

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

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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.

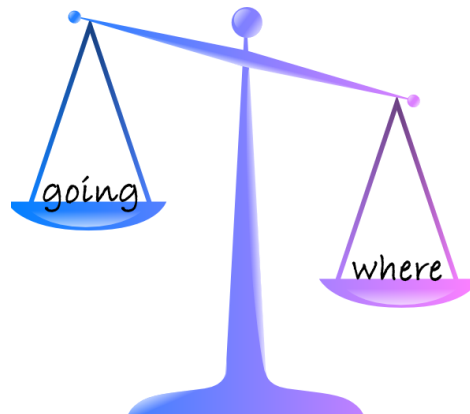
Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

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.

Where Are You Going?

The difference is in the emphasis

What fascinates the mind, should one pause to consider a thing so elementary, is how those asked the question will respond with such odd dissimilitude. Strange that words uttered from a single voice are so often misconstrued as if dishonestly heard by honest ears; rare the moment when with one accord the bewildered multitude hears one voice each in their own language (Acts 1:6).



This difficulty of the mind to decipher with singular precision what the ears absorb with poor attention is a common explication and yet such simplicity fails to fully satisfy. Language has neither the meticulous fidelity of mathematics nor the constancy and invariability of

time. The mind, with every syllable consumed, must of necessity use bias acids by which to digest and formulate a thought or vision. Every thought or vision is thus uniquely formed and, of consequence, effortlessly misconstrued.

There is of course that glib excuse, that all entirely rests upon whether one accepts fiction for fact or some such non-

sense similarly contrived. The mind is too easily turned to foolish thoughts; truth and reason so quickly buried beneath the ever-shifting sands of whim and fashion, desire and passion, illusion and fantasy.

Reason suggests a possibility: its meaning may well rely upon which syl-LAB'-ble one does place the em-PHA'-sis; as for the question, the emphasis most often turns on the nature of the going or the where.

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The Sacrament Of Sin

On man's alienation from God

Why death? Where is the need of it? Would not death's presence prove to be a defect, a corruption within God's design?

Aquinas argues that defect and corruption are natural in all matter for "the good and the preservation of the universe, for which alternate generation and corruption in things are requisite, ... And although every form intends perpetual being as far as it can, yet no form of a corruptible being can achieve its own perpetuity, except the rational soul; for the reason that the latter is not entirely subject to matter, as other forms are; indeed it has an immaterial operation of its own, ..."¹

Death ought never be considered a design flaw to God's plan but simply a material biological fact. And yet, we forget that we are more than matter, which is corruptible and mortal. We have been made in the divine image of God with a material body and most importantly an immaterial soul.

The author of The Wisdom of Solomon understood what we too often forget, that there are different forms of death, death of the body as well as death of the soul. Today's first reading should be thoughtfully studied and considered for it is wonderfully made. It is unfortunate that the reading included only a small portion of the pas-

sage for there is great wisdom to be gleaned from the fuller text.

¹² Do not invite death by the error of your life, nor bring on destruction by the works of your hands;

¹³ because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living.

¹⁴ For he created all things that they might exist, and the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them; and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.

¹⁵ For righteousness is immortal.

¹⁶ But ungodly men by their words and deeds summoned death; considering him a friend, they pined away, and they made a covenant with him, because they are fit to belong to his party.

²¹ Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them,

²² and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hope for the wages of holiness, nor discern the prize for blameless souls;

²³ for God created man for incorruption, and made him in the images of his own eternity,

²⁴ but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.

God created the universe and in all that he had created he "saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:12, 18, 21, 25). He created "man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Humans were created by God in his divine image to be immortal. Paul says as much when he speaks of death as the consequence of sin: "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned (Romans 5:12).

What should be increasingly obvious from reading Sacred Scripture (Genesis, Wisdom,

and Romans) as well as Aquinas that there are two forms of death which can come to all men: physical or bodily death and moral or spiritual death. We cannot hope to escape from physical death for as Aquinas asserts the body is what is subject to universal mortality. Our biological death has more than a physical meaning however, for it is



Perhaps just as unfortunate, but simply for brevity's sake, I'm sure, is the omission of all but the last two verses of chapter 2. I would highly encourage everyone to take some quality time to read the first several chapters of Wisdom. Here I will simply offer the last four verses of chapter 2 to better illustrate what we have heard today.

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the ultimate sign of man's alienation from God. It is, as Paul Althaus once observed, the "sacrament of sin" with which we have purchased death—not physical death per se—but the death of our immortal souls which Christ overcame by his death on the cross.

Wisdom tells us "God did not make death" but then where did death come from? Wisdom gives us a clue that "by the envy of the devil, death entered the world."

When we stop to consider what envy means it begins to make sense. We all have a good idea what envy is: a unhealthy desire to possess what another person has that we do not, should it be wealth or power or talent or beauty or anything else. The success or possessions of others stings and makes us feel small and we become resentful, angry, and jealous.

Now imagine how envious Lucifer must have felt. He, who was arguably the greatest being ever created by God, had been bedazzled by God's infinite greatness and desired to have what he did not and could not possess. His envy of God's infinite greatness turned into hatred for God's goodness. Imagine how he felt when he first looked upon man, pure, unsullied, incorrupt, and imperishable, made in God's own image.

In *Paradise Lost*, the poet Milton imagines what the devil must have thought:

O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold,...whom my thoughts pursue with wonder, and could love, so lively shines in

them divine resemblance, and such grace the hand that formed them on their shape hath poured. ...²

The father of lies, in his wounded-ness, was tempted to "grab the thorns in order to get at the rose": in other words, to conceive real love for these two, to recall the tenderness and care with which he himself was created. But anger and jealous rage knocked aside this temptation. Instead of loving them he seized them. "I can suck beauty and all its traces into myself," he thought. "If I possess these I will have my goodness back. I can continue my war against God and I can win it all! Horror is a small price for what I will gain!"

As Milton imagined it, Satan said, "Evil, be thou my good."³ He chose to be envious, the deadliest of sin and in doing so created death.

Love creates eternal life; envy destroys life and brings only death. To which party do you belong?

Amen.

Homily #181

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

Mark 5:21-43

1. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, I-II, q.85 a.6. resp.

2. From Book Four of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, pp. 358-365.

To put this poetry into plain 21st century prose:

Oh Hell! What are these creatures I am looking at with such grief? I could even love them! They fill me with wonder, so much wonder. They so resemble the divine one in his dazzling light. And look how much grace his hand has poured on them, his hand that formed them.

3. Milton IV, p. 110.

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

Thoughtful Theism

Fr. Andrew Younan

Emmaus Road Publishing
2017, 200 pages.

Coming Soon

Michael Barber

Emmaus Road Publishing
2005, 326 pages.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Charles J. Chaput

Henry Holt and Co.
February 21, 2017, 288 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

Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith
Editor: Tim Ryland
Bi-Monthly.
www.catholic.com

There are those among us motivated solely by the *going*; they live *for* the journey, it is what defines their existence and its essential purpose. To those the *where* is but an end to going; the destination nothing more than a ill-considered terminus, a sibling rival to the perforce beginning to every life.

Where has its own adherents, those who eschew the *going*; every interminable moment a barricade, each step a hurdle; ennui permeates their lives, the destination far too distant to be met. These are those who much prefer to close their eyes, click their heels and whisper softly, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

Such single-mindedness, no matter the tilt or kilter, inevitably warps the soul and dampens the spirit, assuming one possesses either.

There is common consensus among the self-congratulatory cognoscenti that nothing succeeds quite as much as failure, that clarity is best achieved midst murk and darkness, and, as they assert with the gravest sobriety, that rotten apples make for tasty applesauce. These self-same bastions of unconstrained conceit, deliberate vagueness and ambiguous conviction—as with the poor they so mockingly commend—have of course been with us always. Mercifully, their psychedelic psychoses has, until recently, been constrained to academic centers for the cognitively impaired.

G. K. Chesterton first acknowledged this turn of the screw, this awkward bend in the otherwise straight

and narrow when he observed how Dante described "three moral instruments—Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell, the vision of perfection, the vision of improvement, and the vision of failure." while noticeably noting that Ibsen mentioned only one—Hell.

Chesterton believed that what Ibsen taught could be summed up in the phrase which he attributed to George Bernard Shaw, "The golden rule is that there is no golden rule." and that "this absence of an enduring and positive ideal, this absence of a permanent key to virtue," leaves us faced "with the problem of a human consciousness filled with very definite images of evil, and with no definite image of good."

With Chesterton, I have met a kindred spirit, though I must humbly submit he to be far superior in eloquence and wit. His was a towering intellect; George Bernard Shaw said of him, "He was a man of colossal genius." Like John the Baptist, I am but a poor acolyte, unworthy to loose the thong of his sandal.

The human race, according to religion, fell once, and in falling gained knowledge of good and of evil. Now we have fallen a second time, and only the knowledge of evil remains to us.

A great silent collapse, an enormous unspoken disappointment, has in our time fallen on our Northern civilization. All previous ages have sweated and been crucified in an attempt to realize what is really the right life, what was really the good man. A definite part of the modern world has come beyond question to the conclusion that

there is no answer to these questions, that the most that we can do is set up a few notice-boards at places of obvious danger, to warn men, for instance, against drinking themselves to death, or ignoring the mere existence of their neighbors.

Every one of the popular modern phrases and ideals is a dodge in order to shirk the problem of what is good. We are fond of talking about "liberty"; that, as we talk of it, is a dodge to avoid discussing what is good. We are fond of talking about "progress"; that is a dodge to avoid discussing what is good. The modern man says, "Let us leave all these arbitrary standards and embrace liberty." This is, logically rendered, "Let us not decide what is good, but let it be considered good not to decide it." He says, "Away with your old moral formulae; I am for progress." This, logically stated, means, "Let us not settle what is good; but let us settle whether we are getting more of it." He says, "Neither in religion nor morality, my friend, lie the hopes of the race, but in education." This, clearly expressed, means, "We cannot decide what is good, but let us give it to our children."¹

What one might reasonably suspect upon encountering such provoking thoughts is that they are of recent

vintage, but then as Chesterton would undoubtedly suggest one would be a heretic for considering as much. He would suppose that they were wrong and reason why such was the case.

That is not to say that modern man does not sit comfortably into the well-worn chair built by and for the long-forgotten dead. No, there can be little doubt that modern minds would find such a genuinely maladroitness philosophy comfortably ensconced within that large malodorous muscle located between hair and toenail. Ideals no longer find appeal to the man who aspires to reach no higher than the belt which stays his pants from dropping well below his knees.

We have become subscribers to the cheap and common, rabid fans of bland and boring, accepting less while paying more, finding significance in the insignificant, importance in the unimportant. We are bigots, but of a different nature than the common complaint. We have become intolerant toward high achievement, the nobility of man, the magnificence of the universe and the glory of God. We have fully subscribed to “the soft bigotry of low expectations,”² and are much the poorer for the purchase.

Much is made of the quotidian “fake news” to which the public is now subjected but of littler notice is the overabundance of abhorrent artifice uttered by hungry howling hyenas posing as shepherds shepherding their unsuspecting flock to their (the hyenas) next meal. Such artifice is counterfeit, a fraud, a sham device deliberately contrived to mislead the unwary, to

lure innocent unblemished lambs into dangerous and forbidding pastures to satisfy their carnivorous appetites.

Such artifice distorts the truth, reflecting a warped reality as if viewed from a funhouse mirror; what truth may be lies buried deep beneath a heavy blanket of deceit.

Case in point: “Adult” was once a noun (a grown-up) or an adjective (the adult population) but now it’s a verb. At least that is how Kelly Williams Brown uses it to titillate her juvenile readers with such jejune nonsense as “Just because you don’t feel like an adult doesn’t mean you can’t fake it ‘til you make it.” This is perhaps the better portion of the swill Brown dishes out within the 331 pages of “**Adulthood**: How to become a grown-up in 468 535 easy(ish) steps.” This otherwise complete waste of good ink and recycled paper would be well ignored—as it certainly should—were it not for the damage inflicted upon juvenile readers by unsuspecting and complacent adults who have not read the book beyond the fawning obligatory hysteria masking as a review located on the back cover.

In between such banalities as “**Step 1**: Accept that you are not that special” and “**Step 520**: Get out”—and yes, that is it, all two words worth of trite triteness—are some morally destructive, decadent, inhumane, degrading, immoral, vituperative “steps,” conveniently sandwiched between pure stuff and nonsense that no adolescent would or should ever take seriously. Handing “**Adulthood**” to an adolescent is tantamount to handing a loaded gun to a homicidal maniac

with enthusiastic encouragement to shoot; someone is going to be seriously hurt in the exchange.

Step 126 advises readers—this is an abbreviation for the complete step is unfit for human consumption—“Do not ask people about their genitals ...” Honestly, it is far more vile and disgusting than one might possibly imagine.

And then there is this bit of swell swill to chew and regurgitate, found under the captivating subtitle “Hookup Etiquette”:

Let’s acknowledge that not all sex is in the interest of finding a soul mate. Sometimes, we don’t have time for a relationship, or we’re still hurting from a past one, and we just want to get laid. *There is nothing wrong with this*, so long as you’re doing it in a way that isn’t destructive to you or the other person.³

Reasonable people, if they are of a mind to do so, can quickly “fact check” the accuracy and truth of what is reported as news. Should J. Doe report that Martians have landed in Hoboken or Mr. Smith choked on a blueberry while dining last evening at the Pie Palace, these facts can be verified. Opinions based not on fact but emotion and wishful thinking are of an entirely different matter, and far more dangerous to the unwary traveler.

1. G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, (New York: Mead & Co., 1905).

2. A phrase coined by Michael Gerson and used by President George W. Bush.

3. Kelly Williams Brown, “*Adulthood: How to become a grown-up in 468 535 easy(ish) steps. Revised and Updated*,” 331 pages. Seriously, do not waste your money and never give this to an adolescent. Doing so has been determined to cause loss of soul.

A Little Prayer

Opening on a memory

Never in forever would it be, and yet, here we are, looking back on a half-century of yesterdays when we were so very young. Fifty years! We were so very, very young, too young to fully comprehend what fools we were to make believe in happy-ever-aftering; to think of Camelot and imagine living in that most congenial spot.

Remember Camelot? Where the climate must be perfect all the year, July and August could not be too hot, winter was forbidden until December and had to exit March the second on the dot. Remember? Where rain could never fall till after sundown and by eight the morning fog must disappear, where snow could never slush upon the hillside and where by nine p.m. the moonlight must appear. Remember?

Those were heady days indeed, where we had not a clue whether our heads were still solidly attached upon our shoulders or had taken residence somewhere further south. We knew each other well or so we thought, but did not know the other just a little, none at all. We loved the other madly even though we did not know the merest meaning of the word. The world was so much smaller, so small we could cup it in our hands and care not for the bitter taste of it.

We promised, with a solemnity we failed to understand how severe, to be

true to each other in good times and bad times, sickness and health and to love and honor the other longer than forever. That's what lovers make when they decide to marry and yet, so few can later recall the recipe.

Fifty years! Wasn't it just yesterday when we were young?

Sunrise, sunset

Sunrise, sunset

Swiftly flow the days

Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers

Blossoming even as we gaze.

Sunrise, sunset

Sunrise, sunset

Swiftly fly the years

One season following another

Laden with happiness and tears.



Fifty years of photographs should tell a tale or two, and yet, so seldom have we thought to look beyond the covers of the albums which dust has long held rightful claim. One hundred pounds of memories, two pounds for every year; light by any measure, a treasure full of long-neglected memories.

Open on a memory and be surprised by the long-forgotten years which have flown so quickly by, and

yet, we never took the time to think of them, to remember all the anguished whys and why nots, the wooded paths we took, the ones we left for yet another day, the pew we shared on life's roller-coaster, the screams of terror and the joy of flight, the lightness of being and the darkness of despair.

Surely, they have been the best of times—and the least—but then, would we have had it any other way? So many songs we've sung, so many sunrises, sunsets have we known, each day a new day to discover something of the other, undiscovered no matter the years that have now flown far from whence we came.

There are rules to follow like the promises made on that special day.

1. Marriage is more than a promise, much more; it is a welding. It is a bond made of hardened steel which will through years of weather lose its luster and gather rust but never bend or break before a gathering storm. Rust and stain will wipe away with sweet attention and a goodly dollop of elbow grease.

2. Never underestimate the power of an earnest apology and roses.

3. Kneel before the altar of the other and pray for mercy and pardon.

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back (Luke 6:37-38).

4. Buy a pedestal and place your spouse upon it. Then shout it loud to the world. There can be no one more important than the one you marry. Never ever. Never. Ever.
5. Pray. God made you to love him and to love one another. Never underestimate the power of prayer. It is the strongest glue there is.

Between the folds of a card there lay a memory so dearly met and yet we never knew of it before. A yellowed page now three decades old meant more than all the gold and silver one can possess.

It was not so much the words found therein but the surprising presence of a memory and the love which resided there.

There's No Such Thing As a Little Prayer

by
Nellie Ann Lanham
Catholic Digest May 1986

An elderly priest, visiting our parish, was asked to say a little prayer before we began our meeting.

"I can't," he answered, causing a few eyebrows to rise.

Then he smiled and continued, "There's no such thing as a *little* prayer. I can pray with you. I will be glad

to do so. But I cannot say a *little* prayer."

Every day we measure things by their size, by height and weight and length—and we even measure our prayers. How wonderful that God does not use the same yardstick we do. Our prayers may be short, but no prayer is ever little.

My mother, busy with a big family, seldom had time for a complete Rosary. "I tried to keep track of the Hail Marys on my fingers," she said, "but it's hard to count fingers when they are in the bread dough." So she put aside her Rosary until a quieter time and instead offered her short prayers—ejaculations, the Hail Mary, the Lord's Prayer. Sometimes she just talked to God as she changed diapers, did the laundry, swept the floor.

The weary workman who falls into bed and cries, "Oh Lord, I'm tired, forgive me," may be offering a more profound prayer than if he knelt for hours reciting prayers by rote.

Businessmen and women, confronted with unpleasant associates, would be reluctant to kneel down in the boardroom to ask for patience. But there is always time for lifting up our minds to God to ask for help in dealing with difficult people or situations. *Little* prayers? Never. They may be the most powerful words ever spoken in the business world.

The teenager is often caught up in a world of perpetual motion. Stopping by the church to pray would be fine, but if there is no time for that, a short prayer asking for help with a test, seeking strength against temptation, or giving thanks for a beautiful sunset, can be just as meaningful.

God takes our prayers and offerings and magnifies them in a way we cannot understand. Jesus told us to pray without ceasing, and what better way to do this than to punctuate our daily activities with reflections that transform our acts into worship, our thoughts into prayer.

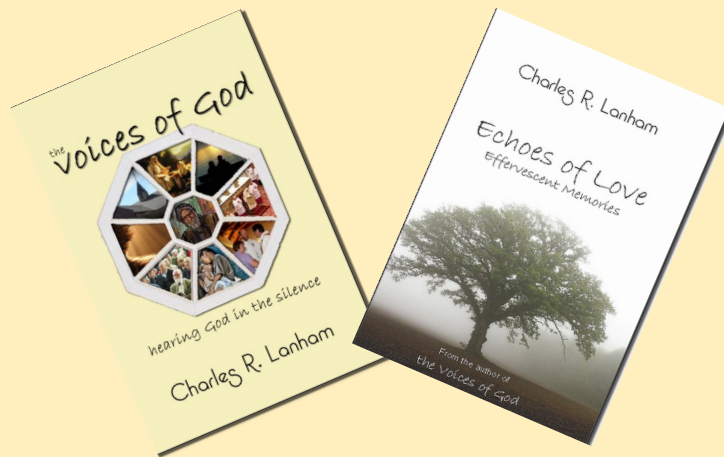
We do not have to stand in front of the church, like the Pharisees, so that

God takes
even the
shortest prayer
and magnifies
it in a way
we can't
understand

everyone can see us pray. Nor do we have to count the hours and minutes we spend in formal prayer. This does not disparage those who have time to say a Rosary, to offer a litany, to pray on their knees. It simply suggests that no matter how short the time we have to spend with God, no matter how few the minutes or

how distracting the day's activities, there is time to talk to God.

Maybe, measured in our own terms, such thoughts do not add up to much. But to God, unfettered as He is by time and space, there is no such thing as a little prayer.



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

deacons corner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

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

<http://deacons corner.org>.

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