. Sinners are irredeemable. Sinners are inconvenient and annoying. Sinners should be stoned to death - figuratively, I hope - so that the rest of you pure types will never have to deal with their ugliness again.

I think of the woman in the Gospel, brought before Jesus by the Pharisees, because she was caught in the act of adultery. Yes, they were testing Jesus to try and come up with something to charge Him with so He could be silenced but don't you think it is odd that only ONE person was brought before Him? She was caught in the act of ADULTERY....was she by herself?

The woman who commented on my letter, without realizing it, played the part of the Pharisee. Look, EVERYONE! This woman who now claims to be Catholic and Pro Life HAD FOUR ABORTIONS. HOW HORRIBLE IS THAT???? She stated that she could understand one or two but 4? And NOW...30 years later...THIS horrible WOMAN was DARING to state that her life is now changed and she is Pro Life. How DARE she????

I dare because only someone who has lived in darkness can truly appreciate the blinding Light that is the reality of Love. Only someone who has spent time in a cave created by sin knows the joy of rolling away the stone blocking the entrance back into true freedom. Only someone who has faced their demons with the help of the healing Grace of God can look at a would-be tormentor and laugh at their attempts to shame and silence her.

Like many others (Harvey Weinstein's treatment of Rose McGowan comes to mind), the commenter makes the mistake of thinking strong men and women recovering from sin can be toppled by someone else naming their sin out loud. What she and other abusers fail to recognize is that our dark pasts are our greatest ally, our source of strength because it is that past that has been sanctified by Grace.

The greatest evil ever perpetrated on earth was the Crucifixion of Jesus. Creatures murdering the Creator. Yet it was that act of evil that redeemed the world and what was once a symbol of fear and trepidation becomes a badge of triumph worn around the neck of billions of Catholics around the world - the Cross.

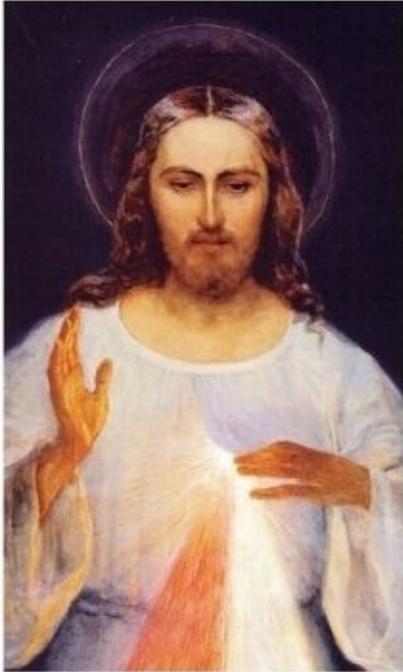
My family turned a governmental torture device into a symbol of redemption, of hope and of beauty.

A comment on my letter is not going to deter me...I stand with that family, and I stand on the shoulders of giants.

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2018/03/the-past-is-past-until-it-isnt.html>
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The Divine Mercy Connection [at The Mission of Saint Thorlak]



By Eugeniusz Kozimrowli [Tubio domini],
vs. Wladislaw Commons

"Jesus, I trust in You!"

Who, here, is familiar with Divine Mercy? The second half of the twentieth century found a great deal of focus in the Roman Catholic Church on the merciful aspects of God, culminating in the work of St. Faustina Kowalska to explain and promote the message and image of Divine Mercy (“Jesus, I Trust in You”). The image itself shows Jesus beckoning with rays of red and white, symbolizing blood and water, promising not to turn anyone away who merely trusts that He means what He says... in Scripture, from the cross, and through His vicars in the Church. In 2015, Pope Francis declared an “Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy” whereby the theme of God’s mercy was highlighted as a source of joy and hope throughout the world. It is difficult to approach any Christian church, from the Catholic Church on through the post-Reformation denominations, and not hear about *mercy*.

What is *mercy*? It is knowingly stepping out of a position of power to assist someone's need, without expecting reward, compensation or applause.

What is *God's Mercy*? God's knowingly stepping out of His position of power to assist us in our needs.



People who set their positions aside to help others are commendable. What is the appropriate response if they are not seeking compensation, especially when our needs prevent us from returning the favor? Certainly, a gesture of gratitude – but more than an impersonal “thank you.” A personal response, a candid sharing of ourselves, would be meaningful for both parties. In this way, mercy necessarily connects people.

The same holds true with God. In showing mercy, God is aware of our limitations and the impossibility – the absurdity – of producing anything to reward an Almighty Creator. How could we, inhabitants of His earth, give Him anything He has not imagined into being, which we have not already taken from His treasury?

We can give our personal response, a sharing of ourselves. We possess and govern our own will. Yielding a share of that to God is indeed a true gift which He does not already possess.

Numerous teachings on Divine Mercy have been proclaimed by saints and theologians of recent time to counter the despair, fear and littleness we experience with the expanding awareness of evil in our age. Thousands hear and turn toward God in the comfort of this loving embrace. Yet, thousands more do not, who embrace the post-Christian messages of humanism, relativism and

individualism with dysphoria and distrust. Thousands fortify themselves in self-esteem, self-justification and self-preservation. Such mindsets reject mercy because they do not perceive any use – any need – for it.



Recall this from our thought earlier this month: Brokenness permits mercy to penetrate the shell of self-reliance. It is through our brokenness that mercy reaches us.

Brokenness is the most fundamental common denominator of humanity. We are all broken. Brokenness will win the battle of spiritual deprivation because need is not a weapon... it is our supply pipeline... our very lifeline. Without need, life has no purpose. Even the staunchest individualist can be persuaded to see – and experience – the validity of this argument.

Need opens doors.

If we have no place for need, we cannot understand mercy; because, without need, mercy is meaningless.

Jesus Himself is God's finest and most concrete demonstration of His need to connect – He is Need Incarnate. Thus, embracing need is but one shade of awareness away from embracing God.



Consider this: Missionaries of St. Thorlak regularly appeal for mercy by leading with our need, by practicing voluntary humility. By offering our need willingly to others, we very literally draw mercy out of others – giving them an opportunity to experience the connection that mercy permits, even on the smallest scale.

Now, consider this: God Himself demonstrates voluntary humility par excellence. He is all in all; yet, He chooses to need: He chooses to need our recognition, our understanding, and our willingness to trust that He does not reject us in our weakness. He needed this so badly that He took the flesh and constitution of a human to get that much closer and speak His longing that much more clearly.

God does not require an elaborate response. In fact, the words are provided for us in the image of Divine Mercy: “Jesus, I trust in You.”

We might say that Missionaries of St. Thorlak embrace that in the particular way of our charism: in recognizing that Jesus dwells in the hearts of those around us, and entrusting our needs to them, we echo: “**Jesus [-in-others], we trust in You.**”



This contribution is available at <http://www.mission-of-saint-thorlak.com/mission-activities/missionary-thought-for-the-week-of-february-26-2018-the-divine-mercy-connection>
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The Death of a Culture Through the Culture of Death [at On the Road to Damascus]

A lazy doctor treats symptoms without concern for their cause. A good doctor uses the symptoms to lead him to find the true cause of the problem. The lazy doctor can relieve you of the symptoms for a time. A good doctor can get you on the road to better health.

In the wake of yet another act of senseless violence we have seen the typical knee-jerk reaction we have come to expect. If we had only had better gun laws and background checks this could have been prevented. This party or that party is to blame for doing nothing. The truth of the matter is that no gun law or background check can prevent a person with evil intent from doing harm. Even if every gun in America had been confiscated decades ago these tragedies would still be occurring. Cain did not need a gun to kill Able and neither does the modern day monster. The gun is nothing but a means and violence a symptom of a much darker disease.

So what is behind the increase of violence in America? A godless academia will never be able to find the root cause because they view the contributing factors to all be good things for a free people. We have an increase in violence because we have embraced a culture of death in this county. This did not happen overnight. We had to slowly embrace death as a way of life for the better part of a century. We have become boiled frogs. If you take a frog and throw it into a pot of boiling water it will instinctively jump out. If you put a frog into a pot of cold water and slowly increase the heat it will stay in the pot until it is boiled to death. That is America. We are boiled frogs.

The tale on how we got to this point is a long one. For sake of time I am going to start at chapter six, where things really get going. In May of 1960 the FDA approved Enovid to be sold in the United States. Enovid was the first legal birth control pill. The road to hell is paved with good intentions and Enovid was on that road. The pill was created to assist with prudent family planning and as a method of population control. The pill had been in the works since the depression. The thought was that if we had smaller families we would have more resources available for each child. This was a strategy to combat poverty. A

motivating factor for one of the pill's creators, Margaret Sanger, was eugenics. In short, eugenics encourages certain races to reproduce while attempting to stop other races from reproducing. For Sanger, the pill was a way to reduce the black and Hispanic populations in this country.

What the pill did was allow women to start having sex like men. Up to this point when a woman had sex she did so at the risk of her own life. Medical science still wasn't all that advanced and there was a majority of women who would die from complications with or leading up to delivery. Sex for a woman was an all in proposal. The pill allowed women to have sex without the fear of getting pregnant. This sparked the sexual revolution which led to the predicament we are in today.

On July 25, 1968 an old, white, celibate, Italian guy by the name of Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini released a prophetic paper that was met with great controversy. That man was better known as Pope Paul VI and the paper his encyclical *Humane Vitae (Of Human Life)*. In that encyclical Pope Paul made four predictions on what would happen in society if the use of birth control became widespread and common place. His predictions were:

- 1: There would be an increase to marital infidelity.
- 2: There would be a general lowering of moral standards.
- 3: There would be a loss of respect for women. They would be reduced down to mere objects used for satisfaction of desire.
- 4: Governments would use contraception to forcibly intervene in citizens' sexual relationships.

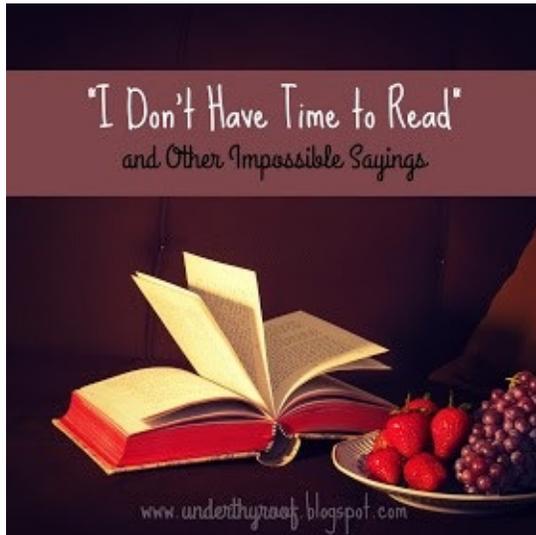
One does not have to look very far to see how hauntingly accurate Pope Paul VI really was. So how do we make the leap from free sex to mass shootings? For that you will have to continue reading.



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"I Don't Have Time to Read" and Other Impossible Sayings [at Under Thy Roof]



"I don't have time to read".

"I just don't have the attention span anymore."

"I think Netflix will make it into a series soon anyway."

Real things I have been told by adult women when asked what they are reading lately.

I don't mean reading things like blog posts and news articles (as much as I love that you are reading this right now!), I'm talking about actual, in your hands, books that you close at the end with a sense of accomplishment.

I get it. You're busy, I'm busy, we're all catering to some sort of urgent need at most hours of the day. But our minds are important, and did not cease to be important once we became adults. If you have children, or work with children, I would argue that you have an even greater obligation to feed your mind with the tools to guide the next generation.

We cannot give our children what we refuse to cultivate in ourselves. What we do not value, they in turn will not value. Those who go against the parental

example are the exception that proves the rule - not evidence of an eventuality. And that means reading. Real reading.

You might recall an Elementary school teacher, somewhere along the line, telling the class, "Your mind is a muscle, you have to exercise it." Your mind did not suddenly lack a need for maintenance upon your graduation from school. The fading of a mind may not be missed right away, but to let our minds atrophy is to lose a part of what it means to be fully human.

Reading allows us to enter into communion with the Other in a more intimate way than is possible through mere conversation. It is a melding of minds without a loss of the persons. I remain me, but I become more fully myself in relationship with others - with a relationship with God being the greatest form of this communion. This is why deep spiritual reading is of such importance in the monastic life, and no less important for the laity.

However, our reading must be translated into meaning if it is to act on our minds and souls. This translation is most effective when it is made in

companionship.

Humanity has never been intended to exist as solitary individuals ("It is not good for man to be alone" Genesis 2:18) It is not enough to read, it is necessary to read together - to allow ourselves to be changed by what we read in living words.

This is what it means to be present.

This is what it means to be human.

This is what it means to Love. To love ourselves is to love others, and to love others is to love ourselves. In this love we fulfill what it means to be human.

In this we fulfill our call to live fully as Children of God. Learning in relationship to other human beings is, thus, innately and intimately tied to the universal call to holiness.

I'm hoping to get a post up in the next few weeks with practical tips for making this kind of reading happen "in the trenches of motherhood" or in a very busy life. What advice would you give for someone struggling to find the time, or

mental stamina, for this kind of deep reading? Is it something you struggle with as well?

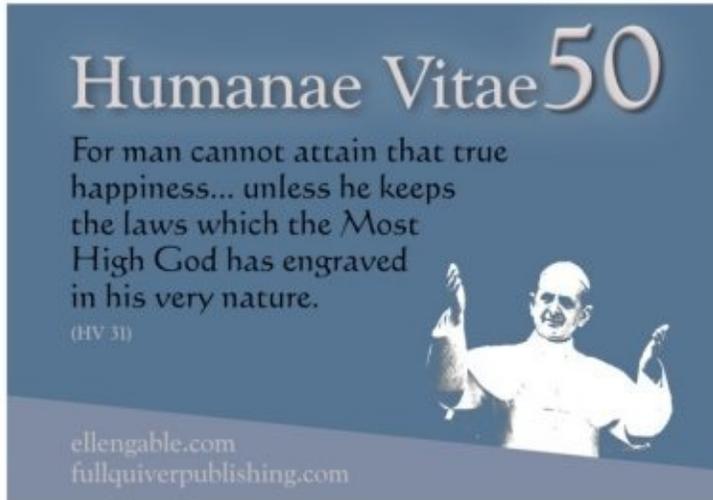
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Humanae Vitae: 50 Years Later [at Plot Line and Sinkers (Ellen Gable, Author)]



My [latest article for Catholic](#)

[Mom](#):

In July of 1968, I was a carefree nine-year-old enjoying summer vacation, still playing with dolls and pretending that I was the mother of ten children. I don't remember watching news or hearing anyone talk about *Humanae Vitae*.

But I do recall my parents and their friends that summer having these sorts of conversations: "What does the pope expect we should do? Have 15 kids? Or not have sex? No way. We're using birth control." I didn't think much about it except that in my naïve mindset, I didn't know what sex or birth control were, but I remember thinking, shouldn't moms and dads *want* to have lots of children?



Me at the age of nine, summer of '68.

In 1968 and with many of the faithful expecting and hoping that the Church would “change” its teaching on artificial contraception, Blessed Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical, [*Humanae Vitae \(On Human Life\)*](#) which confirmed and proclaimed the 2000-year consistent teaching of the Church that artificial methods of contraception were immoral.

Within two days, dissident theologians led by Father Charles Curran issued this statement: “Spouses may responsibly decide according to their conscience that artificial contraception in some circumstances is permissible and indeed necessary to preserve and foster the value and sacredness of marriage,” thereby, leaving it up to individual Catholic couples’ “conscience” to decide. The problem was there was no indication from dissidents as to how couples should form their consciences (nor, in my opinion, did the dissidents care). Two months after *HV*, the “Winnipeg Statement” was issued by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops stating that “those who cannot accept the teaching should not be considered shut off from the Catholic Church, and that individuals can in good conscience use contraception as long as they have made an honest attempt to accept the difficult directives of the encyclical.”

While many of the faithful were only focusing on their own personal situations, Pope Paul VI was warning the faithful that going against natural law and the 2000-year teaching of the Church would bring a “general lowering of moral standards.” (*HV* 17) Welcome to the world in which we live.

Fifty years later, I’m more mature. I understand that there are many good and

serious reasons to postpone or prevent pregnancy. In fact, I've lived through serious situations that necessitated avoiding pregnancy. But I also believe that there are so many good reasons NOT to dissent from Church teaching on this issue.

Blessed Pope Paul VI affirmed the Church's teachings but he also gave an alternative and moral option: Natural Family Planning, which in the '60s was becoming more and more effective.

Blessed Pope Paul VI said (*HV 17*) that we needed to “consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings—and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation—need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law.”

I remember as a teenager in the late '70s when I heard of a young man and woman moving in together. I wasn't surprised. I wasn't shocked. In fact, in the ten years or so since I had heard the conversations between my parents and their friends, three things had become normalized: cohabitation, premarital sex, and contraception. In my formative years, I was taught by society that if everyone agrees something is okay, then it's okay. Thus, I regarded a man and woman moving in together as simply an option rather than a moral choice.

Blessed Pope Paul VI went on to include another, very important, consequence for accepting contraception.

One “effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.” (*HV 17*)

Well, we need only look to the recent scandals that have come to light in Hollywood and in other areas where men in power have been preying on young women. Why do large numbers of Christians and Catholics believe it's completely acceptable to read the *Fifty Shades* books and to see the movies (and

many defending their actions)? It is precisely because women themselves don't reverence their own bodies. If they are contracepting (statistically, most Christians and Catholics use contraception openly), if they aren't reverencing their own bodies, why should they expect their spouses to do so?

The sad effect in all of this is that the widespread dissent to *Humanae Vitae* and our society's rejection of objective truth sent me in the wrong direction to the point that, when I began dating my husband in 1979, I was pro-choice, pro-premarital sex, and pro-contraception. I thank God every day that [he gently led me back to the faith of my youth and to the truths of these beautiful teachings on sex and marriage](#).

Blessed Pope Paul VI was, indeed, a prophet. One need only look at the state of our world 50 years later to see that there is a general lowering of morals. Paul VI knew that the "Birth control commission" set up by his predecessor, Saint John XXIII, recommended that the Church "change" her stance on artificial contraception. However, guided by the Holy Spirit, he wrote *Humanae Vitae*. He probably suspected that his encyclical reiterating and confirming the Church's 2000-year teaching on natural law would not be met with cheers and applause. We do need incentives to keep the moral law; otherwise, there are consequences.

I, for one, am grateful that Blessed Pope Paul VI embraced his mission to confirm and spread the truth. Now, we can clearly see his prophecies have come true — the morals of our world have changed greatly since 1968.

I'm 50 years older, but 50 years wiser. And very thankful to the Church for reaffirming the truth amidst pressures.

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Changing Rules [at A Catholic Citizen in America]



Today's tech and social norms aren't what they were in my youth. It's exciting. Or bewildering. Or unstable. Or dynamic. or any of a myriad other options.

Change happens, even if I don't approve. What matters is making good choices. More about that later.

These are the 'Good Old Days'

I'll indulge in nostalgia. Occasionally. Parts of my past are nice places to visit. But I wouldn't like living there.

Taking a stroll down memory lane lets me revisit the best times, places, people and experiences. It's a 'best-of' selection.

I certainly don't yearn for the days before social media, smart appliances, and online search software.



Maybe it's hereditary.

Or an attitude that's been in the family for several generations.

One of my ancestors, Arba Zeri Campbell, was the first man in his part of Illinois to have a telephone. I've been told that he waited quite a while before a neighbor got one, too.

Folks don't always use today's tech wisely. I don't blame the tech. I remember folks bewailing newfangled gadgets like the telephone and television.

Simpler times and the 'good old days' weren't.

Nostalgia is fine, within reason. But I don't miss epidemics of days gone by: polio, cholera, and otherwise. ([October 22, 2017](#); [August 11, 2017](#); [July 21, 2017](#))

They still happen, but are more avoidable now. Or should be. And that's another topic.

Isaiah, Uriah Heep and Living in the Future

I've been living in 'the future' for quite a while now. It's nowhere near as nifty or bleak as some imagined.

I like it, on the whole.

Today's tech makes doing just about anything easier.

That's good when we're doing something that makes sense. When we're not, it's not the tech's fault. Folks, some of us, were misusing technology long before the Web.

I ran into venom-spitting Christians in my youth, and still do. 'Christian' radio's screwball version of faith sent me on a search that led me to become a Catholic. Eventually. Along the way I met



vehemently non-Christian folks with similar attitudes.

That was in the 1960s. I'm pretty sure we don't have more folks spouting nonsense today. Or fewer. Not by much, either way. They're easier to find now, thanks to information tech.

My guess is that folks like Holy Willie and Uriah Heep pop up in every era. One's real, the other isn't, and that's yet another topic. ([January 8, 2018](#); [October 23, 2016](#))

Pillars of rectitude oozing “malignant virtue” most likely infest everyone's circle of friends, family, and neighbors. Except for hermits, and that's yet again another topic.

I'm not sure who coined the phrase “malignant virtue.” It goes back at least to the 1860s:

“There are times, Charles, when even the unimaginative decency of my brother and the malignant virtue of his wife appear to me admirable.”

(Lord Peter Wimsey, in “[Murder Must Advertise](#),” Dorothy L. Sayers (1933))

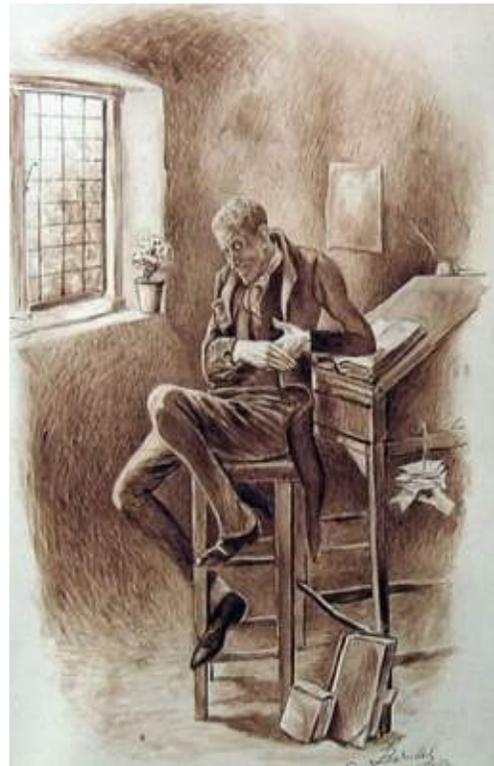
“...counting every thing which the most malignant virtue could shrink from, I have culled eighty lines. Eighty lines out of nine thousand!...”

(“[The Good Gray Poet. A Vindication](#),” William Douglas O'Connor (1866))

The attitude is ancient. So are misbehaving VIPs. Ordinary folks who misbehave and claim virtue aren't particularly prominent in the Bible. I'm not sure why. I found both in Isaiah:

“Your princes are rebels and comrades of thieves; Each one of them loves a bribe and looks for gifts. The fatherless they do not defend, the widow's plea does not reach them.”

([Isaiah 1:23](#))

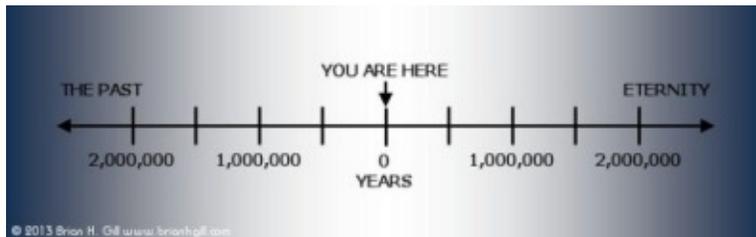


“The Lord said: Since this people draws near with words only and honors me with their lips alone, though their hearts are far from me, And fear of me has become mere precept of human teaching....”

([Isiah 29:13](#))

‘Fear of God’ isn’t being scared of the Almighty. It’s more like respect. ([March 26, 2017](#))

‘That Still Small Voice....’



I could compose screeds against “...scrupulous, self-appointed, nostalgia-hankering virtual guardians of faith....” ([May 7, 2017](#))

Or denounce wackadoo environmentalists. Or folks whose chief offense is liking music I don’t. That last might be hard to find. As one of my kids said, ‘your opinion doesn’t count, Dad. You like **everything**.’ She had a point. As usual.

There’s no shortage of offensive attitudes and beliefs, now or in any age. I might enjoy impersonating an incensed Old Testament prophet. While the performance lasted. But my heart wouldn’t be in it.

Besides, I’ve got my particular judgment to think of. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, [1021–1022](#))

My rap sheet is long enough without adding to the list.

Ignoring trouble isn’t an option either. Not a good one.

Deciding whether my actions are good or bad is a good idea. Preferably **before** I do them. Choosing depends on having some notion of what “good” and “bad” are.

We all start with what Jiminy Cricket called ‘that still small voice nobody listens

to.’

Deciding to ignore it is an option. I can’t recommend it. (Catechism, [1790–1791](#))

So is sliding through life without adding to the starter pack. I wouldn’t say that’s wrong, but can’t say it’s the best choice.



Avoiding chances to learn more, choosing ignorance or substitutes for an informed conscience? That’s a bad idea. (Catechism, [1776–1794](#))

One of the cardinal virtues is justice, so part of my job is noticing what other folks do. That’s the easy part. Deciding whether actions are good or bad gets tricky. So does deciding how to respond. (Catechism, [1776–1804](#), [1905–1917](#), [2401–2449](#))

Developing good judgment is nearly the opposite of being judgmental. Justice is important. So is mercy. (Catechism, [1805](#), [1807](#), [1829](#), [1861](#), [1991–2011](#), [2478](#))

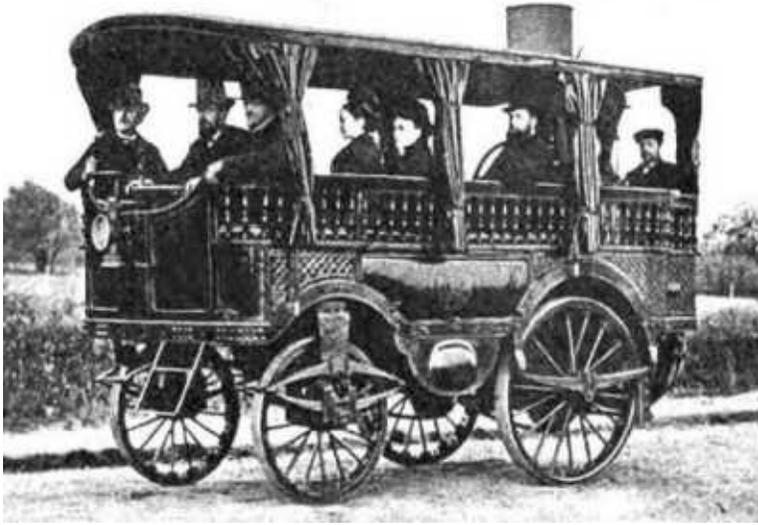
The idea is hating the sin and loving the sinner. Judging persons is God’s jurisdiction. (Catechism, [1861](#))

The basics are simple.

I should love God and my neighbor, and see everyone as my neighbor. ([Matthew 5:43–44](#), [22:36–40](#); [Mark 12:28–31](#); [Luke 10:25–37](#); Catechism, [1706](#), [1776](#), [1825](#), [1849–1851](#), [1955](#))

Remembering those simple principles and acting like they matter? That’s hard.

Dealing With Difference



Behaving myself is a good idea, but my job doesn't end there.

I'm part of a society, like everyone else. Benefits are part of the package. So are duties. One of those is paying attention what others need. How I respond depends on what's needed, and what I can do. (Catechism, [1878–1885](#), [1928–1942](#), [2199](#), [2238–2243](#))

In a society where justice and mercy were perfectly balanced and love abounded — we haven't managed that yet. But we keep trying. I see our efforts as a good thing.

As I see it, one of the tricky parts is dealing with differences. And recognizing our equality. That'll take explaining.

Every one of us is 'equal.' We all have a share of humanity's "transcendent dignity." But we're not all alike. We're not supposed to be. (Catechism, [1929](#), [1937](#))

That should be a good thing. (Catechism, [1934–1938](#), [2334](#))

Some efforts to make a good society turned out better than others.

It took Napoleon to sort out the French Revolution's mess. I don't know what historians will make of assorted 20th century debacles. ([November 19, 2017](#); [November 10, 2017](#); [November 6, 2016](#))



America's experiment started a few years before the French one.

We've survived a major internal war since then and eventually corrected some problems. I like being an American, mostly. But we don't have a perfect society today.

If I thought we lived in a Golden Age before [1965](#), [1954](#), [1933](#), or [1848](#) ruined everything, I'd be trying to drag us back. If I thought today's America was perfect, I'd be striving to uphold the status quo. It's not. It's never been.

Like I keep saying, there's not much I can do to change America. Much less the world.

But I can suggest that we can do better. And that working with all people of good will makes sense.

Reflecting Love

There's no idyllic era in our past, or anyone else's. Nobody's perfect now. That leaves one direction: forward.

It won't be easy. Particularly since even folks who think change is needed don't all agree on details.



And some apparently simply don't like change. They're not all Christian curmudgeons. Or Catholics yearning for yesteryear.

Despite how some Catholics act, our faith isn't all about grimly clinging to antique habits.

And it sure isn't about imposing one culture on everyone. That includes how we worship. The sacraments are universal. How we celebrate them reflects our many cultures. (Catechism, [1200–1206](#))

There isn't one 'correct' culture. Or political system. We can eat with or without forks. Our leaders can be queens, emperors, presidents or whatever.

What matters is having rules that respect the “legitimate good of the communities” and “fundamental rights of persons.” (Catechism, [24](#), [814](#), [1901](#), [1957](#))

That hasn't changed, and won't. The idea of universal and unchanging [natural law](#) was ancient when [St. Thomas Aquinas](#) discussed it. Rules we use to get along keep changing as our circumstances change. (Catechism, [1952–1960](#))

Loving God and neighbors, and seeing everyone as a neighbor: that'll always be important.

Our rules are good or bad to the extent that they reflect that love. That's what the Catholic view of social justice is about. (Catechism, [1928–1942](#))

And that's — still another topic:

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In A Very Personal Way [at bukas palad]



Year B / Ordinary Time / Week 5 / Sunday

Readings: Job 7.1-4, 6-7 / Responsorial Psalm 147. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (R/v cf 3a) / 1 Corinthians 9.16-19, 22-23 / Mark 1.29-39

“He went to her, took by the hand, and helped her up.”

This is how Mark describes Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law in today’s gospel story. Jesus heals by touching.

We can miss this detail altogether because we often focus on the miracle in this event. In fact, we tend to miss the small details in our lives because we are more preoccupied with the big picture that is the drama of our lives. It is a bit like missing the trees because we only see the forest.

Touch. It is a simple action.

Yet it can say so much more and communicate far more clearly than the words we use. We chose and structure words carefully to interpret and give our point of view. We safeguard our innermost feelings with words. A touch, on the other hand, is more personal and intimate. It more freely expresses our deepest feelings. Touch is not an insignificant gesture.

We know the richness of our parents' love by their warm embrace. We know the depth of mercy when we are forgiven with a hug. We've experienced another's friendship when they've laid their hands on our sick bodies. We've witnessed the genuine care of elderly friends as they holding hands to cross the busy street. Yes, you and I know love because another's touch never lies.

Perhaps, the deepest yearning we all have is to be touched. To be touched and accepted as we are. To be touched and cared for in our pain. To be touched and loved because we need love.

As much as we yearn to be touched, I know we all struggle to share a touch with someone else. Did you give a loved one a hug or a kiss this past week? When was the last time you patted a friend heartily on the back to encourage? Isn't it easier for us to say "sorry" than to stretch out our hands in reconciliation? I suspect our answers to these questions will be a "yes". "Yes" because we suffer from a poverty of touch in our lives.

Jesus healed Peter's sick mother-in-law by coming to her, taking her hand and helping her up; then her fever left her. **He healed her in a very personal way: by touching her.** His touch reveals God's bountiful grace at work in our lives.

But Jesus' touch isn't meant for one; it is meant for all. In the gospels, Jesus heals many in the same way: whether by approaching them or letting them come to him, he healed and transformed them with his touch. He rubbed his spittle to give a blind man sight (John 9.6). He touched many in the marketplace, healing them (Mark 6.56). A haemorrhaging woman touched his cloak and was healed (Mark 5.25-34). He touched a leper to cleanse him (Luke 5.13). **Jesus' touch is God's power at work to save.**

Yes, we can hope in Jesus. He is indeed the healer in our lives, the healer of our lives. He is because Jesus' healing restores us to life. Jesus' healing is life-giving. Without him and his healing, life can be a "drudgery" and an "enslavement" as Job describes the misery of the human condition when hope is absent and despair reigns. Haven't we all experienced such suffering and misery before? I believe that in those moments we turned to Jesus. We did because Jesus is our hope in God.

Mark wants to do more than assure us that Jesus is our hope. He wants to deepen it by showing us how **Jesus' touch is fundamentally God's way of being with us, amongst us and for us.** Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, touch was his way of being friend and companion, teacher and master, and even, of being savior in our lives. Through his touch—those acts of healing and forgiving, of comforting and accompanying others that he did—Jesus revealed God's great love at work in people's lives. And Jesus continues to do this whenever we love and care for each other.

"Jesus went to her, took by the hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she began to wait on them". Jesus' healing restores Peter's mother-in-law to health. It also returns her to the community to do what he does—touch others: she waits on them. She does this by serving them, Mark writes. And what is service but touching another's need to be welcomed, fed, and cared for.

This is why I am convinced that the real miracle of today's gospel story will

happen when we let ourselves be touched by Jesus, God's Word, and we let him restore us to do our Christian duty better—to touch and transform another's life as Jesus did.

“Go and do likewise”, Jesus said at the Last Supper. We call ourselves Christians. We say we follow Jesus. Our identity and mission as Christian will mean nothing unless we imitate Jesus' life of touching, healing and transforming other lives. This why Paul's exhortation in our second reading matters: **Christian life is really about preaching the Good News to all peoples.**

Imitating Jesus is how we can let God's life take root and come alive in us. Indeed, touching another like Jesus did is how we become a little more divine by being a lot more human, like Jesus was by being human and touching another. Today's good news is that in Jesus you and I have a meaningful example of how to be fully human and truly Christian. Through Jesus' example, God is challenging us to make God's love more real through our deeds than in our words.

Think of the saints in heaven and on earth the priests and religious, the lay catechists and church volunteers who show us how to live this challenge. Remember Pope Francis who responded to this challenge when he embraced the man with boils on his face and body. Celebrate our parents and friends who teach us that we can meet this challenge through all the life-giving ways we touch each other's lives.

Truly, all these actions express the love of God touching us in our brightest moments and in our darkest days—touching us to give us life, always. I believe we all already doing this because we want to share God's love and life. This is why our kind words, our sincere care, our merciful forgiveness, our Christian charity matter. They are the more concrete, real and better way to help others in need than the many words preached or written by priests and theologians, the many words in Church writings we are to read or ponder on. **Deeds touch and**

transform us much more than words.

Our world is broken by injustice and hatred, persecution and strife. We can begin to heal it by making God's love and life real through our everyday acts of kindness and forgiveness, love and care. Our homes are a good place to start doing this. So, parents, hug your children often. And families, sit and hold grandpa and grandma's hands repeatedly. As for friends, do hold your down-and-out friend's hand and support her. Today's gospel illustrates that **what matters most in troubled times is the personal touch and presence of another who cares and restores life.**

We all want God to touch us with His love and life. And God hears us by touching us in faith, with hope, and through love. All God expects from us in return is that we pay God's goodness forward by doing what Jesus did—touch others to heal and transform them. So let us do this.

As we do, I pray that we will appreciate how today Jesus has come to us, taken us by our hands, and has indeed helped us up—helped us up to go forth and touch and care for others as he did. And as we touch and care for them, may we meet our good and loving God who, through them, will touch us in return.

*Preached at the Church of the Transfiguration and St Ignatius Church,
Singapore*

photo: pope francis kissing a disfigured man; credit: rex features via associated

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True Worship is From the Heart [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

True Worship must be from our Hearts

The Lord Desires We Worship from Our Hearts – Not Just Rote Observance of Tradition



Deep Prayer

“Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.”

He answered them, “And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die.’ But you say, ‘If any one tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father.’ So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ (Matt:15:1-9)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Note that Jesus, here, is criticized as not being a true rabbinical leader by the Pharisees for deviating from Jewish religious tradition. Jesus response to His critics telling them that following the precepts of God in faith and sincerity supersedes any human ritualistic traditions when it involves our relationship with the Divine. He pointed out to them that true worship of the Divine must be based on a heart-to-heart relationship with the Father and not just rote following of

human religious tradition.

When we are baptized into Christ as children we have His Spirit in us. However, it is necessary for our parents and the Church to catechize (teach) us and guide us to our spiritual empowerment at Confirmation thus activating His Spirit in us so that the awareness of the the spiritual becomes a part of our life experience. It is through this awareness that your faith becomes more effective in living our lives in harmony with the Father's will.

Without this awareness, our participation in the practices of the Church become merely routine observance of human tradition and custom, and thus deadening us to the spiritual connection His people should have with the Divine.

That is what happened to many in Israel, not only in Jesus' time, but also in Isaiah's time and that is why Jesus quotes Isaiah when he tells them ... ***'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'*** (Matt:15:9)

In attempting to understand the citation above, let us review its context...

In the Old Testament, it was revealed to Isaiah that a time would come when the nations around Ariel (Jerusalem) would surround her and lay siege to her and that the Lord would come at that time to defend her and bring defeat to her enemies. But although the vision of His protection and been given them through the Word and Vision He provided, the spirits of those charged with making the vision known were as in a deep sleep, so that they were unaware of the vindication the Lord had planned for Ariel in their time of trouble.

Isaiah recorded what God told him about the situation in this way ... ***"For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, the prophets, and covered your heads, the seers.... the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read."*** (Is. 29: 10-12)

In the next verse, Isaiah then records God's explanation for the cause of their loss of spiritual awareness (inability to access the spiritual guidance provided) as follows... ***"And the Lord said, [this is happening] ... "Because this people draw near (me) with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their***

hearts are far from me, and their fear (reverence, including worship) of me is [merely done as a response to] a commandment of men learned by rote ...

... so [because of this] I will again do amazing things with this people, shocking and amazing. The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment [awareness] of the discerning shall be hidden.” (Isaiah 29:13-4, Revised Standard Version)

Thus, in John’s Gospel, when the Samaritan woman met Jesus at the well and tried to divert Him from scrutinizing her morals, she told him ...

“Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” (John 4: 20)

In response to her use of the the term “worship” ... Jesus said to her, ***“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*** (John 4:21-24)

Jesus used the occasion to attempt to clarify to her (and to us) that true worship emanates from a true relationship with God, for the word “know” indicates that we “intimately know” “in spirit” the one whom we worship. And, that the true worship that God desires is for those who worship Him to do so out of a true spiritual knowledge of Him and who He Is in His Person.

So now let us understand what the Word says about what God desires of us in order that we may truly worship Him in “Spirit” and in “Truth”.

Let us begin by considering that Jesus tells us through the WORD, that, ***“ I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE; no one can come to the Father but by Me”*** (John 14:6). It follows then, that if we are to truly come before the Father to worship Him, we can only do that through the Spirit of Christ and The Revealed Truth of His Word.

The only way then, that we can approach the Father to Worship is through the active purity of the spirit of Jesus in us.

The “Way” is Being in The Spirit...

As scripture tells us the Spirit of **“Christ in us the Hope of Glory”** (Col 1:27) is the WAY to the Father. And since flesh cannot beget spirit” our spirit life must be begotten by the Holy Spirit before we can even “walk in the spirit” much less worship in the spirit”.

Just as Jesus told Nicodemus when he came to Him at night... **“you came because the Holy Spirit incited your spiritual awareness of the ‘Kingdom’ but in order to make your spiritual awareness permanent your spirit must be activated by being “reborn of Water and the Spirit”** (see John chapter 3).

So, the Way into the Spiritual temple where true worship begins when **“by One Spirit you are baptized into Christ”** (Gal. 3:27). Here we repent of our sins, accepting Jesus and His sacrifice for our sins, being purified by water at the entrance to His Tabernacle in our hearts. This purification is necessary as explained by this excerpt from Psalm 24 ...

3 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? 4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. 5 They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation. 6 Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah

And then, in the Book Of Hebrews in the New Covenant we believers are told that through our faith in Jesus and His Sacrifice we are purified and sanctified to come before the throne to Worship for He has indeed prepared the Way for us to enter into Worship!

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying...and I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”(Heb. 10:14, 17)

It must also be understood that being Truly in the Spirit requires that we must also be in the Truth, that is, in embedded in Divine Love (agape Love), for our God is Love ...

“Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the

curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Heb. 10: 19-25)

Our Responsibility is maintaining our fellowship in His Life... (I John 1)

Once we have entered into the awareness of His Spirit in us and have experienced true worship in His Spirit, we, as His Children are given the responsibility of maintaining our fellowship with Him by acting as channels of His Love and Fellowship to our Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus. By giving our selves to Love we bring Him the Glory that is His; this then, is the continuation of the True Spirit of Worship in us! Praised be His Holy Name!

In the first chapter of his first letter, the Apostle John expresses this sentiment perfectly... (read 1 John 1 in it entirety)

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

John tells his readers that what he is sharing to them what the disciples saw heard from Jesus because he wants his readers to understand the Light of His Love and Joy that God has them in their fellowship with Christ, and that he desires that his readers understand and experience that same Joy in their lives. He further informs them, that in maintaining that fellowship of Love with one another the Blood of Jesus will continue to cleanse us from all sin so that so that we may maintain our fellowship with the Father bringing Him the Glory which is His.

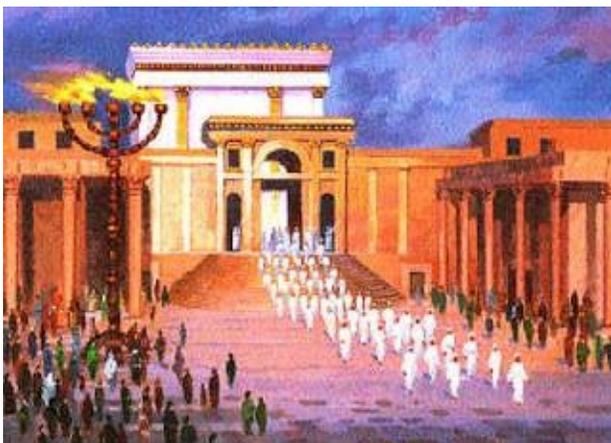
“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Because of this John also tells us that we do not need to hide from our sins but rather readily confess them before Christ in order to let the Blood Of Christ continue His work of cleansing throughout our lives.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

“And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him.” (1 John 2 28-29)

In trying to understand how to open our hearts to God in Worship hear how David prayed from his heart to God regarding how he opened his heart, while in dire distress, contending with the accusations of men as to his faith in God.



“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me continually, “Where is your God?” These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the

throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.” (Ps. 42:2-4)

In his human weakness listen to how he asked for the Spirit of God to lead Him before the altar to worship ...

“Oh send out your light and your truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.” (Ps. 43:3-4)

Thus my brethren, I share this with you that your joy may be in your fellowship with the Divine so that your True Worship may not falter and that His Blessings be continually on you and your loved ones. Amen and Amen!

Your Brother In Christ ... Bartimaeus

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Recommended Links

[Sweet Yoke of Love](#)

[Responding to the Spirit's Call](#)

[The Kingdom of God: Our Spiritual Inheritance](#)

[Reclaiming Our Legacy In Christ](#)

[Hearing God's Voice, and Obeying It](#)

[Pentecost and the Promise of the Father](#)

[The Empowerment Gifts \(Part 1\)](#)

[The Empowerment Gifts \(Part 2\)](#)

[Building our Spiritual Life on the Rock](#)

This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2018/03/03/\\$-true-worship-is-from-the-heart/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2018/03/03/$-true-worship-is-from-the-heart/)
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HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Wed, 21 Mar 2018 14:41:35 GMT
Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked
Connection: keep-alive Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=86400 Vary: Accept-
Encoding Last-Modified: Wed, 21 Mar 2018 14:36:53 GMT Cache-Control:
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you're reading this, you should visit automatic.com/jobs and apply to join the
fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://franciscanmom.com/xmlrpc.php>
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[Home](#)How to Find Good Catholic Reads

How to Find Good Catholic Reads [at FranciscanMom]



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Last summer at the [Catholic Writers Guild](#) conference, I met two dynamic young Catholic women, M.S. Ocampo and A.R.K. Watson, who had just started up a new service, [CatholicReads.com](#). This website features a FREE email service that spotlights Catholic books (often, but not exclusively, by indie authors) and even tells you when those books are on sale. It's my privilege to interview A.R.K. Watson about the team behind this unique and very helpful service. I'm a subscriber, and if you love to read, this free service is for you. [Sign up today!](#)

Tell us your story! What was your inspiration for starting this service?

We started [Catholic Reads](#) because as readers of fiction and genre books like sci-fi, fantasy, and horror we were tired of reading books where people of faith were poked fun at. As we began to find books by Catholic authors that explored our favorite themes and genres we had the natural book-nerd desire to share these stories and bring some much-deserved attention to the literary geniuses in our own age. Too often do people decry the current state of Catholic literature, longing for the glory days of Tolkien and Flannery O'Connor when they fail to realize that those never ended. People are still writing creative Catholic literature. Today it is just harder to find because those authors are often published through small presses or independently. We seek to correct that imbalance.

Who's involved? Tell us about your team.

[M.S. Ocampo](#)

covers our romance & YA books. If you want an explanation of the communion of Saints using almost entirely Marvel Superhero analogies you've got to read her blog.

[S. Leigh Hall](#)

is a photographer and covers our memoir, nonfiction and children's book categories. As a former teacher, she has a passion for making sure our church and school libraries have content for everyone, from the grade school student to the Ph.D. theologian.

Lori Wilson covers our fantasy genre and has an unusually strong intelligence for dissecting a book's themes and symbolism.

Eric Postma

is a recent addition to our team. He is a professional editor at

gingermaneditorial.com

and even edited one of the books that earned our Best of 2017 Award,

[*Comet Dust*](#)

. He covers our horror genre specifically but reads a wide range of books.

And then there is me.

[**ARK Watson.**](#)

At a writer's conference in an Ivy League campus, I was told that I could not have priests on my Martian landscape doing things like scientific research. Ever since I've been driven to change the rhetoric. I cover the sci-fi genre specifically.

Are your team members geographically close or is this a remote-team effort?

[Catholic Reads](#)

grew out of the local Catholic Writer's Guild here in Houston Texas and three of us are still located here but being an online business we have grown to include editors across the United States.

What genres/age group(s) does your service focus on?

Our group promotes books of all types, though we have a particular love for genre books like sci-fi, fantasy, YA, and horror. Too often these genres are decried as not literary enough but some of Catholic literature's best books come from these. We also seek to correct an imbalance we see in the Catholic publishing world. Catholicism is a minority religion in America, so it makes sense that Catholic publishers would want to focus on theology, apologetics, and education, but this makes it hard for Catholic creative writers to find a platform. And often when bigger Catholic publishing houses publish fiction books they

don't always seem to know how to market them since much of their efforts are geared towards promoted nonfiction. Again, this is a good and positive thing, but we would like to help fill the cracks on this issue.

Is your service free of charge?

Our services are free of charge at the moment. We do not feel it is fair to charge authors until we have garnered enough subscribers to make their sales with us a more reliable investment. However, we are trying to find other avenues of income. We have joined Amazon associates, so any books bought through our website earns us a very very small commission. All of us have day jobs and are doing this simply because we love our faith and we love books and we want to give Catholic authors an advantage they sorely lack in the world.

How can readers sign up to find out about the deals?

Readers can sign up by going to

catholicreads.com

and clicking the "subscribe" button at the top. We send out emails no more than once a week, each with a book that is marked down at least 50% off to free. It's a cheap way to find great books and support Catholic authors.

What else would you like readers to know?

I would like your readers to know that they can be as nerdy as they like and still invest their life in Catholic culture and imagination. We might be a minority community but we still have a vibrant growing culture and there are practical affordable ways to support Catholic artists who do as much to change our culture as Catholic apologists. You can argue with someone until you're blue in the face trying to prove that the Catholic Church is fair to women for instance but it's much easier, much less preachy, to give them an adventure book about Rescue Sisters in Space and challenge them to come up with a book that breaks the Bechdel Test better than that. (That's

[*Discovery*](#)

by Karina Fabian if you're interested.)

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Low-down [at With Us Still]

Our grandson, I notice, takes a unique approach to savoring rain.



...from the heavens the rain comes down...

Barely two-feet tall as it is, still he seems to desire a deeper intimacy with the raindrops. He squats down low to get up-close-and-personal with the precip. He gazes at the puddles forming on our deck with a remarkable sense of longing and fascination.

A bit later in the day, unusually warm weather made it possible for the two of us to sit on the front stoop and simply enjoy the rain. We missed having the chance to play outdoors, of course. But it was a blessing of a different sort to have our routine stilled by the rain.

We just sat, and watched.

The blessing of that quiet moment deepened when I went to Mass this morning and heard the first reading proclaimed. [Check this out](#), from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the LORD:

Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down

*And do not return there till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,*

*Giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats,
So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.*



‘I could do this all day, Gramps...’

Francis is a bit young, perhaps, to appreciate the new things that the Lord desires to do on earth – all the “ends” for which we are being prepared during this holy season of Lent. Countless possibilities, as numerous as the raindrops, soaking in the full measure of God’s goodness and power and providence.

Rush through the rain, though, and you might just miss all the good stuff that God has in store for us.

It really helps to slow down...and maybe even get down low...to let the beauty of the season seep in, drop by drop.

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

IHS

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More on 40 [at Walking the Path]



SONGS IN MY HEAD

Earlier I posted an

[entry from 2016](#) in which I recapped the number forty. I felt that at the time this was still something missing from the entry and so I headed off to Mass hoping for some inspiration. As I was quietly reflecting on the readings for the day and on the number 40, it hit me, U2's song forty. Pardon me as I am one of those people that has heard countless songs over my years both as a youth and an adult and never really looked at the lyrics or really heard the song for its meaning. Songs were just music that passed through my lifetime. I believe that when we are really ready to hear something it will come to us. Unfortunately that is sometime true in our relationships those close to us. But I deviate from my intent.



DESERT HIGHWAYS

So as I sat in the pew I was reminded also of Interstate 40 which used to be old Route 66 in California which runs from the high desert city of Barstow into Arizona and beyond. Along Interstate 40 the landscape is barren, rocky, and exceptionally dry. There are but a few places one can stop from Barstow to Needles on the two plus hour drive. There is little to see except an occasional bird. I could imagine Jesus in this unforgiving landscape facing the various temptations and as with wild animals. I also imagined St Anthony wrestling with the various wild animals as he attempted to overcome the desires that seemed to attack his incessantly in his time in the desert. I was then brought back to the song Forty.

FORTY

The song is based on Psalm 40 with its theme of gratitude and thanksgiving. Although the song is pretty much focuses on the verse anyone who has been to a U2 concert can remember the throng of people singing in chorus the lyrics usually as the concert ends. It is quite a spiritual experience. A closer look at the psalm sees a reflection on our travels during Lent.

In verse 13 the psalmist is overcome with the sense of sinfulness. In a sense much of one's Lenten journey is both asking God to make us aware of our sinfulness, then for repentance, and for God's grace to deliver us. From this we sing a new song, a song of renewal. We have been brought from the pit, our own sinfulness and given a foundation to stand on. The question is how long will we sing this song?

U2 FORTY

Lyrics

I waited patiently for the Lord
He inclined and heard my cry
He brought me up out of the pit
Out of the mire and clay

I will sing, sing a new song
I will sing, sing a new song

How long to sing this song

How long to sing this song
How long, how long, how long
How long, to sing this song

He set my feet upon a rock
And made my footsteps firm
Many will see
Many will see and fear

I will sing, sing a new song
I will sing, sing a new song

I will sing, sing a new song
I will sing, sing a new song

How long to sing this song
How long to sing this song
How long, how long, how long
How long, to sing this song

Songwriters: Adam Clayton / Dave Evans / Larry Mullen / Paul Hewson

40 lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group

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Need good Lenten reading material? [at Boldly Catholic]

Capture

I'm re-reading (and actually listening on Audible to) Brant Pitre's [Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper](#) as a Lenten discipline this year and am seriously enjoying it all over again.

Seven years ago this week [I wrote a review of the tome at Patheos](#) and expressed how it really helped me intellectually get over my angst with a key Catholic teaching I had at one time seriously struggled with. I excerpt a part of it here:

As a Protestant (Episcopalian and later non-denominational), I prayed often for the presence of God to be made manifest, the thought being that God's presence alone would be enough to bring comfort, healing, solace – even faith. Of course, the form of God's presence was something I always imagined to be something other than physical – real, but invisible; not felt by touch. I expected God's presence to be experienced ethereally and I was ok with that.

Now, journeying back to my Catholic roots, via RCIA, I find that everything's changed; God's presence is more than ethereal.

The Eucharistic Presence of Christ is central; it forms the core of Catholic teaching and everything revolves around it. You cannot be truly Catholic and dismiss it. Dare I say it is not a thing easily or casually embraced? Nor should it be.

It is also beyond doubt the doctrine forming the greatest chasm between Catholics and Protestants.

Into that divide steps Dr. Brant Pitre and his book, [Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist](#) which should become, in my humble, less-than-learned opinion, a seminal work. And not just for Catholics.

Pitre wends his way through the Old Testament and ancient Jewish writings

like The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Works of Josephus, The Mishnah and other writings and he ties together loose ends. He focuses on beliefs about the Passover, the Manna from heaven and the Bread of the Presence; and demonstrates their relevance to and foreshadowing of the Eucharistic Presence, and makes a forceful and powerful argument for his thesis, which is that the Holy Eucharist cannot be fully understood as a continuing Presence of God, unless considered within the context of 1st Century Judaism. For Catholics, this book will be substantiating and affirming. For Protestants, it can be illuminating and clarifying.

There's [more at the link](#).

I encourage you to read the whole thing... then get yourself a copy of the book ([a Kindle version is available](#)). As I say at the end of the review, "*Catholics will become more aware of the richness and depth of our faith, Protestants will better understand why the Holy Eucharist forms the core of Catholicism, as reality, and not a symbol.*"

You'll not regret reading the book.

This contribution is available at <http://www.boldlycatholic.com/2018/02/need-good-lenten-reading-material.html>
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Me Time [at The Not]



Searching for Jesus

The reflections I read about today's Gospel (Mark 1:29-39) were about knowing that God gave you a purpose, or that we should always seek Jesus. Even Pope Francis got in on it:



The Homily was given by the Bishop through a recording (Bishop's Appeal Sunday), and he mentioned how we should all search for Jesus. He said that some people find Him at an early age, and some search their whole lives. I fall into that last category. Sometimes I feel like we're playing "hide & seek"...I find him and have a great relationship with him, but then I go through a dry period & I feel like I lose him for a time. Are you with me?

Not my take

Interestingly, though, that's not what I got out of the Readings. In the First Reading (Job 7:1-4, 6-7), Job is talking about his sufferings. I remember those nights that seemed to go on forever...walking around the room or rocking a newborn. Just me & my baby for what seemed like hours, especially since I was

so tired and just wanted to go to bed. Seeing the sun coming up was such a relief. Then it would seem like a blink of an eye that the day would be gone and I would pray for the baby to sleep all night. Thankfully, I didn't have very many of those nights; maybe that's why I remember them so vividly.

Fast forward to now...the babies are grown men and those sleepless nights are a distant memory. Every now and then, though, I will have a sleepless night thanks to the dogs. When I'm up, I'm up and there are nights when I can't go back to sleep. Nights when I lay back down, staring at the clock, knowing I have to get up in "X" amount of hours. Those nights don't seem as long as they did when I had babies to comfort. Oh, but the days! There just isn't enough time in the day to accomplish all I need or want to.

But I'm so tired!

In the Gospel, Jesus healed a bunch of people, then got up at the crack of dawn to pray. He had to be dog-tired after all of the healing he did the day before, yet he got up to spend time with God. Those mornings when I just want to stay in bed? Yeah, I'm going to have to remember this Gospel.

My parents were almost always the first to get up in the mornings. They never stayed in bed because they were tired. If they were still in bed after we got up, they were ill, and they were

never

ill. (A slight embellishment...they were

rarely

ill!) Once they were empty-nesters, they attended Daily Mass every day except Sat. (mom said that was their day to "sleep in"...sometimes until 8:00!) My mom would wake up around 6:00 every morning, go into the kitchen, and pray and read the day's readings. My father was raised on farms, so he had always been an "up and at 'em" kind of guy. There wasn't a lazy bone in either of their bodies. But I know they had to be tired. Just like Jesus was.

Early to bed; early to rise

What kept them going? It had to be the promise of salvation. Some mornings I can't wait to get up and see what the day's Readings are. Other mornings, I want to hit the snooze and take just another 15 minutes before I get up. Then I remember the passage in Matthew Kelly's

Resisting Happiness

where he talks about hitting the snooze button being the first resistance of the day. So, I get up and get on with my day. There's definitely something about being the first one up in the house. It's always been my "me time". Just me and the dogs, trying to get my act together for the day. My days definitely go smoother when I have that time to pray and read. Some mornings there isn't a whole lot of reflection going on, and on my Adoration days sometimes I'm a little slack because I know I'll have an hour that evening. Some days I have more to pray about than others because, well...3 grown boys. The worrying never stops, y'all. I can definitely "feel it" when I don't have that time in the mornings. After reading the Gospel this morning, I guess even Jesus needed his "me time"!

So...what about you? When is your "me time"?

This contribution is available at <http://thenotsoperfectcatholic.blogspot.com/2018/02/me-time.html>
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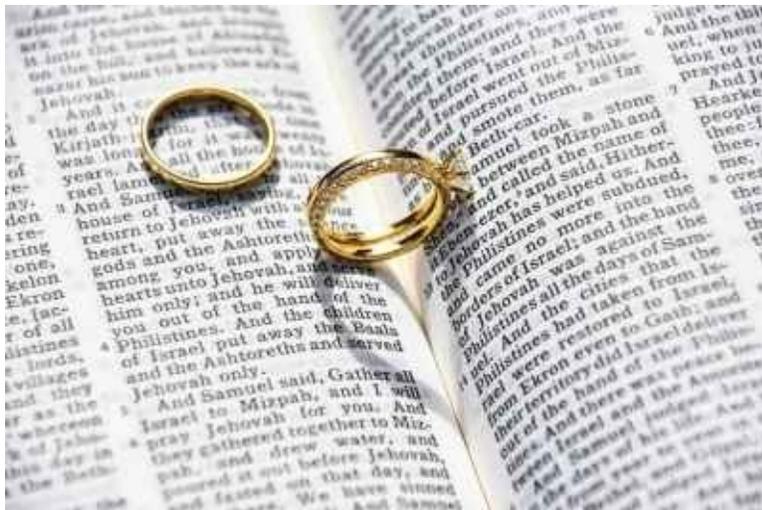
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Catholics are prudes, repressed, and think sex is a bad thing, right? Not so fast! Turns out Catholics may be having better sex than the rest of the world. Let me tell you why...

But first, no worries, this is not an inappropriate post. This is simply a look into God's plan for sexuality, nothing offensive included. I promise :).

This is a post I've been wanting to write for a long time, because I think it's incredibly important for others to know **what Catholicism teaches about sex** and **why** it holds these teachings. And, whaddayaknow, when you follow God's plan, joy ensues! God is so smart ;-).

3 Reasons Why Catholics Have Good Sex



I truly believe that when you follow the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality, you will enjoy the best experiences of sexuality that God intended us to have. By holding to the act's original purpose, living chastely, removing barriers and freely giving of yourself to one person, you will be living the life God has called you to, and you will experience **the true "joy of sex."**

1. Catholics hold to the act's ultimate purpose: procreation.

Catholics remember the purpose of sexual relations. Guess what society? It's not about making yourself "feel good" by whatever means and whenever you

please. By divorcing sex from its purpose—“**procreation**”—we have created a whole range of problems in our world.

When you have sex only to feel good, it leads to **objectification of women** (heard much about that lately?), partners feeling used and worthless as only an object of pleasure, and frankly, it takes the fun out of it.

Remember in high school when you could only sneak alone time with a boyfriend or girlfriend on occasion? It wasn't just an “anytime you feel like it” affair. When you have to restrict yourself from sexual activity, because it's not a married relationship or your spouse isn't available, **the time you do have together is all the more appreciated.**

When you open yourself to the act's true purpose, to create children, that causes you to wait until you are ready for children, and, thus, removes fear from the act, as well. You can enjoy it in its fullness, because whatever the act produces, you're ready.

Finally, this is why the Church teaches that acting on attractions to the same sex is not God's plan. Those actions **cannot result in children** and so it is not God's intention. That is THE purpose for sex and the act must be open to it.

The Church welcomes anyone who feels attracted to the same sex; they simply ask that you don't act on it. Many people in this world have disordered desires that are not anyone's fault. You simply have to learn not to act on them with the support of others and to go to confession when you do. If you experience these feelings, this may be God calling you to the vocation of the single life.

2.Â Catholics take out selfishness.



When it comes to sex, **Catholics aren't selfish**. Sexuality is, again, not about pleasing ourselves. Sure, God made it pleasurable because he wanted us to “be fruitful and multiply,” and if it wasn't appealing, it probably wouldn't happenâ€”at least not enough.

We're already seeing societies who have **declining birthrates** and what a scary situation that is. Have you watched “The Handmaid's Tale”? That'll give you a taste of what society might be like if we are no longer fruitful.

Sexual selfishness=masturbation. Again, if you can please yourself, whenever and wherever you want, you **decrease the joy you experience** when enjoying the act together with your spouse, as it was meant to be. By avoiding self-pleasure, you also store up that sexual desire and energy that can be spent with your spouse instead of wasted on a selfish act because you want it “right now.” Anticipation is a joy in itself!

Cut masturbation out of your life and see if your sexual relations with your spouse don't improve.

Pornography is another example of selfish sexuality (and much more than that). You desire to feel pleasure *right now*, so you turn on the computer and off you go. Save it for your spouse.

Covenant Eyes is a great program that helps you put barriers in place to prevent you from this sexual temptation. *Please note the link to Covenant Eyes is an*

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Present Moments Are Guiding Stars [at A Moment From De Sales]

Our present moments are not moments to idly pass through, but they are sacred times to relish and appreciate. We call these moments special, because they are where our God is closest to us. Our God, “*I am who am,*” chooses the present moment to visit us. He appears like a personal star glimmering with something unique to show, and chooses this moment to display its contents.

God wants us to savor each present moment and discover its meaning. Since God made us to love, He uses these moments to communicate that love brings insights into who we are, and where He is leading us. At other times, it may be the light we need to expel the dark and shadowy clouds that overshadow us. Or God may simply want to affirm His love in a simple gentle way. Plainly stated, God uses present moments to send what we need for our journey!

Present moments are our endless opportunities given to recognize our gifts, discover our talents, understand our personalities, learn to live in our part of His kingdom, and more easily grasp what we can offer the world while here.

Through present moments God sends us the awareness, attentiveness, patience, and willingness to claim that certain something that is missing, and we need to find. Remember, the three wise men roamed a great distance before they discovered the purpose for their long quest.

Or it may be the needed vision to see the obvious because we are blinded by life’s distractions. Mathew, the future apostle who left tax collecting because Jesus called, knew in that present moment he had stumbled upon his star, and he rose to follow it.

What’s in our present moment right now? What are we being asked to become, to leave, to do, or to consider? Every present moment comes with a choice which we are asked to carefully ponder and not disregard. Of course, after thoughtful consideration, we may choose to do nothing right now. This is a choice. What we didn’t do is waste this present moment by choosing nothing. We chose, “not right now.” Whether it be personal or spiritual, growth happens

from mindful choices.

What the Lord wishes is that we don't avoid responsibility by choosing nothing. When we choose nothing, we tend to blame others for the choices we needed to make. And we dim the light of the star that is our present moment. Present moments nourish us to own and to shape our lives in the ways our heart and the Holy Spirit are leading us.

When we see every present moment as opportunity and gift from God, it's easier to trust in a loving God to lead us safely, securely, and steadily forward. For a loving Lord will only take us where we can be closer and nearer to His embrace.

Therefore, with each present moment we face, never fear the tug of the Lord. God is only leading the children He loves in the direction home where we can live with Him forever.

This contribution is available at <http://www.livetodaywell.org/blog/jng37jk7j3fd4lxtwpwhhzcyrnt74>
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Catholic Spiritual Bouquet Coloring Page [at The Essential Mother]

Once upon a time in a land far away, I thought that I could be anything I wanted to be and I imagined that I would end up in a prestigious art school. I knew that they could (and would) take my rough little attempts and refine them until I was a master.

Little did I know then that art school would never happen, and that I would not only end up with no training, no art degree, and no claim to the name "artist"... but that I would ultimately be okay with that and be satisfied with periodically drawing something to please my children.

I simply didn't know that God's dreams for me were bigger. I didn't know that success wasn't quite that linear and that He would draw a depth of talent out of me in other ways that looked sort of like art... but are less easily grasped and touched. And so... in gratitude that God saw fit to give me more than I even knew to ask for, I drew a little something to share with you...

So that you can bless others.

This contribution is available at <http://www.theessentialmother.com/blog-2/catholic-spiritual-bouquet-coloring-page>
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Adoption Education [at everyday Ann]

*I didn't give you the gift of life,
life gave me the gift of you.*

Last month we celebrated the boys' adoption day! The day is right up there with Christmas for them. We go all out and make sure to celebrate! A favorite of course is watching videos from our time in Ghana and when they first came home.

I can't believe it has been three years since we have brought our sons home. Seems like only yesterday and yet feels like we have been together forever. It's hard to remember and imagine our life without them!

They love hearing stories about our [travels to Ghana](#) (the craziest two weeks of my life), how they were longed for and prayed for and the excitement I had in finally getting to see their sweet beautiful smiles!!

Through these three years I have learned that there needs to be more education about adoption. It seems there is still a social stigma associated with it and unfortunately it is doing our children no good and causing more families to be reluctant to open their homes and hearts to the amazing gift.

The boys had only been home a month when we went to their first dentist appointment. The receptionist asked me for copies of our court paperwork of the adoption to prove that I was indeed their mother.

On our first bike ride with the boys, they were so excited to finally have a bicycle! From a car driving by a college aged man yells out his window in a sarcastic tone, "nice kids."

A girl at the park was talking to my boys about her stuffed animal and how she adopted it. Explaining to my sons that she knows what adoption is, "it's when nobody wants you."

At an event with our family this summer and the lady next to me began to engage in some small talk. Seeing I was pregnant said, “I bet you wish you knew you could get pregnant, because then you wouldn’t have had to spend all that money adopting.”

My sons were in earshot and my jaw dropped. A moment where I would have liked to respond with anger for the incredibly hurtful comment. I could feel the tension rising up inside of me as I froze for a second. No, I responded, because then I wouldn’t have my sons. I intentionally ended the small talk from there on out.

One of the areas of adoption I feel like I am never prepared for are the questions and comments we get from random strangers when we are out in public. I easily forget that we are a multi-racial family and “stick-out” from the rest, naturally drawing attention to ourselves. This was the biggest wake-up call for me as to how ill formed the general public is on the topic.

Adoption. It’s a word that we openly use and talk about. There is not a stigma associated with it in our house. It is beautiful, messy, joyful and heart wrenching. It is being the biggest advocate for your child. Being the arms they lean into to cry when all you can do is hold them when there are no simple answers to life’s toughest questions.

This contribution is available at <http://www.everydayann.com/adoption-education/>
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George Weigel - Yet Again [at Practical Distributism]

In a

[recent column](#)

the publicist George Weigel has weighed in on some of the dubious shenanigans surrounding the apostolic exhortation

Amoris Laetitia

, the document that, to say nothing further, by its lack of clarity has confused so many about Catholic moral doctrine on marriage and the reception of the sacraments. Weigel notes the recent statement by Pietro Cardinal Parolin, the Holy See's Secretary of State, that

Amoris Laetitia

constitutes a "paradigm shift" for Catholic thinking on marriage and the family.

The popular phrase "paradigm shift," as Weigel explains, comes from the philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn's 1962 book,

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

. Kuhn was describing the sometimes dramatic breaks that occur in the natural sciences, for example, the turn from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican view of the solar system. The term "paradigm shift" has been widely used in all sorts of contexts, even though Kuhn himself lamented its extension to areas outside of science.

So in describing

Amoris Laetitia

as a "paradigm shift," Cardinal Parolin was presumably claiming that the exhortation changes, in a sudden and radical way, Catholic doctrine on marriage, remarriage, adultery, reception of the Holy Eucharist, and so on. And Weigel

quite rightly criticizes this stance. He writes, "For the Catholic Church doesn't do 'paradigm shifts' in that sense of the term," i.e., "in the sense of a radical break with previous Catholic understandings." Weigel notes and deplors the incompatible interpretations and implementations which are being given to that document by various bishops and bishops' conferences around the world. "Because of that, the Catholic Church is beginning to resemble the Anglican Communion...."

On this matter I could not agree more with Weigel. But I am afraid that there is one big and glaring point which Weigel must come to terms with if he himself is not to be accused of inconsistency. This is the fact that since 1991 he has over and over again promoted St. John Paul II's encyclical,

Centesimus Annus

, as exactly akin to a paradigm shift in Catholic social teaching. In 1992 Weigel edited a book,

A New Worldly Order: John Paul II and Human Freedom

(Washington : Ethics and Public Policy Center), in which he described

Centesimus

as "a decisive break with the curious materialism that has characterized aspects of modern Catholic social teaching since Leo XIII" and as a "new departure in Catholic social thought." Many of the other contributors voiced similar opinions, Fr. Robert Sirico, for example, claiming that "

Centesimus Annus

represents the beginnings of a shift away from the static zero-sum economic world view that led the Church to be suspicious of capitalism." (More discussion of this with examples can be found

[here](#)

and

[here](#)

.)

In fact, just as some liberal Catholics have claimed the Second Vatican Council as a sort of "super-council" that could somehow negate all past Catholic teaching, conservative Catholics have frequently represented

Centesimus Annus

as a "super-social encyclical" that could somehow overturn all previous papal social teaching. But if the "Catholic Church doesn't do `paradigm shifts'", then this is clearly not possible in either case. If it were, if new papal or conciliar teaching could annul what had been taught authoritatively in the past, then no single point of Catholic doctrine could be trusted any more.

I call upon George Weigel, then, to honestly face up to this: If a paradigm shift is impossible in Catholic teaching, are you ready to repudiate your previous championing of the idea that

Centesimus

represents precisely such a shift? Or, if it does, how can you reject so confidently the idea that

Amoris Laetitia

is about to accomplish with regard to marriage what you claim was successfully accomplished in the area of social doctrine back in 1991? I am afraid, Mr. Weigel, that you can't have it both ways.

This contribution is available at <http://practicaldistributism.blogspot.com/2018/02/george-weigel-yet-again.html>

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The Praise of Impracticality [at Practical Distributism]

One of the main – and the oldest – charges raised against distributism is that it is “impractical”; at least as far as I know the case. In my personal experience I have encountered this obstacle hundreds and hundreds of times. In most cases, when I try to convince somebody to become a distributist (or at least start taking serious interest in the problem), it all works great, and everybody agrees with me, and just when I start to gain the upper hand and get “this close” to finishing the case, my interlocutor hides behind the great wall of “impracticality.” “How to do it? Did this Chesterton of yours ever say exactly how to deconcentrate property? Did he propose a bill to the parliament, did he form a political party (etc...). No? Oh, I see; because it cannot be done. It’s nice and all, but it cannot be done.” And usually just after that, the grand hit:

“Socialism in theory is nice too, but it just doesn’t work.”

And no; we are not going to talk about the “niceties” of socialism.

Now, obviously there is much more to it than just my personal experience, and even while reading a Polish edition of The Catholic Encyclopedia under the entry “Chesterton” I encountered an opinion that he “dreamt the utopian visions of pre-industrial ‘Merry England’” (or something to that point). Now, regardless of the authority of the speaker, such accusations have always struck me chiefly because of one thing: they say more about the accuser than the accused; substantially, they mean so much that if the people don’t have something done

for them

, they cannot believe it could be done; that instead of working things out for themselves, especially politically, they wait for “some great Minister” (in the very characteristic words of John Brown, for nothing changes, 18th century or 21st century) to come and deal with everything (preferably by magic). Now, of course I’m being a little mean, but there is quite a grain (or perhaps much more than just a grain) of truth in what I’m saying. And just as distributism is very much about doing things for yourself economically (like running your own farm,

or baking your own bread – from top to bottom), it can be said that it is also about doing things for yourself

politically

. And it is a fact worth remembering.

For my original hypothesis as to why Chesterton was rather reluctant in proposing conclusions and never formulated a clear political program (which cannot be denied) lies in this; that he simply didn't know how to do it. Now, from one point of view it might seem like an unconditional surrender for a social thinker to admit something like that – but not necessarily. There are ideas and there are actions; and however close might our ideas be to our actions, however practical, detailed and complex we make them, however much we'll strive to take care of everything and cover every possibility, and make everything

perfect

in advance – we won't do this. The gap between thinking and doing is, in a way, unbridgeable; and it was not an accident that the Scholastic saw it fit to warn us that it is not the practical reason, but the virtue of prudence that plays an instrumental role in the concrete of moral activity. In the end, you decide and make choices on the basis of what you're dealing with at the moment. It all depends on circumstances – and since you cannot know them in advance, there is not much point in speculating.

In other words, Chesterton didn't give his readers a political program because he was not a politician; it is really quite reasonable. How was he to know

what

would have worked when the Distributist Reform had been (hypothetically) launched? What would the parliamentary balance of power have looked like? Who would have been the prime minister? Who would have led the opposition? What would have been the possibilities for compromise? And would there even have been a parliament, a prime minister, the opposition, or compromise? And what if there had been the Bolshevist Revolution, the state had taken over everything, and Great Britain had become a machine-like dictatorship, hunting its opponents down as if they were mad wolves (which was actually a very real perspective at the time, at least just after the First World War)? Now, these are

the questions he might have asked himself – and anybody who even

thinks

of getting serious about politics should ask himself something exactly of this sort. Chesterton knew this, and he therefore knew what he wanted to accomplish – and when he should have stopped, especially in the uncertain and chaotic times he happened to live.

What I'm saying can very easily be exemplified. Surprising as it might seem, distributism at least once crystallized in an attempt at immediate political expression – and not in England. Adam Doboszyński (1904-1949), one of the leading (and most controversial) Polish nationalist thinkers in his book

The National Economy

(1934; in 1945 he re-wrote it in English as

The Economy of Charity

, excluding all of the most controversial fragments and thus making it much more universal) advocated a broad distributist-based program for major political change, encompassing all the fundamental elements of the proposition: deconcentration of property, proprietization of the dispossessed, checking the uncontrollable urbanization, restoration of the guilds, regulating the scope of market competition by law, strengthening the agriculture, protecting the weak (etc., etc.) Now, Doboszyński – a representative of the fascinating generation of Polish mid-war intelligentsia that had been largely wiped out during the war and immediately after (Doboszyński himself was killed by the communists on a false accusation of spying for the USA and Germany) – traveled a lot, and got to know Chesterton personally (he was never his friend, of course, but he actually talked and listened to him). I was thus most surprised when I learned that this sincere Chestertonian accused his mentor – well: pretty much of exactly the same thing; in 1947, two years before his death, in one of his articles Doboszyński wrote about GKC that “he bordered on genius [...] He lived in a small and skeptical era, and had never perhaps managed to surpass its limitations. He stood on the threshold, in all humility, as was fitting for a Catholic.” Now, the intention of this text, though not at all malicious, seems clear enough; Chesterton was great – but not as great as he could have been; he did much – but not as much as he could have done. Because of the “skepticism” he inherited after his times, he

couldn't find enough courage to say things straightforwardly, and give the English nation a definite project of action.

Now Doboszyński intended to invent a remedy for that (for his own nation of course, not for the English) – and indeed, he managed to do it; but what this remedy really was? How did Doboszyński propose to conduct such a major change? Obviously, the economic project is not enough; someone has to be there to

make the project happen

, in other words – in order to make the economic reform real, you need to pass a bill, and to pass a bill, you need the State. What was, then, the State of Adam Doboszyński?

“In the light of the experiences of the past 25 years it is difficult not to notice that the majority of Poles instinctively desires the Head of the Nation to be a man high above the general populace, shrouded in glory and legend [...]. Elected for life? As it has already been said, such solution fits our traditions and geopolitical circumstances alike; it also answers the demand for strengthening the authority of the head of the state [...]. The head of the state could nominate and dismiss the minister as he saw fit; nominate (for life) the head of the Supreme Court, the head of the High Command (in the times of war: the Commander-in-Chief), the chief of the National Institute for Economic Planning, the head of the radio broadcasting, and a part of the Senate...”

And so on, and so on (the quote is taken from his work

Regimen commixtum

, published in 1947). We really don't have to go into too much detail here, especially that the conclusion seems relatively natural; what Doboszyński aimed at – was a form of dictatorship pure and simple. He did what he could to deny this accusation, and he frequently tells his reader that the prerogatives of the head of the state should be strong but not too strong, that a strong government doesn't have to be dictatorial, and the like, but if we pass from words to things, the matter is quite evident. Now, it is not really the question of whether dictatorship as such is right or wrong; many people (among them Hilaire Belloc) have always considered it to be a normal form of rule, especially for abnormal

times. Whatever we think of it in the abstract, however, nowadays it is completely out of question; you cannot have a dictatorial rule, especially if you're a part of the economic "West" (the "Liberal International" as some say) – and no society in Europe would ever want it; and indeed, no society in Europe wants it, and none is trying to build it. Whether we like it or not, and even if we think them intellectually interesting, we cannot read Doboszyński's remarks otherwise than as historic curiosa. His solutions are practically void – and what is even worse (perhaps), they are also thought to be extremely controversial (at least by those who cannot remember that in 1947 the world was a different place) and for many might compromise the distributist cause; for the same reasons they think an ideal without concrete political articulation is an empty idea, if they see it associated (in the mind of one author and without a trace of logical necessity) with dictatorial government, they think it is dictatorial, and dismiss it at once.

With Chesterton, however, it's different; we can read him – or at least a major bulk of his texts – as if he was our contemporary; we can relate, ask questions, look for solutions. Why is that? Well – precisely because he decided to be "impractical"; because he refrained from forming a political plan, from finding immediate solutions and going too far into the wilderness of political practice. He knew it is never good to say too much at once, and to try to deal with everything at one blow; he knew that changing things takes time – and needs great caution and order, especially – intellectual order. Impracticality of distributism is the practicality of distributism; or, in other words, because distributism is not

immediately

practical it is

eternally

practical (pardon the pathos) – practical with the practicality of a definite historical and social ideal, valid for any day and age. Of course, there really is a need to formulate a working political project, and at least suggest some ways in which distributism could be established (and this is the grain of truth that can be found in the popular accusations), but it is only

the second step

on the road; firstly, we must understand what distributism is in itself; what sort

of thinking it implies; what attitude; what shape of imagination.

Anyway, the “practical” (let us say: immediately practical, though it’s a rather stiff term) solutions are not so common in politics as one might presume. It is easy to find a golden key that unlocks every door, a magical formula applicable to anything in any moment, to say “lower the taxes” any time there is an economic problem, or “more welfare” any time you find yourself in the middle of some social turmoil. But such solutions are not solutions; they are slogans. To have a solution, you need a precise knowledge of the law; you need to know how to write the law; you need to know how to make moves, and how to make them pass; you need to know who to talk to, and how to negotiate. It is not an easy matter, and Chesterton knew this well enough (he was a brilliant political journalist); and he sure taught me much about it. This is yet another reason for the permanent greatness of his political texts. They do not offer immediate solutions, but they

do

offer the instruments necessary to find such solutions – but, as I’ve just said – this is a different thing altogether. What we must do first, is to understand the ideal itself, assimilate it, ruminate it, and work it out for ourselves. Only when we do that it will be possible to move on, and to think of action as action.

And I’m quite sure there are plenty of people who will do true marvels when the time comes.

And if somebody still thinks that Chesterton is too impractical, and distributism is just a beautiful utopia, let him know this: it is

you

who can make this utopia happen; Chesterton understood that, and wrote specially for you (and no, I’m not kidding, at least not totally). At least give it a try; read, think, wonder, figure it out. If nothing happens, you will move on – but beware; there were many who read Chesterton and Belloc just to “try them.” And very few of them has remained quite the same.

Present company included.

[impracticality.html](#)

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Proxy Wars: Replacing Moral Belief with Ideology [at If I Might Interject]

Whenever America is involved in a moral debate, whether a national tragedy or change in leadership, her people get into a dispute about what we must do. The goal we should strive for is to consider what we want to change and what needs to be done to achieve it. But instead of doing this, our tendency is to pick the “sacred cow” of our preferred ideology and substitute it for this investigation. Then, if anyone should disagree with our solution, we accuse them of “not caring” and being willing to let the evil continue.

But this is unjust. The person who rejects an ideological solution might simply disagree with the means put forward and think another solution is superior. In that case, the infighting is counterproductive. It leads to nothing being done on the grounds that each thinks that the other solution has no value.

The other side of the coin is when a proposed solution is just, but threatens something else we support, the temptation is to downplay the value of that solution, claiming that it will not help us and might cause extra harm.

These two things combined make finding the truth difficult. A legitimate solution can be attacked by those who don't want to follow it, while supporters of an illegitimate solution can savage those with reasonable objections.

If we want to find a real solution, we have to be willing to set aside our ideological preferences and search for the truth about a situation. Once we find the truth, we can see what needs to be done in response. But if we start with our own preconceived notions on what must be done, more often than not our “one size fits all” solution won't fit at all.

As Catholics must be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the city of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), we have no excuse for adding to this confusion. We believe that God forbade bearing false witness. This means we cannot demonize those who have a different idea on how to best carry out Church teaching [†]. Because we believe we have a Church established by Our Lord, given His authority, and protected from teaching error, we must listen to what the Church teaches and base our political views on that teaching.

Tragically, we tend to label those teachings we dislike as “prudential judgment” as if a prohibition against doing X was a mere opinion and we were free to do X. This negates our witness that we have the truth for the whole world. If we denounce others for rejecting Church teaching that we happen to agree with while ignoring Church teaching we are at odds with, we are hypocrites. While the world may not be very good at picking up truth, it’s uncomfortably good in spotting when we don’t practice what we preach.

So, when there is a tragedy, when there is an election, when there is some sort of national crisis, Catholics need to stop confusing their ideological preferences with seeking out and doing what is right. We can’t replace that with scapegoating and assuming that whoever does not support our ideological ideas must be acting out of bad will. We need to be willing to sacrifice our political preferences in favor of doing what is right if our political preferences are wrong.

Unfortunately, it is easy to fall into the temptation of immediately thinking of the “other side” being guilty while never thinking that we might be guilty of the same fault. I’m not talking about moral relativism here. If something is objectively wrong, we have to reject that wrong even if it means incrementally taking it down when outright overturning is impossible. No, I’m talking about our tendency to sneer at the wrongdoing of others but ignoring our own failures and refusing to amend them. When we do this, we are no longer defending what is morally right. Instead, we are fighting a proxy war over ideology while pretending to be morally virtuous. And then we wonder why Christian belief is

rejected.

So let's stop using the moral teaching of the Church as a camouflage for our political battles. Let's make sure our faith shapes our ideology and not the reverse.

[†] Of course we must make sure that our “different idea” is not an attempt to evade Church teaching. God is not deceived.

This contribution is available at <http://www.ifimightinterject.com/2018/02/proxy-wars-replacing-moral-belief-with.html>
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Offering It Up [at From the Pulpit of my Life]

This was first published on my blog three years ago. With Lent approaching, I think it is a topic worth reviewing.



Early this morning, four o'clock, to be exact, I woke up with a raging headache. I made my way to the master bathroom to find some Excedrin, which I usually find effective for relieving my headache pain. But it would take time to bring relief. In the meantime, I went to the living room to sit quietly, because my head felt better in the horizontal than in a vertical position. In my misery I offered my pain to God as I had been taught to do as a school girl by my parents and Catholic school teachers, and have continued to practice from time to time throughout my life.

This spiritual practice of offering up one's sufferings means joining oneself to the redemptive sufferings of Jesus on the Cross as a sacrifice to benefit the salvation of oneself and for the salvation of others. It's true that Jesus suffered 2000 plus years ago, so perhaps it makes no sense to join one's own sufferings here and now with His of long ago. My father explained that in God's eye's everything is now. There is no past, present or future, because God lives outside of time where He always was, always will be, and always remains the same. Admittedly that is hard to understand, but as a child there was much more that I didn't understand than that I did understand. So, I trusted my parents and teachers to give me the truth. Now, of course, I get it.

Offering it up is Scriptural. Saint Paul alludes to the value of Christians joining their sufferings with those of Christ in Colossians 1:24, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is, the church,"

Being ill and suffering the pain of a migraine-type headache for about 12 hours

made me think of those who have chronic illnesses and those who live with persistent pain on a daily basis. I keep them in my daily prayers and ask God to give them relief. I don't know if something like that is in my future. Honestly, I hope not. But I pray that whatever afflictions lay ahead as I continue to grow old will give honor and glory to God and benefit the salvation of others.

Update: Recently, I came across this beautiful quotation from a holy saint.

“When we must do something we dislike, let us say to God, ‘My God I offer You this in honor of the moment when You died for me.’”

~ St. John Vianney

This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2018/02/offering-it-up/>
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Stations of the Cross with Saint Therese [at One Pearl]



The [Stations of the Cross](#) are a beautiful Lenten tradition. This devotion allows us to walk with Jesus towards calvary, reflecting on how we can “take up your cross and follow Him.”

During my time in religious life, we prayed the Stations of the Cross every Friday and I grew to love the practice of remembering Jesus’s ultimate sacrifice. However, I often found the meditations we used lacking. They left me feeling guilty and like a failure, rather than grateful for Jesus’s act of love. This, coupled with my growing obsession with Saint Therese of Lisieux, led to an incredible inspiration that has blessed me and many others. Combining scripture, the writings of Saint Therese, and my own prayer, the Holy Spirit helped me compose “The Little Way of the Cross.”

I am hoping to get these reflections on the Stations of the Cross printed into a booklet and will be selling them on my website. However, I am offering a FREE digital copy to my subscribers for a limited time. May you be blessed and drawn deeper into Christ’s sacrificial love and mercy!

This contribution is available at <http://www.onepearl316.com/stations-of-the-cross-with-saint-therese/>
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Yellow Tulips in Blue Pot [at Grace to Paint]



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

Once again, the pot is painted from reality; the tulips are from imagination.

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2018/02/16/yellow-tulips-blue-pot/>
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The Criteria For Judgment [at Creo en Dios!]

The University of St. Thomas Office for Spirituality posts daily reflections during Lent. I authored today's reflection, focusing on today's Gospel from Matthew. Here is what I wrote:

Today's Gospel is the familiar passage from Matthew's Gospel in which Jesus explains to his followers the basis upon which the Son of Man will separate those who stand before him on the day of judgment. The explanation given to those he will welcome into his kingdom is that when he was hunger they fed him; thirsty, they gave him something to drink; a stranger, they welcomed him; naked, they gave him clothing; sick, they took care of him; in prison, they visited him. Of course, his hearers remember no such good deeds done for Christ, prompting his further explanation: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

The theologian Michael Himes makes much of this passage, writing

"the criterion of judgment has nothing to do with any explicitly *religious* action. The criterion is not whether we were baptized, or prayed, or read Scripture, or received the Eucharist, or believed the correct doctrines, or belonged to the church. Not one of these – however important they may be – is raised as the principle of judgment. Only one criterion is given: Did you love your brothers and sister?"

Reflecting on this Gospel passage invites us to reflect on the question: Do we see the face of Christ when we look at our brothers and sisters? And I don't mean the brothers and sisters who look like us. Do we see the face of Christ...

...in the prisoner on death row

...in the homeless beggar on the street

...in those addicted to drugs or alcohol

...in those whose politics we find objectionable

...in those who don't share our religious beliefs

...in those whose sexual orientation we don't understand.

We want to be able to see the face of Christ in every single person we encounter because He is right there in every single person, however misleadingly he is disguised by characteristics that make him look different from us. And seeing others as Christ, we want to respond to them in love and compassion, doing what we can to meet their needs.

Lent offers us a wonderful opportunity to practice that recognition and response.

Note: You can read all of the posted reflections [here](#).

This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2018/02/19/the-criteria-for-judgment/>
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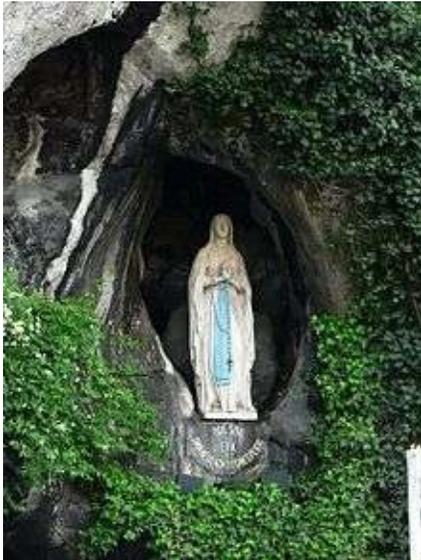
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Our Lady of Lourdes: Prayers, Saints, Popes and Miracles

Yesterday, in the Latin lung of the Catholic Church, we celebrated the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, and although this Sunday takes precedence over any particular feast or memorial, it is also the day in the liturgical calendar where we honor Our Lady of Lourdes.

Just like with Our Lady of Fatima, I know many Catholics that have a particular devotion to the Blessed Mother at this particular pilgrimage site. Over the past six years of writing on this blog, I have written on Our Lady of Lourdes a total of 7 times (including this one today).

Unfortunately, like many other Marian sites, except for Our Lady of Guadalupe, I have not personally been on pilgrimage, but many friends have been and often have brought me items back from these holy sites. One of my cherished items is a small glass container of holy water that was purchased at the Marian Pilgrimage Shrine of Lourdes in France. You can read about it below in the post titled, “Mondays with Mary” – Our Lady of Lourdes.



Our Lady of Lourdes

Since I have written many times in the past on Our Lady of Lourdes, for today's

“Mondays with Mary”, I am going to list the posts I have written on this widely devoted Marian pilgrimage site and title for Mary. Between prayers, lives of the saints, Papal activities, and a host of miracles, Lourdes remains to be one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in the Catholic Church, if not entire world.

Yesterday, [the 70th approved miracle was declared](#) valid, although countless pilgrims have claimed miracles not officially reported or approved.

If you haven't read these posts in the past or you are new to my website/blog, I hope you will read these posts to give yourself a better understanding of Our Lady of Lourdes and the importance this shrine plays in the Catholic Church today –

1. [“Mondays with Mary” – Our Lady of Lourdes](#)
2. [“Mondays with Mary” – Pope Benedict XVI on the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes](#)
3. [“Mondays with Mary” – Saint Bernadette and Our Lady of Lourdes](#)
4. [Our Lady of Lourdes](#)
5. [“Mondays with Mary” – The Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes by Pope St. John Paul II](#)
6. [“Mondays with Mary” – Prayers to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima](#)

Our Lady of Lourdes...Pray for Us

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2018/02/12/mondays-with-mary-our-lady-of-lourdes-prayers-saints-popes-and-miracles/>

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