



A journal for restless minds

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Ordained to service

DEACON'S DINER

Food for a restless mind

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

What Love Is This

Dining on nothing but appetizers

What we call love seldom plays a happy song, for in truth we want little more than the smallest taste of it; an appetizer: nothing more.

I wonder at the question: why do so many choose to dine on appetizers and not enjoy the meal. What love is this that seeks the bed but all too soon tires of it? What love is this that tastes only what sits sweet and pleasant upon the tongue? What love is this that hears a single tune and cares for nothing more? What love is this that sees and sees more than enough?

How jaded we have become to any thoughts of love. Listen to someone who has no idea of what love is: *"I'm 35; I've never been married. My parents have both been married three times, so I no longer believe in the fairy tale. In my mind it's so*

great, whatever, but statistically I can't shake the facts. I'm a romantic person but I'm a realist. So I'm not like, 'We did it! Now we are going to be together forever!' I think there's a chance we'll be together for a long time—or not. Sometimes I'm like, 'Yeah we're going to be together!' And sometimes I'm like, "This is doomed." Appetizers. Nothing of any substance to be consumed. What love is this?



We have bought into living on snack food because it is quick and easy. When we tire of potato chips, we pick up a bag of Doritos. When they grow stale we settle for corn chips.

And when we run out of corn chips we look for popcorn beneath the seat cushions. What love is this?

Love cannot be taken, only given. Love is never quick or easy. Perhaps that is why we have little patience for it. We want what we want and we want it now! Those unwilling to spend the time and effort to know love will neither know it nor have it. They will never be filled or satisfied for they do not know what love is.

A Ten O'clock Scholar

No time for scholarship

University comes from the Latin *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* which loosely describes a community of teachers and scholars. Central to its purpose, the university was instituted with a sharp focus on academia, higher education and scholarship requiring students to engage in serious study and abstract thought.

While few universities today acknowledge their unmistakable Catholic roots, the truth is the earliest universities were developed under the aegis of the Roman Catholic Church by papal bull dating as far back as the 6th century and for centuries were taught by monks and nuns.

By the twelfth century with the rediscovery of works by Aristotle, universities had become centers of scholasticism where teachers focused on applying Aristotelian logic and thoughts about natural processes to biblical passages, while attempting to prove the viability of those passages through reason. Astonishing as this may sound to the modern university attendee, this was precisely the expectation of the students of the time.

The acquisition of knowledge from the masters was what drove students to the universities. In short, student came to learn from scholars, teachers who had studied the philosophies of the Greeks, Aristotle and Pla-

to, or the theology and metaphysics of saints such as Augustine and Aquinas. Students also came to study under the masters of mathematics and science, law and business.

Sadly, what once drove students toward the university—the study and acquisition of knowledge—no longer compels them to attend. What purpose is neither clear nor understood.



Students no longer attend universities to learn, to discuss or to debate weighty issues. To do so runs the risk of offending another's delicate sensibilities. Rather than acquiring an education, students today are focused on building safe spaces and on tackling such manufactured and imagined problems as engagement, diversity, and inclusion.

A recent blog post suggests:

"Today, universities all across the nation are tackling problems of engagement, diversity, and inclusion (or a lack thereof). As much as we wish that those

issues didn't exist, they do. And sweeping them under the rug will not solve anything. But you know what will solve them? Engaging faculty, professors, students, and alumni to collaborate and bring new ideas into the mix."

This same post makes note of how Harvard was recently confronted by a student group called Reclaim Harvard Law who demanded that the official school shield be changed to be more inclusive and less racially offensive. Why? Because it displayed the crest of a plantation owner and slave trader. One can only wonder as to the pertinence of such a fact to the actual study of the law.

The writer further suggests that universities should establish a "Brave Space," similar to a "Safe Space" but differing in that participants "should be comfortable in opening up and sharing their opinions without fear of judgment. ... everyone should be encouraged to speak their truth, even if it is different than someone else's."¹

Herein rests the lie upon which the modern university must contend: the idea that truth is relative, that your truth may differ from mine and yet inexplicably both remain true. The fallacy of relative truth should be obvious but apparently it fails to find fault within academia, both with faculty and student. Should I claim as true that $1 + 1 = 2$ and you claim that $1 + 1 = 3$, the truth must rest with either one or neither of us. We both cannot simultaneously possess the truth.

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Yet, that is precisely the philosophical casuistry that has been and continues to be impressed upon far too many impressionable young minds in attendance at our colleges and universities. The state of higher education is dire and sinking ever faster into the mire and muck of feel good relativism, where the core curriculum has turned away from a search for objective truth toward bland mediocrity and the salving of emotional scar tissue. If it wasn't so ridiculous it would most assuredly be laughable.

What academia simply cannot stomach is the insistence by those—primarily the Catholic Church—who dogmatically *“claim that we can have knowledge, real knowledge, even certain knowledge, and not just opinion or belief, about objective reality—about any objective reality, much less about God....”*

“If all we know are our own concepts, we are like prisoners in a cave staring at images on the wall. (Does that sound familiar?) Or like people who watch only TV and media, not the real world. (Does that sound eerily familiar?) And even though we do not usually believe that about the things our senses perceive, if we believe that about the things our mind believes, including religion, then all we can do is to believe in ourselves, hope in ourselves, love ourselves, pray to ourselves, obey ourselves, and trust ourselves for our own salvation. That is a perfect definition of the philosophy of Hell.

“Philosophy is important because a really bad philosophy, like subjectivism, can endanger our salvation.”²

What is especially dangerous to the minds yet fully formed and malleable is how prevalent philosophies such as subjectivism and relativism have become, not only inside the ivy-covered walls of the university but throughout our entire society and culture.

Here is what one recent horoscope purported to predict: *“You understand that your truth is not the only truth, and you respect the rights of others.”³* One can readily discern what those who have a mind to believe such astrological gibberish must themselves believe. What the writer would have you believe is that whatever you and others believe to be true (whether true or not) is somehow a right which must be respected.

Poppycock and balderdash!

While anyone may believe or think whatever they may, there is no *right* to claim it to be true. A lie is still a lie, still a falsehood no matter how many times or how stridently one claims it to be true.

While the price of higher education has escalated well beyond affordability, the quality of the product delivered has declined precipitously even as the knowledge imparted has become increasingly suspect.

Universities are no longer the wellsprings of grand and glorious intellectual pursuits to which they were once so dedicated. The search for truth—that is objective truth and objective reality—have been unceremoniously discarded, replaced by much more important studies such as basket

weaving, tree hugging, gender identification, alternative lifestyles, ethnic culture, and social reorientation.

Almost always described as studies, these so-called courses offer nothing pursuant to objective truth or reality but are seldom more than the subjective beliefs of someone with an emotion-laden agenda and a need to lay guilt-trips on unsuspecting, naïve young minds. In truth they are nothing more than propaganda disguised as truth and indoctrination served up as education.

While admittedly not all colleges and universities have fallen sway to the constant secular and political pressures; more have acquiesced to the false philosophies of subjectivism and relativism than have resisted.

Sadly, far too many recognizably Catholic Universities have bent and folded under the relentless pressures of modern social and political will. Well-known and respected Catholic institutions have been far from immune to the demands for engagement, diversity, and inclusion.

It is especially difficult to resist whenever an institution is dependent upon public largesse for significant portions of their ongoing funding needs. Our colleges and universities would do well to take a lesson, a lesson that states *“when you lie down with dogs, you will get up with fleas.”*

1. Author Unknown, *Uncovering University Diversity and Inclusion Issues Before They Escalate*, July 20, 2016, popinnow.com.

2. Peter Kreeft, *Practical Theology: Spiritual Direction From St. Thomas Aquinas*.

3. Holiday Mathis, *Horoscope: Gemini*, Reno Gazette Journal, p 5C, August 16, 2016.

The Narrow Gate

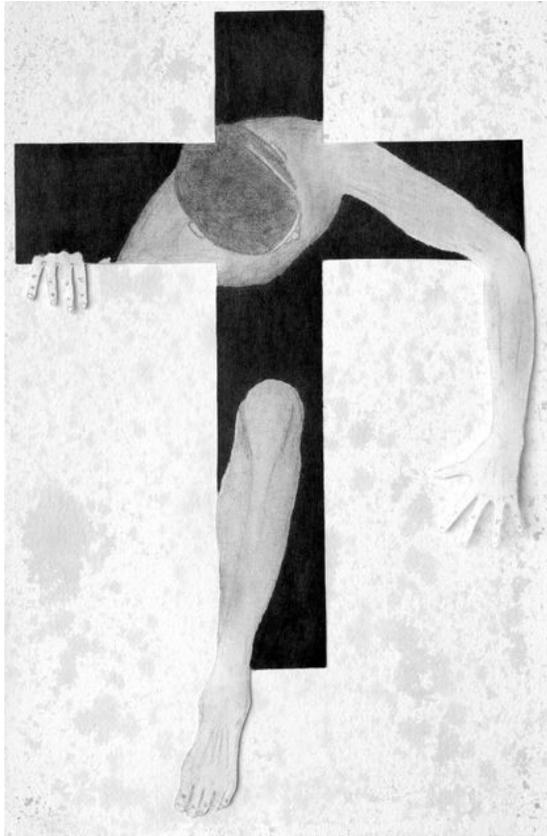
It's your choice: all or nothing

C. S. Lewis wrote in the preface to *The Great Divorce*, his classic allegorical tale of a bus ride from hell to heaven, *"I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. A sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply going on. Evil can be undone, but it cannot 'develop' into good. Time does not heal it. The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, 'with backward mutters of dissevering power'—or else not. It is still 'either-or'. If we insist on keeping Hell (or even Earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell."*¹

Lewis describes hell (and Purgatory) as a vast grey town on an endless featureless plain, largely unoccupied because the residents are so quarrelsome that as soon as they settle into a place, they immediately quarrel with their neighbor and move on to another street and then to another and another and another.

What Lewis describes may well be hell or it may not. Popular images of hell often picture it as eternal fire, while the Bible speaks of hell as *"experiencing God's wrath"*, as *"being outside"* the wedding, as *"mourning and weeping and grinding of teeth,"* as being thrown into *"Gehenna"* (a garbage dump outside Jerusalem,) as being eaten by worms, as fire, as missing out

on the banquet, as being outside the kingdom, as living inside a bitter and warped heart, and as missing out on life.



Personally, I tend to favor hell as *"nothingness."* In this perhaps I find myself in rather peculiar agreement with Atheists, for in their denial of God's existence along with their denial of a heaven or any spiritual afterlife, the Atheist sees death as finality, as *nothing* more, and that seems to me to be the very definition of hell itself.

Many have asked: How could God, who is all good and all love, punish anyone by sending them to hell for all eternity? The answer is God does not; we send ourselves to hell. Jesus always speaks of God, our heavenly Father as the giver of life, never death. Death,

evil, sin, and hell originate from elsewhere. God neither creates hell nor sends souls to hell—we do.

God creates life and loves life into existence. It is his gift, given when we are first created. Any gift, freely given, places a debt upon the receiver; a debt which must either be repaid or the gift refused. Our debt to God differs not from any other debt.

In a letter written by Anselm of Canterbury, often called the *"Father of Scholasticism"* he says:

"If anyone asks the price that must be paid, the answer is: The One who wishes to bestow a kingdom in heaven has no need of earthly payment. No one can give God anything he does not possess, because everything belongs to him.

"Yet he does not give such a precious gift entirely gratis, for he will not give it to anyone who lacks love. After all, people do not give away what they hold dear to those without appreciation.

"So since God has no need of your possessions but must not bestow such a precious gift on anyone who disdains to value it, love is the one thing he asks for; without this he cannot give it.

*"Give love, then, and receive the kingdom: love and it is yours."*²

If you believe that you can achieve for yourself all that God has offered as a gift, then you are refusing to accept his gift and telling God you owe him nothing. And *"nothing"* is precisely what you will discover at the end; for you will have chosen to send yourself

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into nothingness, into hell.

Father John Kavanaugh once wrote that *“Most young people are said to believe in a hell where nobody goes. Many others, perhaps adults, think there is a hell largely populated by enemies. And among the old are believers who nervously wonder if hell might be populated by the likes of themselves. They, like St. Paul at some moments, consider the question of their salvation ‘in fear and trembling.’”*³

Perhaps they may have good reason to tremble in fear. When Jesus was asked if only a few people would be saved, he answered, *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.”*⁴

Like many I imagine, the first image that comes to mind is of a small sliver of a gate or door, something so small that one would have to enter by turning sideways and seriously sucking it in in order to make it through to the other side. That image doesn't quite seem to fit with what Jesus was saying.

It was when I came across two pictures with an opening in the shape of a cross; in one a woman carrying two large shopping bags stood before the narrow gate and in the other a woman stood before it with her arms empty and outstretched. The juxtaposition of the two images was all that was necessary to gain greater understanding into what Jesus was telling us.

The narrow cross-shaped gate is the size of a person and that person is Jesus Christ. Only by entering through

the cross of Jesus can we enter into the heavenly kingdom.

Another thought that comes to mind, one that is equally if not perhaps more illuminating is this:

If you stand before the narrow cross-shaped gate with arms either at your side—whether empty or not—or folded across your chest you will find it quite impossible to traverse to the other side. The gate is simply too narrow.

This posture represents those who have lived life dependent on no one but themselves, who have refused God's forgiving love, or who have refused to pick up and carry their cross. They stand there with their chests puffed out, full of pride at their own achievements. Their arms either by their side or across their chests in smug defiance, steadfast in their refusal to admit that they owe God anything at all.

For those who have recognized their absolute dependence on God's mercy, forgiveness and grace; those who have accepted the crosses they have been given and carried them without complaint, they know the way through the narrow gate.

They know to stand before the gate with arms held wide in humble supplication acknowledging with gratitude the salvific sacrifice made by God's only son, Jesus Christ. They know that standing with arm outstretched in imitation of Christ's sacrifice that they can walk without difficulty through the narrow gate and enter the kingdom of God.

Anselm further writes:
“Love God more than yourself, then, and already you will begin to have what you desire to possess fully in heaven.”

“But you cannot have this perfect love unless you empty your heart of every other love. That is why those who fill their hearts with love of God and neighbor desire nothing but the will of God or that of some fellow human being—provided this is not contrary to God.”

“That is why they devote themselves to prayer, spiritual conversations, and reflection, for it is a joy to them to long for God and to speak, hear, and think about him whom they dearly love.”

“Hence too their contempt for riches, power, pleasure, honor, and praise. Those who love these things frequently offend against God and their neighbor.”

Accept the gift of God's forgiving love and the spirit of Christ will abide in you and you will be his beloved. Acknowledge that only with God's forgiving love and grace can you hope to see him face to face. Amen.



Homily for

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C

Isaiah 66:18-21

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

Luke 13:22-30

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, June 2, 2009, HarperCollins e-books; Revised ed. edition.

2. Anselm of Canterbury, *Letter 112: Opera omnia III*, 244-246, ed. Edith Barnecut.

3. John Kavanaugh, SJ, *The Word Engaged: Consoling Hope*, The Sunday Website of Saint Louis University, August 21, 2016..

4. Lk 13:24.

Called To A Life

Ordained to service

Ask any Catholic to list the sacraments and most would know that there are seven and would be able to list most if not all of the seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick.

The first three sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion—are referred to as the Sacraments of Initiation by which one becomes a full member in the body of Christ and his Church. While not considered a Sacrament of Initiation, Confession normally precedes reception of First Holy Communion.

The sacrament of Anointing of the sick can be received by any Catholic, usually under threat of a serious medical condition or death. The two remaining sacraments—Marriage and Holy Orders differ from the other sacraments by virtue of their restrictive covenants—not every Catholic can be validly and licitly married in the Catholic Church and only men can receive Holy Orders.

It is to the last—the Sacrament of Holy Orders—which this essay will attempt to address for it is the rarest of the sacraments and thus the least experienced or understood. I suggest that it is the rarest only quantitatively because it has by far the fewest participants.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is received by men at ordination, who are called to a life of service to serve God, the Church, and his fellow man. While there is one sacrament within it there are three degrees: Deacon, Priest, and Bishop. These degrees are commonly described in a hierarchical manner with the Deacon at the lowest level, the Priest above the Deacon, and the Bishop at the highest level.



While this is in many ways correct, it offers but a single dimensional view of the ordained ministry and often results in confusion and misunderstandings. Although not perfectly analogous, one might gain a better understanding of Holy Orders by considering a simple cup of coffee.

Consider the ingredients necessary: water, coffee grounds, sugar, and cream. Water represents mankind, the coffee grounds represents ordination to the diaconate, sugar represents ordination to the priesthood, and cream represents ordination to the episcopacy.

To make coffee only the first two ingredients are required. Brewing coffee grounds with water results in

an new, indivisible liquid we call coffee. Once brewed you cannot unbrew it so as to return it to its original two ingredients. The same can be said for diaconal ordination. The man that was is now a new man, with an indelible mark on his soul. It cannot be removed.

Add a spoonful of sugar and it dissolves, melting into the coffee. The coffee has been changed and its ingredients are permanently bonded. It is still coffee but now more than it was before. This is similar to what occurs at the ordination of a priest. Previously ordained to the diaconate, a priest, like the coffee with sugar is still coffee, is still a deacon, only more, different, changed, with another indelible mark on his soul that cannot be removed.

Not to belabor the point for I believe it should be obvious where I am going with this analogy: Add cream and once again you still have coffee but it is once again changed yet equally inseparable into the its original ingredients. Likewise, a bishop becomes a new person, yet remains a deacon and a priest.

Five years ago next month eight men from the Diocese of Reno were ordained to the *permanent* diaconate. A few months ago two men from the Diocese of Reno, currently attending seminary were ordained to the *transitional* diaconate. All ten men were ordained Deacon; all ten received the Sacrament of Holy Orders; all ten are

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now and will forever be members of the hierarchy of Clergy in the Roman Catholic Church.

The differences that distinguish *transitional* from *permanent* are largely superficial and in the minds of many subject to misunderstanding. A *transitional* deacon at some future date will most likely be ordained to the priesthood while a *permanent* deacon will not. A *permanent* deacon may be married while a *transitional* deacon must be unmarried and celibate. A *permanent* deacon who is married prior to ordination cannot remarry should his spouse die subsequent to his ordination. A single person may be ordained as a *permanent* deacon but cannot marry subsequent to ordination.

With either form, *transitional* or *permanent*, ordination to the diaconate is permanent, placing an indelible mark on the soul which once received can never be wiped away. Once a deacon, always a deacon.

As an ordained minister deacons are members of the clergy. Deacons are united to the bishop in service. At ordination they promise to obey the bishop and his successors. They assist the bishop and priests in celebrating the sacraments, as well as other duties and ministries. Deacons are granted faculties by the bishop to celebrate baptisms, marriages, and funerals but cannot consecrate the Eucharist, hear confessions, or anoint the sick. The deacon is an ordinary minister of Holy communion and the proclaimer the Gospel.

Priests are co-workers with the bishops. They assist and obey the orders of the bishop, care for the communities of the faithful, administer the sacraments (priests can confirm only with permission of the bishop and they cannot ordain.) The highest act of the office of the priesthood is the celebration of divine worship, the Mass.

The bishop is the highest degree of ordination. The Pope selects priests who have been recommended for ordination to the episcopacy and through his ordination the bishop receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. He is Christ's representative and given the power to sanctify, teach and to lead. He becomes a member of the college of bishops. Bishops have the power to ordain.

Archbishops, Cardinals, and the Pope are conferred or elected and are not additional degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. What is important to remember, however, is that they remain ordained: deacon, priest, and bishop, indelibly marked by virtue of their ordinations to the diaconate, priesthood, and episcopacy.

An archbishop is a bishop who is assigned to a province of bishops.

A priest can be appointed a Cardinal, but current Canon Law stipulates that any priest must first receive episcopal consecration before their appointment. There are three orders of Cardinals: Cardinal Bishops, Cardinal Priests, and Cardinal Deacons. These should not be and are not degrees of Holy Orders.

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

For those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.



BOOKS

Disorientation: How to Go to College Without Losing Your Mind
Edited by John Zmirak
Ascension Press
December 21, 2010, 188 pages.

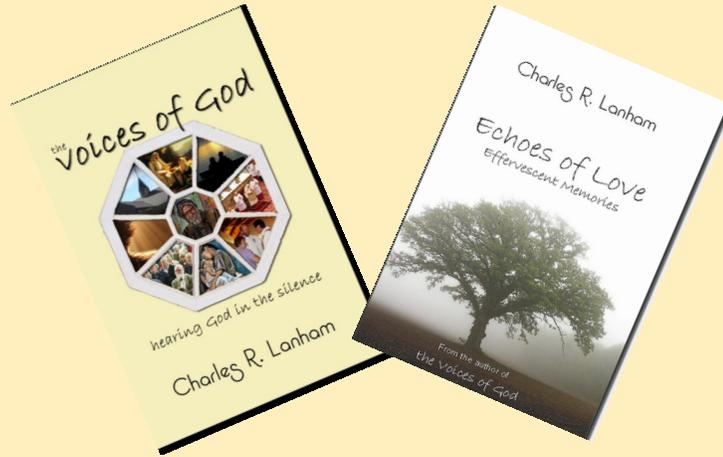
Old Errors and New Labels
Fulton J. Sheen
Alba House
(1931) May 30, 2007, 222 pages.

City Of God
Saint Augustine
Doubleday
February 1958, 551 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things
Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

Touchstone
A Journal of Mere Christianity
Editor: James M. Kushiner
Bi-Monthly.
www.touchstonemag.com



Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

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<http://deaconscorner.org>.

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