



A journal for restless minds

DOING THE RIGHT THING

Always do what is good

HERE I AM LORD

Like a candle in the wind

HOW BIG IS MY CHURCH?

Bigger than you might think

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.

Doing The Right Thing

Always do what is good

We have heard the story many times: Jesus enters the synagogue and encounters a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees watch closely to see if he would dare cure the man on the Sabbath. Knowing what was in their hearts, Jesus invites the man to stand before them and asks if it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to which they refuse to answer.

Two things should be noted in this instance: Jesus looks at them *"with anger"* and then says to the man, *"Stretch out your hand."* Only one other time in the Gospels do we hear of Jesus getting angry (Mt 21:12). That in itself makes this noteworthy, something that should inform us that this is significant and to read this with care. The second thing to note is what Jesus does *not* do. Jesus takes no direct action nor does he physically touch the man: he simply asks him

to stretch out his hand. And for asking the man to do something he could not do but now could, the Pharisees condemned Jesus for violating the Sabbath laws and they began to conspire to put him to death. Rather harsh judgment for simply requesting someone to stretch out his hand, don't you think?

Yet in many ways, there are many who act in like manner, even today. Con-

sider: A motorist driving across the Golden Gate bridge sees a man about to commit suicide by jumping off the bridge. He stops his car in the middle of the bridge and is able to

coax the man out of his suicidal jump. A policeman arrives, approaches the motorist and gives him a traffic ticket for illegally parking his vehicle on the bridge.

What lesson can we learn from this? I believe Jesus would tell us that doing good is always the right thing to do, no matter the consequences. Never do the right thing expecting a reward, for indeed you may be punished for doing so.



Here I Am Lord

Like a candle in the wind

There is an indefinable quality to candlelight. Bright neon lights illuminate with such unforgiving harshness, revealing every flaw and imperfection. The flickering flame of candlelight glows with a gentle warmth that fills the soul with grace.

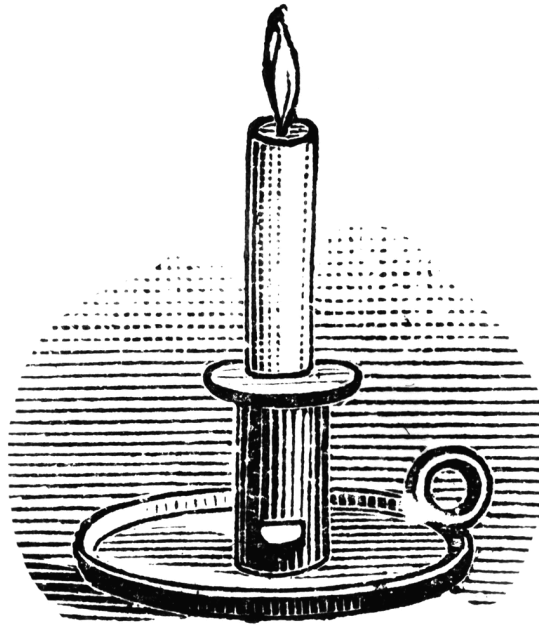
Few freely choose to live in darkness, yet fewer still would seek the hard spotlight's glare. Most would prefer the quiet glimmer of candlelight to relieve the darkness and warm the heart.

We read *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone"* and ask: if the light is Jesus, what sort of light is he?

Two sets of brothers, fishermen, are met by a stranger who calls to them, *"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men"* and beyond all understanding, they immediately drop everything and follow him. Why? It is difficult to comprehend why anyone would do such an incredibly rash thing. Would you do the same if called by someone you did not know to walk away from all you have ever known, your job, your friends and your family? Wouldn't you want to know a bit more, want to at least know where you were going or what you were supposed to do?

These men were no fools, they wouldn't have left their nets to follow just anyone. Jesus must have been a

very special and appealing person. Did these simple fishermen see Jesus as a great light? He was a stranger, strolling along the seashore; they were fishermen. Why would they follow him? We don't know why but they did for he wore a quiet glow, like a candle in the wind, an indefinable quality that drew them irresistibly toward him.



A few years ago I attended a weeklong silent retreat. On the third day, which happened to be a Sunday, a song popped into my head and adamantly refused to leave. It was a beautiful song, written by Dan Schutte. Based on Isaiah 6:8 and 1 Samuel 3 it is called *"Here I am, Lord."* It is a familiar one, one which we have heard before.

Over and over again I heard the music and the lyrics inside my head, soft and low, like a small candle flickering to the whispered breeze of the melody: *"Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart."* Perhaps it was the

moment and the place, I do not know, yet the lyrics spoke of unquestioning acceptance, of saying yes to all that God should ask, knowing his request might take me where I did not want to go or require me to do something I did not wish to do.

I remember writing at the time *"I may not know where or what or how but I do know why: because he has called and I must say yes."* Just as Mary said *"yes"*, just as Peter, Andrew, James and John said *"yes"*—when God calls, the only response should be *"yes"*. What else is there to say?

God calls each of us by name and we are free to respond however we might choose. We may refuse to hear him or to ignore him or to simply tell him *"no"*. Of course, if we love him we will accept the call but no one, especially God, will force you do anything against your will.

Some fifteen years ago, a tiny candle was lit which dispelled the darkness within my soul. It was a small flickering flame, the slightest breeze would have quickly extinguished it, but there was no wind that day. I heard Jesus call, saying *"come, follow me"* and I could not refuse nor did I refuse to do so.

Recalling that moment, other moments come to mind when he called but I either refused to listen or just ignored him. I wasn't disposed to answer his call for I had much more important things to do. And isn't that true for most of us?

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At times it feels as though God is constantly calling, yet we treat his calls just as we do those political robo-calls, don't we? Either we add him to our "*Do not call*" list or we disconnect our direct line to heaven. After all, he seldom calls when it is convenient, does he?

God calls when we're busy. It irritates, it grates, it is inconvenient, and besides, why me, why now? Surely there are others more qualified, more capable, more talented. Here I am Lord but ask someone else if you don't mind. Maybe someday when I'm not so busy, but now just isn't a good time.

But then God reminds you of Peter and Andrew, and of James and John. They were busy men, tending their nets, working to feed their families. They were simple men, uneducated except by the school of hard experience, most likely illiterate, obviously unsuited and ill-prepared for a life of itinerate preaching. Why them?

I am reminded of what Saint Bede, an English monk and Doctor of the Church once observed: "*Now fisher's and unlettered men are sent to preach, that the faith of believers might be thought to lie in the power of God, not in eloquence or in learning.*" Wisdom doesn't always belong to the wise, the learned, or to "better" men. God doesn't look to the proud and the strong, those who are so full of themselves, for in their pride and conceit they find little room for God. They believe only in themselves and are want to live always in the harsh glare of the spotlight.

No, God looks to those who live in

the shadows, the marginalized, the humble because it is those who look to him for his great light to illuminate and dispel the darkness.

God seldom asks for simple deeds. Seldom will we find comfort in what we are called to do. Perhaps that is why we are so often reluctant to respond. We are afraid. Afraid of failure, embarrassment, or simply of the unknown. Yet, we should remind ourselves of the Apostles whom Jesus chose to build his church. They were not the most stalwart and courageous of men. Throughout the Gospels we find many instances where the disciples were afraid, and yet, they followed Jesus and persevered.

Peter, who Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom, was afraid enough to deny him three times.¹ John tells us that on the Sunday evening following Jesus' death, the disciples were behind locked doors, afraid of the Jewish leaders.² Mark tells us of their terror when a violent storm threatened to sink the boat they were on.³ We read in Matthew of the time when the disciples were again on a boat being tossed about by the waves and terrified when they saw Jesus walking on the water. Peter became frightened while walking on the water toward Jesus and began to sink.⁴ When Jesus decided to return to Bethany upon receiving the news of the death of Lazarus, the disciples were afraid of the Jews who had tried to stone him previously. They were convinced that their return would result in their deaths.⁵

Time and again, Jesus acknowledged the fears of those who followed him. His constant

reminder was to "*be not afraid*" while knowing that it is in our nature to fear what we do not understand. Jesus brought light to the world through the Father and dispelled the darkness of fear that blanketed men's souls. Through the Holy Spirit, the disciples and all Christians were enkindled with the fire of God's love.

On Pentecost, those who heretofore had displayed great fear, were graced by the Spirit with the wisdom to contemplate the things of God, the understanding of the truths of faith, the gift of counsel to defend those truths, the courage to suffer death for the faith, the knowledge necessary to see the circumstances of our lives the way God sees them, the piety to worship God and to serve him out of love, and the fear of God—not in the sense of being frightened or fearing punishment—rather the desire to not offend him in the hope of eternity with him.

We are but tiny candles in the wind, fragile flickering flames, ever threatened by the darkening storm that blows across the land. The light from a single candle lacks the power to rid the world of darkness, but the Light of the world, the Son of God can still the wind, allowing every candle to shine together, thus illuminating the face of God. Amen.

Homily for the
The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Isaiah 8:23—9:23
1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17
Matthew 4:12-23

1. Jn 18:17, 25-27.
2. Jn 20:19.
3. Mk 4:35-41.
4. Mt 14:22-33.
5. Jn 11:8-16.

How Big Is My Church?

Bigger than you might think

What we envision as church is too small, for our minds deny the full nature of the Body of Christ. One of the first ordained deacons in the nascent church, protomartyr Stephen, at the climax of his trial, *"full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing at the right hand of God'"* (Acts 7:55-56).

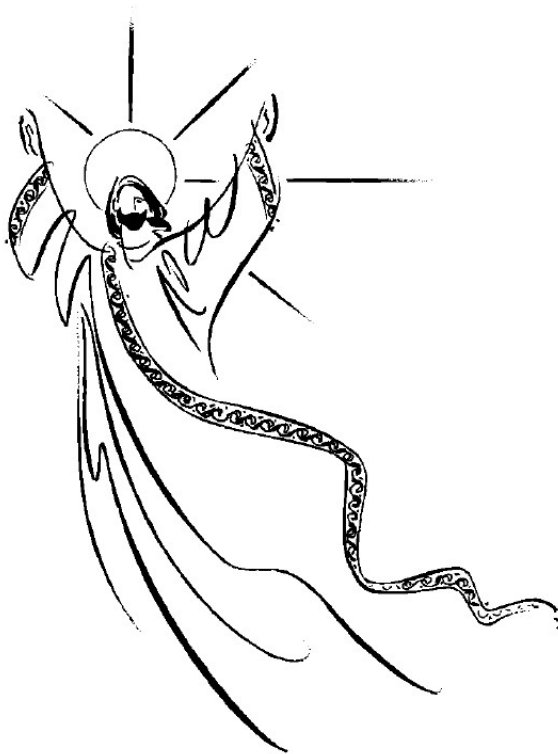
The vision which Stephen saw was strikingly similar to the views of the early Christian church. Those early Christians saw Christ as the high priest, standing at the right hand of God, in fulfillment of and officiating at the liturgy of the church. This was not a novelty developed by the early Christian churches, but rather a profound development of ancient Israel's understanding of divine worship.

"The people of Israel considered their earthly liturgy to be a divinely inspired imitation of heavenly worship. ... The prophets expressed this belief in a mystical way, as they depicted the angels worshiping amid songs and trappings that were clearly recognizable from the Jerusalem temple (see Is 6 and Ezek 1). The hymns sung by the angels were the same songs the Levites sang before the earthly sanctuary.

We find the idea in full flower at the time of Jesus Christ and expressed in the non-canonical books of Enoch and Jubilees

and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. What the priests did in the temple sanctuary was an earthly imitation of what the angels did in heaven.

*None of this was mere pageantry. Both the heavenly and earthly liturgies had more than a ceremonial purpose. The angelic liturgy preserved a certain order not only in the courts of the Almighty, but in the entire universe. God had given over the governance of creation to his angels, and so the world itself was caught up in a cosmic liturgy: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory' (Is 6:3). As Israel's priests performed their temple liturgy, they—like their counterparts in heaven—preserved and sanctified the order of the cosmos."*¹



Considering this ancient understanding and practice of an all-encompassing liturgy, the beauty and profundity of the petition found in the Lord's prayer *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,"*

offers new and greater insight, adding to our understanding of what we are praying.

This view of a shared liturgy of heaven and earth has broader implications beyond the petition in the Lord's prayer. Both Christian and Jewish scholars have noted the evolving understanding of the unity of temporal and divine liturgies.

As A. G. Martimort explains: *"This singular interplay of earth and heaven is characteristic of the Christian liturgy. There are not two liturgies, any more than there are two Churches. Rather, as the same Church is a pilgrim on earth and triumphant in heaven, so the same liturgy is celebrated here below in figurative rites and without figures 'beyond the veil' in the heavenly sanctuary."*²

Erik Peterson, noting the historical and cosmological development that has taken place, highlighted in the Book of Revelation, explains: *"We see clearly that the earthly Jerusalem with its temple worship has been the starting point for these ideas and images of primitive Christian literature; but the starting point has been left behind and it is no longer upon earth that Jerusalem is sought as a political power or centre of worship but in heaven, whither the eyes of all Christians are turned."*³

Rabbi Baruch Levine, in his commentary on Leviticus, has noted the Mass's continuity with the worship of Jerusalem's temple. Following the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., Judaism moved their non-sacrificial worship to the synagogue; the liturgy

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of the Christian church took up the temple's sacrificial liturgy, in a renewed form. "Christian worship in the form of the traditional mass affords the devout an experience of sacrifice, of communion, and proclaims that God is present. The Christian church, then, is a temple."⁴

Christ, in the liturgy of the new covenant now served as high priest of the liturgy in heaven and on earth—a liturgy led in the earthly church by his clergy, who "preside in the place of God."⁵ This sense of angelic presence is particularly evident in early church liturgies.

"The early Christians professed their belief in the angelic presence and power in the heavenly liturgy, the church's liturgy, and the "cosmic liturgy" of all creation. God had delegated both liturgical and cosmic ministries to the angels; but Christians now shared that liturgical and cosmic authority as they worshiped with the angels. Thus, the Book of Revelation shows liturgical action as directing human history.

The doctrine of the angels, like the arm of God, has not been shortened over time; and it remains integral to every liturgy of the apostolic churches. In the Roman liturgy's prefaces, this theme is especially strong: 'And so with all the choirs of angels in heaven, we proclaim your glory and join in their unending hymn of praise. ... Holy, Holy, Holy ...'

Cardinal Ratzinger has noted that the New Testament's apocalyptic imagery is overwhelmingly liturgical, and the church's liturgical language is overwhelmingly apocalyptic. 'The parousia is the

highest intensification and fulfillment of the liturgy,' he writes. 'And the liturgy is parousia. ... Every Eucharist is parousia, the Lord's coming, and yet the Eucharist is even more truly the tensed yearning that He would reveal His hidden Glory.'"⁶

This heavenly-earthly liturgy is profoundly presented in the fourth-century Syriac *Liber Graduum*, or Book of Steps:

"Since we know that the body becomes a hidden temple and the heart a hidden altar for spiritual worship, let us be diligent in this public altar and before this public temple. ... For our Lord and his first and last preachers did not erect in vain the church and the altar and baptism, all of which are visible to physical eyes. It is through these visible things, however, that we shall be in these heavenly things, which are invisible to eyes of flesh, our bodies becoming temples and our hearts altars (Heb 11:3). Let us open [the door] and enter into this visible church with its priesthood and its worship. ... Then ... that heavenly church and spiritual altar will be revealed to us and we will sacrifice praise upon it through the prayer of our hearts and the supplication of our bodies while believing in this visible altar and this priesthood, which serves [the altar] true for us."

The church is much bigger than we think. For all God's creatures, on earth and in heaven, sing in eternal praise and glory to God.

1. Scott Hahn, Ph.D., *Letter and Spirit: From Written Text to Living Word in the Liturgy*, (The Crown Publishing Group; 1st edition, November 8, 2005).
2. A. G. Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).
3. Erik Peterson, *The Angels and the Liturgy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), p. ix.
4. Baruch Levine, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. xxxviii, 11.
5. Ignatius of Antioch, *Magnesians* 6.1.
6. Scott Hahn, *Letter and Spirit*.

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.

Called To Communion
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Ignatius Press
1996, 165 pages.

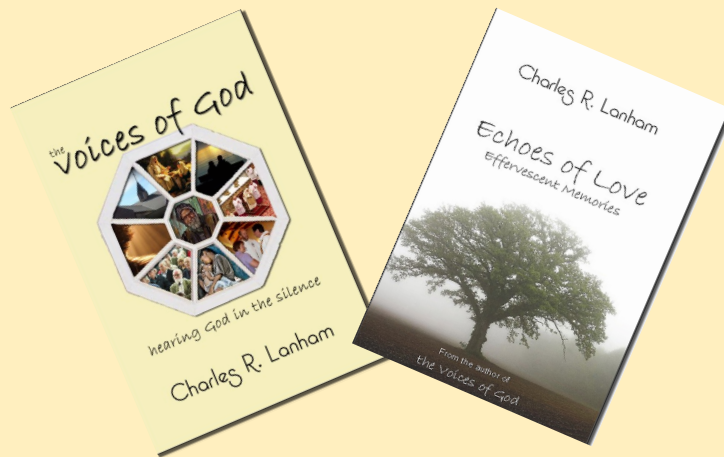
Orthodoxy
G. K. Chesterton
Digireads.com
March 30, 2004, 121 pages.
Originally published 1908.

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