



A journal for restless minds

NAME OR IMAGE

The depth of our profanity

THE JOURNEY INWARD

Make straight the way of the Lord

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.

Name Or Image

The depth of our profanity

Profanity has become so commonplace few recognize it when they hear it. The profane misuse and abuse of the name of God, intermixed with unmentionable vulgarities has reduced the name of our Creator God to little more than gutter language.

What used to be considered the worst form of blasphemy, accompanied with the direst consequences for the blasphemer—Jesus was ostensibly crucified for his blasphemous claim to be the Son of God—now causes not even the slightest bit of nonchalant concern or bother.

The name of God was so revered by the ancient people of Israel that no one would have dared utter it lest they die. Only the high priest could utter God's name, and then but once a year. Even today, devout Jews are forbidden from

uttering or writing God's name. Thus, you will often see a devout Jew use "G-d" so as to observe the reverence rightly due their Creator.

Christians are doubly culpable whenever they profane the name of God and Jesus Christ whom they profess and believe to be both God and man. The dual nature of Jesus—fully divine and fully human—is a fundamental tenet of

Christian faith; one cannot call one's self a Christian without the unshakable, resolute belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

And yet, the One we know to be the Most Holy, we profane; the One we believe to be the Greatest Good, we denigrate; the One we worship, we cheapen; the

One we pray to for guidance and help in our most desperate hour, we abase in anger and disgust at the slightest provocation. We have trivialized God, and in so doing, have diminished ourselves.

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PROFANITY
ANY
TIME



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The Journey Inward

Make straight the way for the Lord

Anyone who has traveled beyond the borders of that place they call home can readily attest to traveling through vastly different terrain on a wide variety of pathways.

There are places where the land is flat and barren, where one can see far off into the distant horizon. Then there are mountains and low valleys where sight is limited to the next bend in the road or to the top of the rise before you. And as varied as the terrain may be, the roads one traverses may be just as different. They may be wide or narrow, paved or deeply scarred and rutted, flat and straight or steep and winding, or occasionally there may be no path at all.

Whenever we embark on a journey, whether a brief or lengthy one, we generally have a purpose and a destination in mind. There is a reason for going somewhere, as well as a specific “somewhere” we intend to reach. Few have any great desire to wander aimlessly, with neither purpose nor goal, for such meaningless meandering leads to nowhere.

Of course, there are other factors which must be considered: weather conditions (rain, snow, ice, wind, etc.), modes of transportation, distance to travel, time of day or night, and so on. And then, there is the urgency in reaching the destination: what speed is required, how fast does one need to

travel.

With all these things to consider, it would be easy to simply opt to stay in one place, to forget where we were heading and why we were going there. After all, home is where the heart is. Isn't it? If we never venture far, life will be much more pleasant; easier and safer too. Won't it?

When the road is flat, smooth, and straight, it is enticing to place yourself on auto-pilot, to sit back and leave the driving to the mindless, unthinking technology built into the car. Autopilot works fine for as long as the conditions remain the same, but when the road bends or abruptly changes direction the autopilot will fail to adapt and correct for the changing conditions; that can only result in disaster. Placing our lives on autopilot is what a pilot might say is “*all velocity and no vector.*”



Saint Thomas Aquinas observed much the same, taking note of our tendency to keep on running in the same direction even when we have left the road, “*It is better to limp on the way than run off the way. For a man who limps on the way, even if he only makes slow progress, comes to the end of the way; but one who is off the way, the more quickly he runs, the further away is he from his goal.*”

The most profound journey in life is the journey inward and the path is seldom flat, smooth or straight. The obstacles we encounter—the curves, cliffs, rocks, pitfalls, ruts, and potholes that block our way and hinder our progress—are almost always of our own making.

Within is where God resides, yet how often do we journey inward to be with him? What obstacles, what hindrances do we place in our spiritual life? Our journey inward isn't blocked or hindered by neighbors, bosses, co-workers, teachers, classmates, spouse, children, parents, friends or enemies. No, the largest obstacle we face is the one we placed in our own way when we refuse to give ourselves completely over to God.

For many, this time of year is associated with the approaching Christmas holiday. It means cleaning and decorating the home, shopping for presents, planning parties, writing letters, and mailing cards. We, who are generally busy with work, family, and everyday living, suddenly shift into overdrive, becoming frenzied, frazzled, and frantic.

We spend all our time and energy focused on moving outward, going in all directions, searching for the meaning of Christmas.

And as we journey to the mall to find those gifts we will give, the Christmas party to socialize, or the grocery store for what we need to bake those cookies, cakes and pies, we find ourselves bobbing and weaving,

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winding our way around curves and corners, distracted and tired from it all.

During this season of Advent, it is important to slow down. Instead of speeding up, it is a time to put the brakes on, slowing down and taking time to examine ourselves and to reappraise our relationship with God. It is a time to experience a quiet stillness, to almost hold our breath as we wait for the coming of our Lord and Savior. Quiet silence provides us with an opportunity to attain a deeper intimacy with others, with ourselves, and with God.

This is the time when we need to heed the call of Isaiah and John the Baptist, to make straight the path inward to the Lord. That means clearing it of all the road debris we have placed in our way. It means taking a serious look at ourselves, recognizing and removing all that hinders us from our destination.

Perhaps Advent can be understood with an analogy. Imagine a time when you absolutely needed to be somewhere in ten minutes and you realize that you have just enough time to get there. How do you feel as you sit at a stoplight waiting for it to turn green; precious seconds are slipping by and missing your appointment is becoming a distinct possibility? Are you anxious, nervous, impatient, hopeful? Are you anticipating the change, eager to get going again? Are you worried that you will miss your appointment; that you will arrive too late? If only you had anticipated that some delay might occur and left earli-

er.

John the Baptist proclaimed "*a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*," but told all who would hear, "*One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*" Preparing the way of the Lord can be likened to preparing a garden for planting. The soil must be turned and loosened, weeds must be removed, and the seed bed prepared.

John the Baptist spoke of *repentance for the forgiveness of sins*." Because of misuse, "repentance" has oftentimes received a bum rap. What repentance *is not* is mental, emotional, or spiritual flagellation. Rather, repentance is course correction, turning away from our current direction, and turning inward toward God.

In Isaiah we hear, "*In the desert prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!*" Isaiah is admonishing us to prepare ourselves for our God, to look at our lives and the world arounds us and to ask ourselves "*Where is the wasteland in our lives?*" How are we wasting time and energy on frivolous pursuits and trivial things? Where are we wasting time in busyness, distractions, and entertainment? What waste clutters our minds, what dirt fills our hearts, what sin soils our souls?

Having spent some time in our own wasteland, we are now ready to hear the words of the prophet. "*In the desert prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God.*"

Advent calls us to clean up our act, to straighten up and fly right. It is not a time to bargain or convince God to act on our behalf. God is already well disposed towards us.

God is ready to act on our behalf, heal our wounds and forgive our sins. But while we cannot earn God's grace—it is always a given—what can we do to prepare for the journey inward to him? What can we do to "*wake up*" to God's coming? The prophet suggests a road construction job. In ancient times when a dignitary or ruler would visit a city, the townspeople would fix the roads to make the royal person's entrance smooth. What roadwork do we need to do this Advent? What valleys and empty places need filling in? What mountains and obstacles in our lives need leveling in order to reach God? What rough edges need smoothing?

If we tend to the "*roadwork*," Isaiah promises, "*Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all peoples shall see it together.*"

There is a strong appeal to change, yet we find ourselves resisting. After all, our paths are fairly straight, our valleys not too deep, our mountains not too high. We all have faults, but basically, deep down, we are good and decent, doing our best. Yet, there is always room for improvement: dust to remove, potholes to fill, debris to remove in order to prepare the way of the Lord. Amen.

Homily for the
Second Sunday of Advent (B)
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

The essence of man, true of every human being, is this: man is a rational animal; all are "a union of matter and spirit, made by God, made in God's image, made for God, and redeemed by Christ."¹

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27).

"Man occupies a unique place in creation: (I) he is 'in the image of God'; (II) in his own nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds; (III) he is created 'male and female'; (IV) God established him in his friendship."²

"Of all visible creatures only man is 'able to know and love his creator.' He is 'the only creature on earth that God has willed for his own sake,' and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity."³

"Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons."⁴

"God created everything for man, but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him."⁵

As Frank Sheed points out:

"Our civilization, the one that used to be called Christian and is now called Western, is based upon the idea our ancestors had of what man is. That idea was clear, strong, universally accepted. They arrived

at it, not by looking at man, but by listening to God.

Summarized, it was this:

Man is a creature of God, living in a universe created by God. But he differs from every other being in the world because God made him in his image.

This special likeness to God is not in man's body, by which he is akin to the animals, but in his soul, which is spiritual, immortal, and meant for eternal union with God.

By setting his will against God's, man had damaged himself and lost oneness with God. God became man and died to save all men from this derelict condition.

In these three ideas—image of God, immortal spirit, redeemed by Christ—you have the dominating elements in that concept of man which went into the building of our civilization."⁶

We are made in the image of God and yet, far too many disagree, offering the counterargument that God was made in man's image, that is to say, the idea of God comes from the mind of man, from his imagination. This warped view by man of God thus alters our conception and judgment of the divine nature of God, reducing God to something less than human. Since man has not the power to create his equal, any manmade object or living thing must, of necessity, be less than man.

And thus, God, being less than man, is no longer worthy of man's worship or reverence. It follows then, God's name holds no special meaning

or ought to be considered sacred or holy, rather it is reduced to a profane one, nothing more.

Once God has been made in man's image, the divine nature of Jesus Christ becomes justifiably suspect. To be God offers no special attributes: Jesus was a man, nothing more; divinity a fantasy, a profane figment of an imaginative human mind.

As difficult as this might be to at first countenance, there is a profanity ever more profane. *"To use God's name without reverence is normally a lesser profanity compared with using God's image without reverence: God is more vulnerable in the living man made in His likeness than in the sound by which men have chosen to name Him."⁷*

An imitative god, a poor facsimile of man, provides but a passing fancy which, like any fad, holds no lasting value or lengthy fascination. This then holds equally true—if not more so—for man, for what is man without a Creator God? Man becomes but another thing, a random accidental conjoining of chemicals and atoms, without purpose or meaning, and thus subject to the vagaries of nature and simple happenstance.

Without a being of unimaginable power (God) any quality or attribute possessed by any one man is but an accident of nature. The individual holds no unique or special value except where or when it might be deemed of utility by another; a disposable commodity, easily and carelessly discarded when no longer of any use.

The modern tendency to view man as a profane tool to be used by the more powerful is all too obvious. This profanity, too often asserted as man's usefulness to society, negates the inalienable rights which man is rightly entitled by nature and by nature's God.

*"Man's claim upon Society lies not in his usefulness to Society, but simply in his being a man. His rights, ... are not simply concessions made to him by Society. Neither are they returns for services rendered to Society: he does not earn his right to a livelihood, for example, by social usefulness, though he may lose his claim to it by culpable uselessness. A man may be diseased or crippled or insane: Society still has precisely the same fundamental obligations to him as to its most obviously useful member. Society's obligations to the individual man are not simply a return for what he does for Society: they arise from the fact that he is a man and that it exists for the good of men. Indeed the quality of a society may be judged by the value it attaches to people who are of the least usefulness to it. Obviously the individual member is bound to serve his fellows according to his capacity; but only according to his capacity. Society is not bound to feed the lazy, but it must feed the helpless. Even then there may be ways of serving Society—for example, by cheerful acceptance of suffering—which would not show in any social balance sheet. But whether or no, man is of value as man: that is the first principle of Christian Sociology."*⁸

Placing God as a creature of man not only mischaracterizes the relationship, it obfuscates the definition of man. One part of that definition states

that man is a rational animal, which implies that such a being is a reasonable one. But the mere possession of reason does not preclude man of unreasonableness.

*"The possession of reason, which distinguishes him from the lower animals, means that he can act reasonably as they cannot, but also unreasonably, as they cannot. The animals, not having reason, cannot misuse it. Man has it, can misuse it, does misuse it. Misusing it, he falls, not to the animal level, but below it. ... Man is endlessly ingenious in discovering ways of misusing his reason. The commonest way, perhaps, is to leave it unused. Most of us would rather not think at all when any effort is involved. The use of the body is easy, and promises pleasure. The use of the mind is difficult and holds out no such promises. So man is always trying to bypass the use of the mind. He thinks with reluctance, which makes him a slave to habit. He thinks with the will, which makes him a slave of desire. He thinks with the imagination, which makes him a slave to slogans. ... One result of all these ingenious ways of avoiding the use of the mind is that man is intensely gullible: offer him happiness, and all his defenses are down."*⁹

Profanities, whether by word or deed, is a mindless assault on the dignity of man made in the image and likeness of God. Something to seriously consider.

1. Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity*, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 47.
2. Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), §355.
3. CCC §356.
4. CCC §357.
5. CCC §358.
6. Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity*, 17.
7. Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity*, 42.
8. Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity*, 45.
9. Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity*, 50.

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

On Conscience

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Ignatius Press

2007, 82 pages.

Society and Sanity

Frank Sheed

Sheed & Ward, New York

1953, 270 pages.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Charles J. Chaput

Henry Holt and Co.

February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

PERIODICALS

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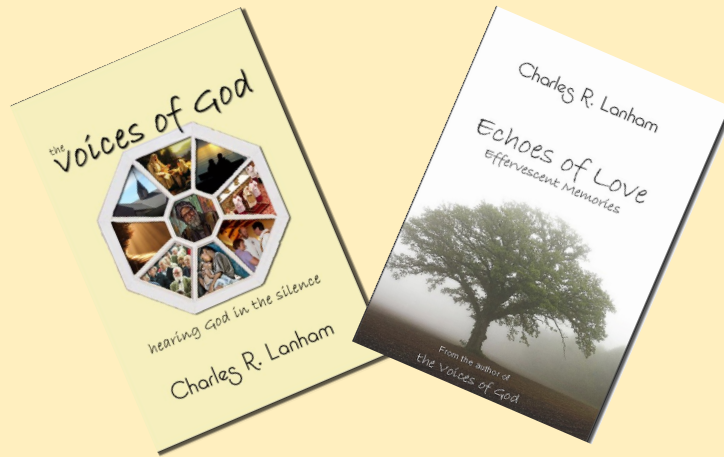
Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith

Editor: Tim Ryland

Bi-Monthly.

www.catholic.com



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