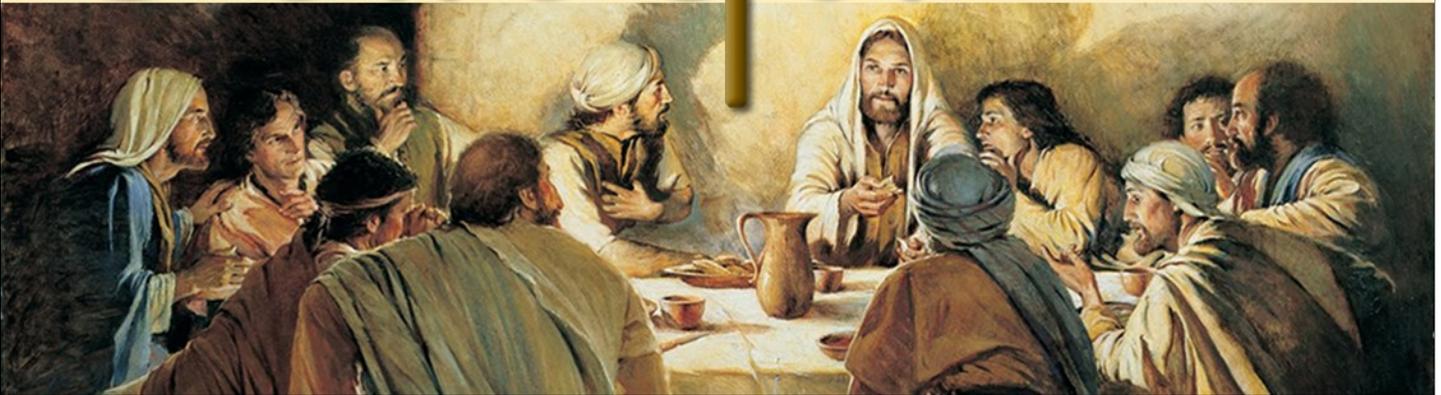


Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

Everyone Dies

By God, we must live!

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.

Everyone Dies

By God, we must live!

Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy, 1789, observed that "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." This rather fatalistic and sardonic proverb seems strangely appropriate this year with April 15th—the final "drop dead" date for filing U.S. Income Taxes—and the Triduum—the observance of the passion and death of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—occurring within days of one another.



Oddly enough, there is a certain uncertainty with either, as no one knows where the taxes paid will eventually be spent anymore than one can truly know where one will ultimately spend eternity. It is the insult and inevitability of each, holding no possibility of escape or delay,

which rubs raw the tender soul. The only choice no choice at all, for everyone dies. No one lives forever in the here and now but God has promised life forever with him if only we choose to live in his love and follow his commandments.

This is, of course, predicated upon whether we choose to believe in him and to be willing to submit our will to his, and that is seldom easy, frequently a heavy burden, terribly difficult, often almost too painful to bear. But, should we truly believe in God and his promise of eternal reward in heaven, we should suffer any afflictions set upon us with gratitude and joy.

For as the apostle Paul tells us we should not lose heart but rather trust in the Lord knowing that by God, we must live, not for the present but for the true home which awaits us.

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Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18).

Last January, 8,000 attendees at FOCUS SLS18—the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, Student Leadership Summit Conference held in Chicago—were surprised by the unexpected appearance of Jim Caviezel, the actor who portrayed Jesus Christ in *The Passion of Christ* and St. Luke in the then yet to be released film *Paul, Apostle of Christ*. J.P. Mauro, writing for *Aleteia* said, “Jim Caviezel gave what may be the greatest Catholic address of the 21st century.” It is well-worth the viewing (available on youtube, the link can be found in the endnotes.)

The crowd was thrilled to see Caviezel’s kindly, bearded face, to such an extent that it did not seem they would ever calm down. He gently raised a finger and the room became still enough to hear a pin drop. Then Caviezel began, speaking softly and reading from his prepared speech a little clumsily:

“The name Saul means ‘Great One.’ The name Paul means ‘little one.’ While making this film I learned that changing one little, tiny letter that we can become great in the eyes of God. But it requires us to be little if we wish to be great. This is the way of the saints. This is the way of the Holy and this is the way Saul became St. Paul.”

He continued speaking of vocations and how one must open up to discern such a calling. He spoke of how he knew he wanted to be an actor, the stressful time of his role as Edmond Dantes in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, as well as the sacrifices he made during his time playing Jesus in *The Passion of the Christ*. He said:

“When I was up there on the Cross, I learned that in His suffering was our redemption. Remember the servant is no greater than the master. Each of us must carry our own cross. There is a price for our faith, for our freedoms. I have been literally scourged, hit by the whips, crucified, struck by lightning, yes, open heart surgery — that’s what happens after five and a half months of hypothermia.”

He recounted a moment during the filming of *The Passion*, when he was wedged under the cross and someone else pulled it the wrong way, causing his shoulder to become dislocated. He said this footage remains in the final cut of the film and commented that had the production taken place in a studio, we might never have seen such an authentic performance. “The suffering made my performance, just as it makes our lives.”

“There was a lot of pain and suffering before the resurrection and your path will be no different. So embrace your cross and race towards your goal. I want you to go out into this pagan world and shamelessly profess your faith in public. The world needs proud warriors, animated by their faith. Warriors like St. Paul and St. Luke who risk their names and reputations to take their faith, their love for Jesus into the world.”

He spoke about democracy and how the freedom to do what you want is not the same as the freedom to do what you ought. He quoted

Maximilian Kolbe’s famous phrase, “Indifference is the greatest sin of the 20th century,” to which he added, “Well, my brothers and sisters, it is the greatest sin of the 21st century as well.”

He brought the whole speech together by quoting the famed pre-battle speech from *Braveheart* in which William Wallace pumps up his army by speaking of freedom and what one must be willing to do for it. He broke from the quote, speaking with conviction and leaving aside his prepared speech, saying:

“Every man dies. Not every man truly lives. You, you, you. We all must fight for that authentic freedom and live my friends. By God, we must live! And with the Holy Spirit as your shield and Christ as your sword, may you join St. Michael and all the angels in sending Lucifer and all his henchmen straight back to hell where they belong!”

This Thursday, one week before Catholics throughout the world will once again relive the passion, death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI broke his self-imposed silence with a lengthy (over 6,000 words) essay on the clerical abuse crisis. The essay, entitled “The Church and the Scandal of Sexual Abuse,” is divided into three parts. The first is an examination of the “wider societal context” of the crisis. A second section deals with the effects on the “formation of priests and on the lives of priests.” And in a third part he develops “some perspectives for a proper response on the part of the Church.” While the essay will no doubt be viewed negatively by some,

every word parsed and scrutinized by those who would disagree and summarily dismissed, Pope Benedict remains a voice of one crying out in the desert. His words still ring true in a world long devoid of any trace of it.

Over the following weeks Colloqui will provide you with his insights through his own powerful words. This week, his introductory remarks followed by the first part. His introduction places what follows into context.

On February 21 to 24, at the invitation of Pope Francis, the presidents of the world's bishops' conferences gathered at the Vatican to discuss the current crisis of the faith and of the Church; a crisis experienced throughout the world after shocking revelations of clerical abuse perpetrated against minors.

The extent and gravity of the reported incidents has deeply distressed priests as well as laity, and has caused more than a few to call into question the very Faith of the Church. It was necessary to send out a strong message, and seek out a new beginning, so to make the Church again truly credible as a light among peoples and as a force in service against the powers of destruction.

Since I myself had served in a position of responsibility as shepherd of the Church at the time of the public outbreak of the crisis, and during the run-up to it, I had to ask myself - even though, as emeritus, I am no longer directly responsible - what I could contribute to a new beginning.

Thus, after the meeting of the presidents of the bishops' conferences was announced, I compiled some notes by which I might contribute one or two remarks to assist in this difficult hour.

Having contacted the Secretary of State, Cardinal [Pietro] Parolin and the Holy Father [Pope Francis] himself, it

seemed appropriate to publish this text in the Klerusblatt [a monthly periodical for clergy in mostly Bavarian dioceses].

My work is divided into three parts.

In the first part, I aim to present briefly the wider social context of the question, without which the problem cannot be understood. I try to show that in the 1960s an egregious event occurred, on a scale unprecedented in history. It could be said that in the 20 years from 1960 to 1980, the previously normative standards regarding sexuality collapsed entirely, and a new normalcy arose that has by now been the subject of laborious attempts at disruption.

In the second part, I aim to point out the effects of this situation on the formation of priests and on the lives of priests.

Finally, in the third part, I would like to develop some perspectives for a proper response on the part of the Church.

I.

(1) The matter begins with the state-prescribed and supported introduction of children and youths into the nature of sexuality. In Germany, the then-Minister of Health, Ms. [Käte] Strobel, had a film made in which everything that had previously not been allowed to be shown publicly, including sexual intercourse, was now shown for the purpose of education. What at first was only intended for the sexual education of young people consequently was widely accepted as a feasible option.

Similar effects were achieved by the "Sexkoffer" published by the Austrian government [A controversial 'suitcase' of sex education materials used in Austrian schools in the late 1980s]. Sexual and pornographic movies then became a common occurrence, to the point that they were screened at newsreel theaters [Bahnhofskinos]. I still remember seeing, as I was walking through the city of Regensburg one day, crowds of people lining up in front

of a large cinema, something we had previously only seen in times of war, when some special allocation was to be hoped for. I also remember arriving in the city on Good Friday in the year 1970 and seeing all the billboards plastered up with a large poster of two completely naked people in a close embrace.

Among the freedoms that the Revolution of 1968 sought to fight for was this all-out sexual freedom, one which no longer conceded any norms.

The mental collapse was also linked to a propensity for violence. That is why sex films were no longer allowed on airplanes because violence would break out among the small community of passengers. And since the clothing of that time equally provoked aggression, school principals also made attempts at introducing school uniforms with a view to facilitating a climate of learning.

Part of the physiognomy of the Revolution of '68 was that pedophilia was then also diagnosed as allowed and appropriate.

For the young people in the Church, but not only for them, this was in many ways a very difficult time. I have always wondered how young people in this situation could approach the priesthood and accept it, with all its ramifications. The extensive collapse of the next generation of priests in those years and the very high number of laicizations were a consequence of all these developments.

(2) At the same time, independently of this development, Catholic moral theology suffered a collapse that rendered the Church defenseless against these changes in society. I will try to outline briefly the trajectory of this development.

Until the Second Vatican Council, Catholic moral theology was largely

on natural law, while Sacred Scripture was only cited for background or substantiation. In the Council's struggle for a new understanding of Revelation, the natural law option was largely abandoned, and a moral theology based entirely on the Bible was demanded.

I still remember how the Jesuit faculty in Frankfurt trained a highly gifted young Father (Bruno Schüller) with the purpose of developing a morality based entirely on Scripture. Father Schüller's beautiful dissertation shows a first step towards building a morality based on Scripture. Father Schüller was then sent to America for further studies and came back with the realization that from the Bible alone morality could not be expressed systematically. He then attempted a more pragmatic moral theology, without being able to provide an answer to the crisis of morality.

In the end, it was chiefly the hypothesis that morality was to be exclusively determined by the purposes of human action that prevailed. While the old phrase "the end justifies the means" was not confirmed in this crude form, its way of thinking had become definitive. Consequently, there could no longer be anything that constituted an absolute good, any more than anything fundamentally evil; [there could be] only relative value judgments. There no longer was the [absolute] good, but only the relatively better, contingent on the moment and on circumstances.

The crisis of the justification and presentation of Catholic morality reached dramatic proportions in the late '80s and '90s. On January 5, 1989, the "Cologne Declaration," signed by 15 Catholic professors of theology, was published. It focused on various crisis points in the relationship between the episcopal magisterium and the task of theology. [Reactions to] this text, which at

first did not extend beyond the usual level of protests, very rapidly grew into an outcry against the Magisterium of the Church and mustered, audibly and visibly, the global protest potential against the expected doctrinal texts of John Paul II (cf. D. Mieth, *Kölner Erklärung*, LThK, VI³, p. 196) [LTHK is the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, a German-language "Lexicon of Theology and the Church," whose editors included Karl Rahner and Cardinal Walter Kasper.]

Pope John Paul II, who knew very well the situation of moral theology and followed it closely, commissioned work on an encyclical that would set these things right again. It was published under the title "*Veritatis splendor*" on August 6, 1993, and it triggered vehement backlashes on the part of moral theologians. Before it, the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" already had persuasively presented, in a systematic fashion, morality as proclaimed by the Church.

I shall never forget how then-leading German moral theologian Franz Böckle, who, having returned to his native Switzerland after his retirement, announced in view of the possible decisions of the encyclical "*Veritatis splendor*" that if the encyclical should determine that there were actions which were always and under all circumstances to be classified as evil, he would challenge it with all the resources at his disposal.

It was God, the Merciful, that spared him from having to put his resolution into practice; Böckle died on July 8, 1991. The encyclical was published on August 6, 1993 and did indeed include the determination that there were actions that can never become good.

The pope was fully aware of the importance of this decision at that moment and for this part of his text, he had once again consulted lead-

ing specialists who did not take part in the editing of the encyclical. He knew that he must leave no doubt about the fact that the moral calculus involved in balancing goods must respect a final limit. There are goods that are never subject to trade-offs.

There are values which must never be abandoned for a greater value and even surpass the preservation of physical life. There is martyrdom. God is [about] more than mere physical survival. A life that would be bought by the denial of God, a life that is based on a final lie, is a non-life.

Martyrdom is a basic category of Christian existence. The fact that martyrdom is no longer morally necessary in the theory advocated by Böckle and many others shows that the very essence of Christianity is at stake here.

In moral theology, however, another question had meanwhile become pressing: The hypothesis that the Magisterium of the Church should have final competence ("infallibility") only in matters concerning the faith itself gained widespread acceptance; (in this view) questions concerning morality should not fall within the scope of infallible decisions of the Magisterium of the Church. There is probably something right about this hypothesis that warrants further discussion. But there is a minimum set of morals which is indissolubly linked to the foundational principle of faith and which must be defended if faith is not to be reduced to a theory but rather to be recognized in its claim to concrete life.

All this makes apparent just how fundamentally the authority of the Church in matters of morality is called into question. Those who deny the Church a final teaching competence in this area force her to remain silent precisely where the

boundary between truth and lies is at stake.

Independently of this question, in many circles of moral theology the hypothesis was expounded that the Church does not and cannot have her own morality. The argument being that all moral hypotheses would also know parallels in other religions and therefore a Christian property of morality could not exist. But the question of the unique nature of a biblical morality is not answered by the fact that for every single sentence somewhere, a parallel can also be found in other religions. Rather, it is about the whole of biblical morality, which as such is new and different from its individual parts.

The moral doctrine of Holy Scripture has its uniqueness ultimately predicated in its cleaving to the image of God, in faith in the one God who showed himself in Jesus Christ and who lived as a human being. The Decalogue is an application of the biblical faith in God to human life. The image of God and morality belong together and thus result in the particular change of the Christian attitude towards the world and human life. Moreover, Christianity has been described from the beginning with the word *hodós* [Greek for a road, in the New Testament often used in the sense of a path of progress].

Faith is a journey and a way of life. In the old Church, the catechumenate was created as a habitat against an increasingly demoralized culture, in which the distinctive and fresh aspects of the Christian way of life were practiced and at the same time protected from the common way of life. I think that even today something like catechumenal communities are necessary so that Christian life can assert itself in its own way.²

During this coming Holy Week, please read and reflect the paragraph above, for it speaks of the essential essence of what it means to be a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ. Let it serve as a reminder that although we are in the world we are not of the world.

His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

"But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (John 16:29-33, 17:13-19).

May the blessings of almighty God and the saving power of Jesus Christ be with you this Holy Week.

1. Jim Caviezel, FOCUS SLS18 speech: [youtube.com/watch?list=RDe9z-dMQjRBE&v=e9z-dMQjRBE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=RDe9z-dMQjRBE&v=e9z-dMQjRBE).
2. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, "The Church and the Scandal of Sexual Abuse", Part I, April 11, 2019.

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.

To Change the Church

Ross Gregory Douthat

Simon & Schuster
2018, 256 pages.

Mere Christianity

C. S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis Pte. Ltd.
1952, 228 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

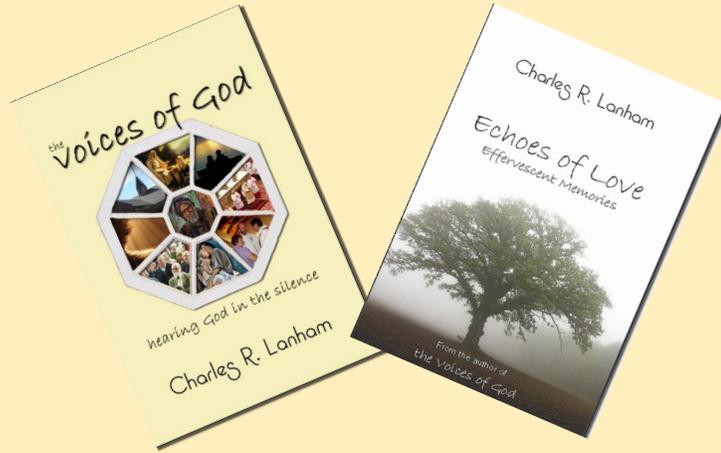
Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

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

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