

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

The Howling

The silence of the shepherds

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

Colloquī will return in October.

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.

The Howling

The silence of the shepherds

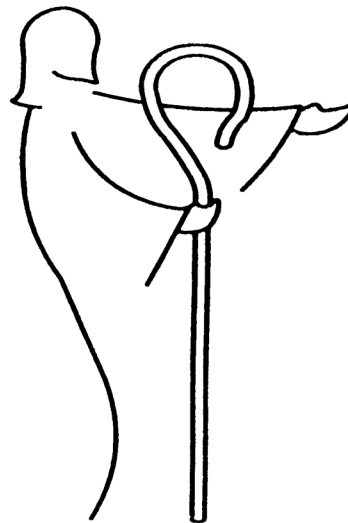
Shall I say what anguishes my soul? Can I speak of it provoking no offense or would the better be a blind eye to the horror, a deaf ear to the cry? Shall I join the muted chorus or enroll the clamoring throng or ought there be "a still more excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31)?

Sheep, such apathetic creatures, are wont to follow, caring not where brook or meadow, but whether enough to satisfy. The cry of the ancient prophet, "Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not" (Jeremiah 5:21) long forgotten as with Heywood's reminder: "There are none so blind as those who will not see. The most deluded people are those who

choose to ignore what they already know."

The nature of sheep demands a "good shepherd" for else how might they find still waters and green pastures? A "good shepherd" leads not astray but upon the path of righteousness and truth, vigilantly protecting his flock from

howling wolves. The flock entrusts their care into the knowing hands of the "good shepherd." What then when the shepherd's trust is shattered; in whom can they rely?



¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep (John 10:11-13).

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There well may be a monkish lot who have yet to hear the sordid tale; if so, they are perhaps the better in their unknowing. It is a lurid tale sorely written that reeks and rots all the more with every new recounting. There are facts undeniable of acts vile and horrid; sins of omission and commission enough to worry hell with overpopulation.

The plot, on which such hanging tales depend, lies mired in the murk of the La Brea tar pits, yet the shrill strident howling is enough to wake the somnambulant bones of the ancient dead; facts and truth be damned.

While shepherds were intoning “peace on earth, good will to men,” wolves donned shepherd cloaks to ravage unguarded flocks. The apathetic lambs proffered small resistance for they believed the “good” shepherds were well-intentioned and would tend them attentively with an ever-vigilant eye.

Irrespective of station, shepherds are but fallible men, not gods, in whom trust must be justly earned and never applied *sine conditione*. Politics and religion make strange bedfellows but with either “*Doveryai no proveryai*” — trust, but verify — is always the better portion.

A Country-man that was to pass a River, sounded it up and down to try where it was most fordable: and upon Trial he made this Observation on't: Where the Water ran Smooth, he found it Deepest; and on the contrary, Shallowest where it made most Noise. *There's More Danger in a Reserv'd and Silent, than in a Noisy, Babbling Enemy.*¹

The silent currents deep beneath still water run swift, angrily denying the unwary a cautionary note.

*Silence like a cancer grows.
Hear my words that I might teach you.
Take my arms that I might reach you.
But my words like silent raindrops fell
and echoed in the wells of silence.*²

For too long the silence of the shepherds has allowed the cancer of evil to metastasize, infecting ever more the Body of Christ and his Holy Catholic Church. But this is not merely recent vintage. Saint Peter Damian (1007-1072), an Italian Benedictine monk, Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia and Doctor of the Church was an outspoken critic with an acid tongue for members of the Church hierarchy — bishops and religious superiors — who had turned a blind eye to the moral depravity within the ranks of clerics and monks under their rule. Such was his antipathy and moral outrage that his recommended punishment was death! In his *Book of Gomorrah*, he wrote:

Listen, you do-nothing superiors of clerics and priests. Listen, and even though you feel sure of yourselves, tremble at the thought that you are partners in the guilt of others; those, I mean, who wink at the sins of their subjects that need correction and who by ill-considered silence allow them license to sin. Listen, I say, and be shrewd enough to understand that all of you alike are deserving of death, that is, not only those who do such things, but also they who approve those who practice them (Rom 1:32).

The sainted Doctor of the Church condemns with the most violent intemperance those reprobate bishops and religious

superiors who themselves were guilty of heinous sodomitic acts and who prostituted their own spiritual sons — seminarians, priests and monks under their care.

While some may commend the holy doctor for his moral zealotry, death, however, may be a tad too harsh a punishment. That does not in any way compromise that which must be addressed with utmost seriousness and deliberate effect. Such grievous sins should and must always be condemned, never suffered in silence. Silence is never the answer no matter the effect of public condemnation and just punishment.

There are many questions which demand honest answers. One question being asked is “Why haven’t bishops been proactive in eliminating from the ranks abusive priests?” The answer is not necessarily a simple one. Here is what one priest wrote recently:

In a few cases, the bishops may themselves be personally compromised. In the majority of cases, I think the reason is fear about the consequences of a zero-tolerance policy.

Several years ago, I spoke with to a bishop friend I’ve known since before I entered seminary. I brought to his attention what some people from one of his parishes where I had spoken had told me about their priest who was regularly preaching heresy against Marian dogmas, mocking people’s devotions and giving advice opposed to Church moral teaching in the confessional.

The bishop asked, in a somewhat frustrated tone, what I thought he could do about it. “What would

you do,” I asked, “if the faith of one of your nieces or nephews was being poisoned there?” After thinking about it, he admitted he would act, but confessed that he was concerned that once he started to crack down on particular priests, he would likely have to discipline a sizable number of his clergy, which could lead to closed parishes, protests, overworked priests who remained and various other troubles.

It might indeed lead there, I replied, but it’s better to have fewer priests truly building up the faith than dealing with many more who by words and example weaken or destroy it. He laudably removed the priest two days later.

The conversation taught me about the “maintenance” issues that can keep good bishops up at night—tolerating unfaithful priests to keep parishes open at a time of priestly shortages—and how it’s essential to make such decisions “personal,” never forgetting the people who suffer because of unfaithful stewards.

Because of this episcopal fear, I think that it’s important for lay faithful who want to catalyze reform to let their bishops know that they are prepared to be personally inconvenienced in the practice of the faith, with fewer Mass times and even fewer parishes, if that’s what it takes to ensure that they’re served by priests who keep their promises.³

There are many acts and actors to this sordid tale too long buried not yet dead, forgotten not yet forgiven, unknown not yet revealed, the preface not yet written while conclusions have been in deliberate haste concluded. Vultures thrive on carrion, eschewing respect for dead and dying; the rotting flesh of mortal sin has darkened heaven with vultures

circling in anticipation of a foul and putrid feast.

Whichever side the vultures feed the carrion is every bit as rotten and decidedly reeks of sulfur. There is little to be gained from casting judgment or proclaiming righteousness and truth absent knowing what is yet unknown; what facts are at present known would rest comfortably upon the tip of a needle with room to spare. What now so fouls the air is but opinion premised entirely on conjecture, personal bias, innuendo and wishful thinking, coupled with misinterpretation, erroneous or false information, misleading statements and felonious argument.

“For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). This is the season of revelation, discovery and for assigning blame to those who would speak of immorality and scandal within the hierarchy of the Church, from the lowliest prelate to the lofty occupant of the Petrine Chair. It matters not guilt or innocence only upon whose back to place the monkey for the offense.

I am reminded it was but a week ago of Jeremiah. Each of us belongs to Christ. Each is called to serve but one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Though other gods may tempt the soul, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Amen.

1. Roger L’Estrange, *Aesop’s Fables: A Country-man and a River*, 1692.

2. Simon and Garfunkel, *Sounds of Silence*, 1964.

3. Father Roger Landry, *How to Stay Faithful as We Endure and Confront the Crisis*, National Catholic Register, August 21, 2018.

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

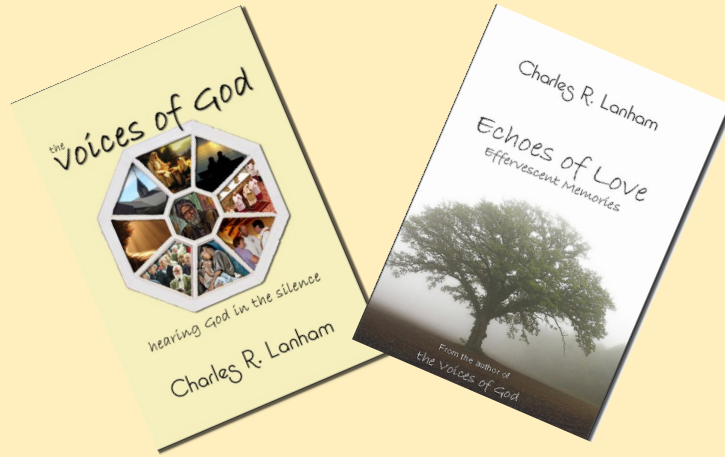
Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

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



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

deaconscorner.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://deaconscorner.org>.

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