

A journal for restless minds

GOD DESCENDS TO MAN

So man can ascend to Him

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD

From the mouths of angels

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To be young and Catholic

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

It is in giving that we receive

ET QUOD HOC ...

This and that ...

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.

God Descends To Man

So man can ascend to God

It is difficult to imagine a time without Christmas and yet we know once upon a time the world knew nothing of him, for far more of history has gone before than after. But there came a night when God condescended to become man, so that we might ascend to Him. How fortunate then are we to know and to have received the gift of Jesus, that most precious of gifts, God's only Son.

We live each year anew, enjoying the gifts of life and love and so much more, yet how seldom do we pause to kneel in gratitude for all we have and have received? Tradition says there will be mistletoe and presents beneath a tree, song and laughter with family and friends, cards and letters, phone calls and packages, cold mornings and snow, sleigh bells and warm fires, and stockings hung by the chimney with care. Memories of bright shiny packages, each tied with a

bow, anticipating, wondering, what would they bestow. All this is good yet how we forget, without Jesus on Christmas, no Christmas we'd get.

Each day is a new day, a pearl of great price; do we pause, do we pray, do we ever think twice, of the one gift he sent us, so precious and small, the greatest gift ever given for all.

There is not a gift greater than his, and yet we are wanting more every year, so this year for Christmas let us pause and reflect on all that we have and never forget how much we are loved by the One who is Love, who came down from heaven on a night long ago to bring joy, hope, and Christmas for his children below.

May the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with each and every one of you this Christmas and may Almighty God descend upon you and remain with you forever. Merry Christmas, Everyone.

Deacon Chuck



Angels We Have Heard

From the mouths of angels

We are familiar with the narrative from Luke of the nativity, the birth of Jesus and how circumstances resulted in him being wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. We are also familiar with the shepherds to whom an angel of the Lord appeared proclaiming the good news that a savior had been born who is Christ and Lord. And then suddenly a multitude of heavenly host appeared with the angel praising God.

Throughout ancient history, there are many instances of angels appearing, messengers of God, such as to Mary announcing to her that she was to be the mother of the Son of God. We know that God created angels but we know little else concerning them. So in order to find out more about angels, what better than to turn to a few of the smallest angels for some answers.

Why do angels wear halos?

Angel Olive, age 6: Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it.

How are angels created?

Angel Matthew, age 6: It's not easy to become an angel! First, you die. Then you go to Heaven, and then there's still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes.

Do Angels work?

Angel Mitchell, age 7: Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else.

Is that what guardian angels do?

Angel Henry, age 8: My guardian angel helps me with math, but he's not much good for science.



What do angels eat?

Angel Jack, age 6: Angels don't eat, but they drink milk from Holy Cows!!!

Do angels talk?

Angel Daniel, age 9: Angels talk all the way while they're flying you up to heaven. The main subject is where you went wrong before you got dead.

Do angels ever get angry?

Angel Reagan, age 10: When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to ten. And when he lets out

his breath again, somewhere there's a tornado.

Are angels busy all the time or do they ever get time off?

Angel Sara, age 6: Angels have a lot to do and they keep very busy. If you lose a tooth, an angel comes in through your window and leaves money under your pillow. Then when it gets cold, angels go south for the winter.

Where do angels live?

Angel Jared, age 8: Angels live in cloud houses made by God and his Son, who's a very good carpenter.

Are there boy and girl angels?

Angel Antonio, age 9: All angels are girls because they gotta wear dresses and boys didn't go for it.

Have you ever met or seen an angel?

Angel Ashley, age 9: My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big headstart on helping me while she was still down here on earth.

Do angels watch over animals?

Angel Vicki, age 8: Some of the angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the child get over it.

What don't you understand about angels?

Angel Sarah, age 7: What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them.

Your Journey Of Faith

To be young and Catholic

Christmas awakens the somnolent soul from dreams of hope for a re-surgent faith. While the world seems to endlessly wallow in manmade quagmires of hatred and violence, death and despair, materialism and secularism, hope grows at times in the most unlikely of places.

Recently, in the aftermath of a shooting of a 14-year old knife-wielding high school student, another student from the same high school spoke to fellow students in his AP English class. Here is a portion of his speech:

"...our generation is stagnant, we're attracted to selling ourselves short and lowballing our goals like metal to a magnet. We are OK with kind of wanting to succeed, kind of putting in effort, kind of caring for each other, kind of being nice and, from my understanding, this means you will kind of live.

Have we really become this society? This bitter, rude, illogical generation that takes the definition of indecency to a new level. Each battle has its own devils but in our situation are we the serpent that feeds Adam and Eve from the tree? We must address this issue not from the root but from the seed, we were raised this way, watching shows where the cue to laugh was at an insult. ...

I myself am guilty, not for taking these actions but being a bystander, if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem. I task the bystanders to be-

come involved, to put an end to this virus. We will create a generation where there is no tolerance for such words. There are some who are bulletproof to such terms, but there are those who feel that at school and online it is hunting season and they are birds. ... To those birds, do not go gentle into that good night, for you only need to fly higher, elevate your mind to where barrages of insulting bullets do not dare climb. To the shooter of insults, the killer of dreams, the murderer of self-esteem, are you paid to be rude? Do you feel dominant taking these inhuman, primitive actions? It is 2016 and the idea of dominance is obsolete, that ideology is no more useful than flies on meat. We are not paid to be rude so we might as well be nice. It is easier to respect and have manners in life.

JOURNEY OF Faith

*...we must begin with breeding positivity instead of making matters worse. When you join this battle 'do not fear, for I am with you' (Isaiah 41:10). In order to create a kind positive life we must learn to be kind and positive towards each other."*¹

An article written for the National Catholic Register points to a growing number of college students whose journey of faith has continued despite the often anti-Christian secular environment. One young woman, Aurora Griffin, "was on a mission — a Catholic mission — while at Harvard University.

The author of the recently released *How I Stayed Catholic at Harvard* was a Rhodes Scholar and a magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the Ivy League. During her time at Harvard, she wrote for *The Harvard Crimson*, served as president of the Catholic Student Association and took the lead in having the 'black mass' canceled on campus. "For all of us, there are moments that come to define who we are in the public eye. Fighting the black mass was one of these for me, as was writing a pro-life op-ed in *The Harvard Crimson*."

Another young woman, Barbara Soares, who earned her undergraduate and master's degrees from Montclair University and her doctorate from Columbia University offered: "I've been a Catholic science major in secular institutions for most of my life, and I've had my share of challenges as both a student and researcher. Still, each challenge gave me the opportunity to attain a deeper understanding of my faith and, as such, ultimately made me a stronger defender of my faith."

She offers this advice to Catholic students in challenging environments: "Keep growing. Take 10-15 minutes a day for a podcast, homily transcript or YouTube video to learn the rich history and vibrant life of the faith you profess. The more you know, the stronger your faith will grow in even the most secular environment. Don't ever stop learning about your faith."²

1. Victor Arriaga Medina, *Choose Kind*, Reno Gazette Journal, Dec. 11, 2016, 1E..

2. Kathryn Minaliak, *To be Catholic at College: Advice for Sticking to the Faith in a Secular Environment*, National Catholic Register, Dec. 11, 2016, 7..

Celebrating Christmas

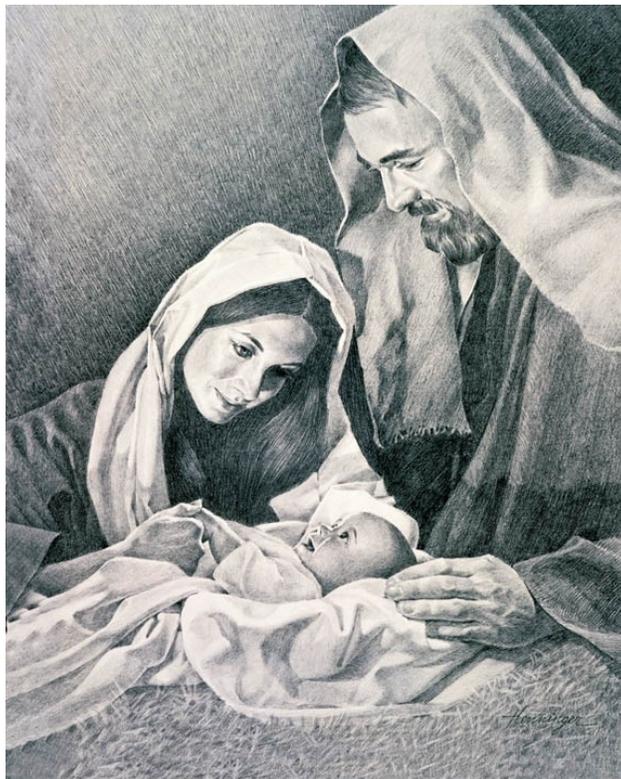
It is in giving that we receive

The good news: it is Christmas. The bad news: it is Xmas. Attempts to take Christ out of Christmas is nothing new; such animus toward the celebration of the birth of Jesus is almost as old as Christianity itself.

The celebration of the birth of Christ began in the early fourth century. It wasn't until the year 500 that the Catholic Church made Christmas a special feast. The sixth century saw the commemoration of the birth of Jesus spread throughout Europe; and by the year 600, Augustine of Canterbury baptized ten thousand converts on that holy day. For almost a millennium, Christmas was a special feast for the poor, the common people, the little ones.

The political, national, and ecclesiastical wars of the sixteenth century led to the disappearance of Christmas in many places throughout Christian Europe. The Puritans condemned and abolished Christmas as something pagan and idolatrous. They even tried to make observing it a sin. In 1642 services were banned. No decorations were allowed. Two years later Christmas was declared a time of fast and penance. In 1647 Oliver Cromwell and a Puritan Parliament totally banned Christmas. Markets were ordered to stay open. Longer work hours were enforced. The results were riots; some ten-thousand people demonstrated in Kent, England.

The political and business classes, seeing opportunities to calm the masses and further line their pockets, compromised by allowing for a secular celebration, not wanting to appear like Scrooge. But even in the 1700s, when Charles Wesley was penning "*Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,*" the educated elite and upper classes continued to push the mantra: "*There is no place for Christmas in the modern world.*"



In America, Christmas was outlawed in New England until 1850. People were forced to work on Christmas and children were required to attend school.

The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Oliver Cromwell in England. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone

exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. Tellingly, Congress was in session on December 25, 1789, the first Christmas under America's new constitution. Christmas wasn't declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870.

Yet despite the near constant antipathy toward celebrating the true meaning of Christmas, the holiday has endured.

While there are those for whom Christmas has lost any and all sense of the sacred; no more is it a celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, but just another opportunity to overindulge in materialistic ritual and unbridled consumerism.

The true meaning of Christmas remains deeply engrained in the hearts of those who know and love God. There is a mystery to Christmas which cannot be so easily or readily dismissed. There is a grandeur and a majesty to the mystery of God incarnate, the Word become flesh

which, to those who believe, still cause the knee to bend in grateful awe and awesome wonder.

Christmas is more than bright lights, mistletoe, sleigh bells and presents under the tree. Christmas is special because it is the birthday of the Lord God who came to save the world from its foolishness and folly.

There is something magical about Christmas for it has the power to

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change hearts, to redeem souls that are lost, and to bring joy and peace where only darkness and hatred exist.

There is a story, first published as a book on December 25, 1956 by Theodor “Dr. Seuss” Geisel, and later adapted as a Christmas animated special in 1966. The book of course is “*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*” which has become an annual Christmas classic. It tells of the Grinch, a bitter, grouchy, cave-dwelling creature with a heart “*two sizes too small*” who lives on snowy Mount Crumpit, a steep high mountain just north of the town of Whoville, home of the merry and warmhearted Whos. Alone in his cave, with only his dog Max, the Grinch hears the noisy Christmas festivities taking place in Whoville. Annoyed, he decides to stop Christmas from coming by stealing all their presents, trees, and food for their Christmas feast. Disguised as Santa Claus he forces Max, disguised as a reindeer, to pull a sleigh to Whoville where he slides down the chimneys and steals all the Whos’ Christmas presents, trees, and food. His burglary is interrupted by a little girl but he concocts a lie and escapes to the top of Mount Crumpit.

As dawn breaks he expects to hear nothing but sorrowful cries but instead hears the Whos singing joyous Christmas songs instead. He puzzles for a moment until it dawns on him that “*maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more*” than presents and feasting. The Grinch’s shrunken heart suddenly grows three sizes and he returns all he has stolen and is warmly invited to enjoy in the Whos’ feast.

The story criticizes the commercialization of Christmas although it fails to ascribe to it its religious meaning. It never mentions Jesus. Nevertheless, it shows that Christmas isn’t about receiving presents but perhaps a little bit more than that.

There are all sorts of Grinches who are want to steal Christmas. Think of those who wish to call it “Xmas” or to attempt to delete “Christmas” from all our greetings, replacing them with such nondescript politically correct phrases as “Happy Holidays” or “Seasons Greetings.” Consider the ACLU who has sued to remove any and all public displays of Christmas, especially crèches and other religious symbols.

It is easy to succumb to the Grinches, to become focused on the giving and receiving of gifts and unfocused on what Christmas is all about. It is not difficult at all to succumb to all the hype and clever commercials, to the pleas of children for the latest and greatest gadgets, toys, or video games. It is far, far too easy.

It is even easier to become obsessed with making the right choices when purchasing gifts for someone. Have you ever worried whether a gift was appreciated or simply stored away, only to be brought out when you stop by for a visit? Of course we all have at one time or another experienced receiving such a gift or had the feeling that the gift we gave wasn’t really well-received.

I read once of a priest who had a good friend from South Africa who offered him some great ad-

vice in this regard. He said, “*You are trying to do someone else’s job. Do your own. Your task is to give the gift. Let them take care of receiving it.*”

He went on to say that in the part of Africa where he lived it was the custom to always bring a gift to any person you were visiting. Once he went to visit his father, who he knew loved roast beef, so he took a large roast and placed it on his father’s table. His father simply said “*No thank you, I do not like that anymore.*” The son was not at all offended or bothered by this (something which our Western sensibilities would find extremely rude and impolite at best) for he explained, “*I did my part, and my father did his.*” All was well.

Wise counsel indeed. Our job is to open our hearts and give. Let the receiver take care of accepting all that we have to give.

And perhaps this is what God does at Christmas. While there are many who say “*no thanks*” to the Christ child, Jesus wasn’t born to be accepted but to pour out on us God’s boundless and unconditional love. God knows that the gift of his only Son, Jesus is and always will be the perfect gift. It is our job to accept him into our hearts.

Merry Christmas.



Homily for
The Nativity of the Lord—Christmas (A)
Isaiah 52:7-10
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-8

Et Quod Hoc ...

This and that ...

Often these days I find great similarity between the twenty-first century materialist mind tormented by currents of angst-driven madness and like minds of the nineteenth. Reading G. K. Chesterton's marvelous book *Orthodoxy* is as much a study of conversion as an indictment of the materialistic extremism evidenced both then and now. Although here and there Chesterton writes of persons and places firmly set in his own time and place, there is more than enough meat on the bones for anyone today to chew.

"Materialists and madmen never have doubts.

Spiritual doctrines do not actually limit the mind as do materialistic denials. Even if I believe in immortality I need not think about it. But if I disbelieve in immortality I must not think about it. In the first case the road is open and I can go as far as I like; in the second the road is shut. But the case is even stronger, and the parallel with madness is yet more strange. ... Now it is the charge against the main deductions of the materialist that, right or wrong, they gradually destroy his humanity; I do not mean only kindness, I mean hope, courage, poetry, initiative, all that is human. For instance, when materialism leads men to complete fatalism (as it generally does), it is quite idle to pretend that it is in any sense a liberating force. It is absurd to say that you are especially advancing freedom when you only use free thought to destroy free will. The determinists come to bind, not to loose. They

may well call their law the "chain" of causation. It is the worst chain that ever fettered a human being. You may use the language of liberty, if you like, about materialistic teaching, but it is obvious that this is just as inapplicable to it as a whole as the same language when applied to a man locked up in a mad-house.

... note that there is a queer fallacy to the effect that materialistic fatalism is in some way favorable to mercy, to the abolition of cruel punishments or punishments of any kind. This is startlingly the reverse of the truth. It is quite tenable that the doctrine of necessity makes no difference at all; that it leaves the flogger flogging and the kind friend exhorting as before. But obviously if it stops either of them it stops the kind exhortation. That the sins are inevitable does not prevent punishment; if it prevents anything it prevents persuasion. Determinism is quite as likely to lead to cruelty as it is certain to lead to cowardice. Determinism is not inconsistent with the cruel treatment of criminals. What it is (perhaps) inconsistent with is the generous treatment of criminals; with any appeal to their better feelings or encouragement in their moral struggle. The determinist does not believe in appealing to the will, but he does believe in changing the environment. He must not say to the sinner, "Go and sin no more," because the sinner cannot help it. But he can put him in boiling oil; for boiling oil is an environment. Considered as a figure, therefore, the materialist has the fantastic outline of the figure of the madman. Both take up a position at once unanswerable and intolerable."



What this passage brings to mind is this brief note (R. R. Reno, *While We're At It*, First Things, January 2017, 68):

"Sometimes reality outdoes the imagination. Some theologians at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University recently got together to issue a statement. Its authors 'invite others into a larger conversation about life in a deeply divided country.' A fine sentiment—immediately followed by an expression of 'grave concern' that Trump represents 'homophobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, as well as hatred for Jews, Native Americans, African Americans, Mexicans, and Hispanics.' Let's not leave out that 'he advanced misogyny, bigotry, distorted piety, racial hate, contempt for science, and mockery of prisoners of war and the disabled.' The statement goes on to say, 'The ascendancy of Trump to the Office of the Presidency reflects a politics of fear and loathing sustained by a misogynistic, xenophobic, and racist nationalist ideology that offends moral decency and distorts the deepest values of life and civil discourse in our constitutional democracy.' All of this is 'alarming, dangerous, and of grave concern to anyone mindful of the core values that unite us in this constitutional democracy.'

Well, that's quite a bill of indictment. But have no fear: Those who signed the statement are firm Christians. They 'seek a politics of humility, charity, and justice,' though neither the humility nor charity seems to extend to anyone who voted for Trump."

Notwithstanding their contempt

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and disdain for the results which they so obviously disapprove, the authors propounded a mistaken assertion, common among the alt-left elite intelligentsia.

We pledge allegiance to the United States of America and to the **Republic** ... not to the **Democracy**. Our nation is a constitutional republic, a federation of sovereign states united under a constitution which delegates limited powers to the federal government while leaving all remaining powers in the hands of the individual states. It is not therefore a democracy. The offices of President and Vice-President have *never* been chosen by popular vote, that is to say, *never* democratically elected to those positions.

The framers of the Constitution were wary of giving the people the power to directly elect the President—some felt the citizenry too beholden to local interests, too easily duped by promises or shenanigans, or simply because a national election, in the time of oil lamps and quill pens, was just impractical. Some proposals gave the power to the Congress, but others opposed this to insure separation of the branches of government. Others thought the states should decide but this was thought to make the President beholden to state interests. The Electoral College was decided and agreed upon by the Constitutional Convention as a way to insulate the election of the President “from the people” by having the people elect not the person of

the President, but the person of an Elector pledged to vote for a specific person for President.

As R. R. Reno writes (The Public Square: The Loss of Peace, First Things, January 2017, 3-5) “*Our country is bitterly divided, yes, but we are united in fear. For all the talk of ‘inclusion,’ ‘diversity,’ and ‘identity,’ our society cannot do what any shared culture must do, which is to promote **Gemeinschaft**, the shared sense of belonging that allows us to feel at home in the world. The cultural politics of the last fifty years, largely driven by progressives, has failed.*”

He adds “*St. Augustine recognized that our desire for peace will never be fully satisfied in this life. Our true homeland is the heavenly kingdom, the City of God, where the will of our Creator ensures that we are in full accord with him, and with each other in our common worship of him. Here below, however, we rightly seek a relative peace, the concord that comes from a common civic love, a shared accordance with the general spirit that animates public life.*” To this he says, “*... , but there’s a deeper reason why we’re feeling vulnerable and on edge: the anti-metaphysical consensus that dominates public life. For a long time now we’ve been trained to believe that the really real is material. ... These modes of economic, cultural, social, and psychological theory are all very different. But they follow a common disenchanting pattern: The true springs of human life are material, primitive, and base.*”

Perhaps it is past time for us all to read and reread Saint Augustine, to recall our true homeland.

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

Faith Comes From What Is Heard

Lawrence Feingold

Emmaus Academic

July 8, 2016, 756 pages.

Practical Theology

Peter Kreeft

Ignatius Press

November 28, 2014, 400 pages.

Orthodoxy

G. K. Chesterton

Digireads.com

March 30, 2004, 121 pages.

Originally published 1908.

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

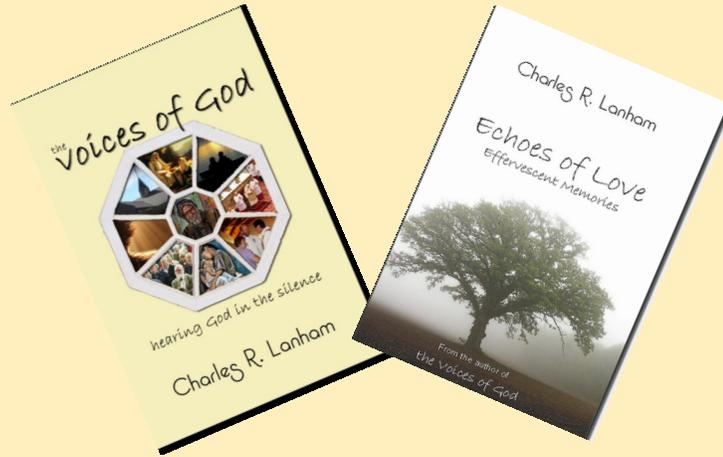
Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith

Editor: Tim Ryland

Bi-Monthly.

www.catholic.com



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

deaconscorner.org

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Each issue of **Colloquī** can be viewed or downloaded from

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Deacon's Corner Publishing

4742 Cougar Creek Trail
Reno, Nevada 89519