

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

To Be Catholic

It means more than you may think

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.

To Be Catholic

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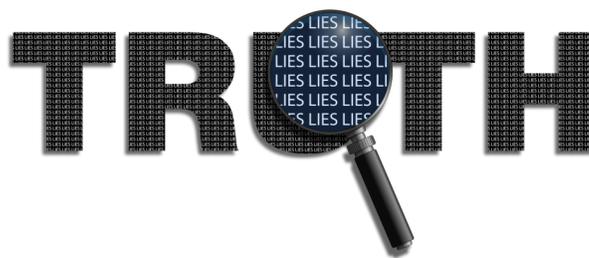
Age, and I suppose, a mature curiosity to know the *Unknowable*, the *Prologue* and the *Epilogue* to the known and the knowable, arrives without so much a howdy-do. We are young, and then in a wink and a nod we realize we are not. Strings of somewhere, somehow, sometime are but memories of past and present rolled up into a mess, a wadded mess of life lived less or more or somewhere in between.

And yet, it is our past that defines us, the sum and substance of experience met in living. It is that which separates the ages, the knowing from the unknowing. The knowing of past mistakes, of consequences and lessons learned is

deeply personal and thus of little interest outside shared experience. It is the intransigence of the unknowing for the past that warrants repetition and the insanity which inevitably must follow.

Should one pause to think of what it means *to know* a thing, to truly *know* the truth and reality of anything at all, would what we thought we knew remain the same with greater understanding and a fuller knowing? We say we

know without knowing the truth of what we claim to know, and thus, the first victim to knowing is always the truth.



Years ago, as a college freshman, I participated in a psychology lab exercise meant to show how fragile the truth is relative to what we know. The professor began by leaving the classroom, taking one of the students

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with him. He then read from a paper a statement, something like, "The woman, tall, with long brown hair and blue eyes, dressed as if going to a funeral, was suddenly frightened out of her wits by the unexpected appearance of a black cat."

The professor then returned to the classroom, telling the student to stay. Upon returning, he asked another student to meet the first student who would repeat from memory what the professor had read to him, then return to the classroom. One by one, students left the classroom, listened to what the waiting student had to say, then repeat it to the next student until the last student had heard the statement. When the last student returned to the classroom, the professor had the student tell the entire class what he had heard. Needless to say, the results were hilarious, outlandish gibberish. When the professor read the original statement, we students immediately got the point. It was a point well noted, one this student may never forget.

My mother was an award winning journalist when journalism meant reporting verifiable facts, not opinion. Even so, facts have a nasty habit of dancing in the wind, twisted by the whirlwind of unforgiving deadlines. For years, I carried a small article written by my sainted mother in my wallet as a reminder of how even the most knowledgeable and diligent writer must never trust to memory, always verify, reverify, and then re-reverify the facts.

The small article was but a brief mention (fewer than 50 words) detailing my service rank and assigned duty station while serving in the U.S. Army. Bear in mind that the author was none other than the woman who bore me and knew me better than any other, and yet, other than the name which she gave me, the remaining "facts" were pure fiction or in today's political argot, "fake news."

I am a child of the sixties, a member of the baby boomer generation; my past, like other boomers, has defined me, shaped me in countless ways. But my past is more than my own for the pasts of my parents played an existential part as did all those who had come before; each defined and shaped by those who had come before them. We are not alone in our becoming; we are not alone in who we are. My parents' lives were framed by the Great Depression and World War II; their lives were shaped by deprivation and the horrors of war, events that defined them and would influence all that would come after. Including me.

Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower, five-star general and Supreme Allied Commander during World War II, became president when I was six and would be so until I was fourteen. I grew up knowing the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, Soviet expansion, the threat of nuclear destruction, bomb shelters, the Korean conflict and escalating tensions in Vietnam.

Mass was in Latin; one Mass on Sunday was always a High Mass. The priest faced in the same direction as the congregation. Altar boys (no girls)

wore cassocks and surplices. An altar rail belted the Sanctuary, communicants knelt to receive Holy Communion, and an altar boy would follow the priest, holding a communion plate under the communicant's chin while the priest placed the host on the tongue.

Catholic school teachers were nuns in habits whose habit was to instill fear in their charges. Infractions were dealt with corporally (a ruler was the preferred instrument of punishment) and administered with immediate effect. Disbelieving, outraged parents demanding an apology under threat of legal action was unimaginable; a troublesome student faced certain double jeopardy, punished twice, first by the holy sister, then by the parents. Infractions were, consequently, as rare as proverbial hens teeth. We prayed in school and pledged allegiance to the flag. Grades given were grades earned.

In 1962, my first year at Holy Rosary Catholic High School, John Glenn orbited the earth while the Second Vatican Council opened its doors to the world, the first ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church to be televised around the world. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, my Sophomore year. The Twenty-fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, prohibiting the use of poll taxes in national elections was ratified in 1964 followed by the Civil Rights Act. The Free Speech movement was launched on the University of California, Berkeley campus. Vatican II ended in 1965, the year I graduated from high school.

Over the ensuing fifty-four years, much has happened, much has changed, that is the way of history. What was once the present is now the past, my past and those who have lived it. What so disturbs the soul these days is the intentional ignorance of so many, the purposed attempt to erase and rewrite the past to better fit the narrative of their fiction. The past is etched in stone, written on the pages of history in indelible ink. It cannot be erased nor should it be.

We are who we are in large measure by the dictatorship of past experience. Our past defines us whether we wish it or not. It is the same with our faith and with our God. God does not change. The laws of God are immutable; they are not subject to the mutable laws of man. God created us and endowed us with free will, but our existence is not democratic, we exist under the rule of a benevolent, loving master, a Divine Dictator. He alone makes the rules and there are but ten of them. We break them at the peril of our souls.

The world has never been—and never will be—the idealized utopian dream so highly regarded by those who believe too highly in their divinized self. In the mind of man there is no God but man, each man a corporate god whose aim is to profit through their divine selfishness. It is enough to make one terrified of what is now and what is yet to come. When the world and all the evil of worldly things begin to press and overwhelm, I find the forbearance sorely needed in the testimony of the apostle Paul.

On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:5:10).

It was in that same place that I heard, if not *the* answer, then perhaps a means to an end, the words that might finally excise that troublesome prick and grant some small relief that so anguishes my soul.

Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced (2 Corinthians 12:19-21).

For quite some time now, I have been asking myself, and others, what precisely is required of us “to be Catholic?” Specifically, what does Jesus demand from us to be true disciples, members of the Body of Christ, “who are called to be saints” (Rom 1:7). I ask this, not so to boast, for like the blessed apostle, I may only boast of my weaknesses; I ask only so we might come to believe enough so as to understand, or as Saint Augustine wrote, “Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”

It seems to me that we, as Catholics, have lost “a pearl of great value” (Matthew 13:46), we have lost our faith, our unquestioning belief in the goodness of God and salvific power of His Son, Jesus Christ. We have lost our faith because we no longer believe, and we no longer believe because we have turned our hearts and our minds away from the Word of God toward the lures of the world. We no longer listen to the Word of God heard in divine Scripture. We listen to the voice of Satan and his demons through social media and Hollywood. We no longer bend a knee in prayer.

The Church “forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful ... to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. ... Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For ‘we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.’ – Catechism of the Catholic Church §2653.

We have become ignorant, largely ignoring what Jesus taught and what God commands us to believe and to do. What Scripture is read or heard is too often limited to those who still come to Sunday worship, for Catholics seldom read the Bible. Those who pray to God too often complain that God never responds. God always responds, he has already responded, we just aren't listening.

Michael Barber, Catholic theologian and associate professor at the Augustine Institute states quite clearly that to hear God you must listen to his Word.

This involves more than simply passing our eyes over the pages of Scripture. To hear God speaking to us, we must do something more intentional than casually glance at the Bible's pages. Catholic teaching emphasizes the need for meditation, that is, the slow and thoughtful reading of Scripture. We can truly enter into a meaningful conversation with God wherein we are not simply speaking to him but listening to him by contemplating Sacred Scripture.¹

In order to understand what it means "to be Catholic" one must first come to believe *all* that Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, taught and come to be *perfect* in our obedience to his commands. It is perhaps worth noting that the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) each end with Jesus commissioning the disciples to spread the Good News:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go

therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45-47).

Most notable in each of the synoptics is the directive to teach and to preach *all that Jesus had commanded*. Although no direct commissioning can be found in the Gospel of John, the importance of teaching and preaching is clearly implied when Jesus commands Simon Peter three times to care for his flock, to tend and feed them.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

Obviously then, preaching and teaching were important, of vital importance to the Church of the early Christian communities and no less so to the Church in the modern world. The apostles went out into the world, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them and "teaching" them to observe all that Jesus had commanded them. Why did he command them to teach *all* that he had commanded? The answer should be obvious but obviously the obvious has been lost to the ears of the modern Christian. Catholics—and Christians—in the modern world, through no insignificant fault of their own choosing, have little or no understanding of what Jesus taught or what he commanded of his disciples. Why this has come to be, can be placed in large measure, squarely on the shoulders of the modern preacher.

God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4): that is, of Christ Jesus. Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth:

God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations. (CCC §74).

Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most High God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips. In preaching the

Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline. (CCC §75).

In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways:

--orally "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves received—whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit";

--in writing "by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing." (CCC §76).

The Sacred Liturgy is celebrated in two parts, each part no less important than the other. Essential elements of Christian worship, the liturgy of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice together proclaim the goodness of God who sent his Word, his only Son, Jesus Christ into the world as a living and true sacrifice, for our salvation. The importance of proclaiming the Gospel and breaking open the Word during the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy cannot be over-emphasized. The Second Vatican Council issued *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy noting

that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by

the same title and to the same degree.

For the liturgy, "through which the work of our redemption is accomplished," most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.²

Just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also He sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This He did that, by preaching the gospel to every creature, they might proclaim that the Son of God, by His death and resurrection, had freed us from the power of Satan and from death, and brought us into the kingdom of His Father. (SC §6).

The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before men can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion: "How then are they to call upon him in whom they have not yet believed? But how are they

to believe him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14-15). (SC §9).

The council fathers understood the urgent need for the faithful to be led to a fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations as Christian people, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet 2:9; cf. 2:4-5) which is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work.

Yet it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and undertake to give instruction about it. (SC §14).

In the foreword to *Dogma and Preaching*, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) acknowledges that the path from dogma to preaching has become very difficult.

There are no longer any patterns of thought and assumptions that carry the content of dogma into everyday life; it is too much to demand of the individual preacher, however, that he himself should figure out each time the entire path from the doctrinal formula to its core and from

back to contemporary language. Should we not instead leave out dogma entirely? With such a radical cure, which appears to many today to be the only way out, preaching becomes speaking in one's own name and loses all objective interest whatsoever, as Erik Peterson has strikingly and incontestably demonstrated from the painful experiences of crumbling liberal theology (*Was ist Theologie?* [Bonn, 1926]). The inner tension of preaching depends on the objective arch spanning and upheld by the pillars: Dogma-Scripture-Church-Today; not one of them can be taken away without the whole thing eventually collapsing.³

I will return to more of what Ratzinger has to say but before I do I must mention briefly the difficulties bad theology—what Ratzinger calls “crumbling liberal theology”—has led to in the spiritual life of the Church and to its members.

This is a truth that is necessary to underscore. Theology is essential for the Church's pastoral mission and life of faith. Sadly, many fail to appreciate this. Theology is often viewed merely as a form of Catholic trivia. It is even becoming increasingly common to suggest that theology is somehow antithetical to spiritually or to pastoral concerns.

I once knew a priest who often expressed this idea in his homilies. “Don't get distracted by all that fancy theology,” he would state in a charming, northeastern accent. “All that matters is that you have Jesus in your heart.”

Having Jesus in your heart is important; on that point, I fully agree. But it is not simply enough to love the Lord with all one's heart. When Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, he responds, “You shall love the Lord your God

with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37).

Did you catch that? Loving the Lord with our *minds* is indispensable. One cannot be Jesus's disciple and ignore this aspect of his teaching. In fact, the Greek word “disciple” (*mathētēs*) literally means “student.” As a professor, I like to remind my students what being a student involves—students must *study*. If we are called to be Jesus's disciples, we are also called to grow constantly in understanding our faith.

Of course, I am *not* suggesting that every believer needs to earn academic degrees in theology. Most of the greatest saints in Church history never did. Nonetheless, you cannot be truly committed to following Jesus and refuse to think about what that entails. St. Paul writes, “... be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2). For Paul, spiritual transformation comes, in part, by being transformed in one's *thinking*.

Years of bad theology coupled with bad homilies have made for bad catechesis and the results tragic: Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, no longer know nor care what it means to be Christian. They have either forgotten or have never known what it means to be a disciple, what is demanded of them, what obligates them if they are to be true members of the Body of Christ and his Church.

The American humorist, Mark Twain, once wrote of a preacher and his bad preaching in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: “He was a preacher ... and never charged nothing for his preaching, and it was worth it too.” That, in a nutshell, is the state to which

modern preaching has descended.

Let's be honest. A lot of preaching today is bad—some is even terrible. Sunday by Sunday, preaching is often trite, self-involved, or simply dull. My preaching, your preaching, our preaching, the preaching you hear from the pews: so much of it falls short, so much unworthy of God and unworthy of the mission. We should admit this. Candidly and in penance, we should acknowledge the failures and the crisis that our too-often lackluster preaching has brought to the Church. The matter is urgent.

Pope Benedict XVI, forever circumspect but no less frank, said once that “the quality of homilies needs to be improved” (*Sacramentum Canonitatis*, 46). Pope Francis, characteristically more blunt, said that we preachers too often trap Jesus in our “dull categories,” and that we all “suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 11, 135). These sentiments, echoed the world over by people in the pews, bear witness to the problem. In his introduction to *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., begins by asking, “Why are most homilies so boring?” as if it's a truism needing no argument. Google “bad Catholic preaching” and you'll spend the next several hours reading blog posts and articles and comments, all of them offering the same sad assessment. Preaching is not good, and the mission of the Church is suffering because of it.

Of course, it's not just Catholic preaching. Protestant preaching isn't what it used to be either, not for some time. At the beginning of his multivolume work on Christian preaching, the Protestant preacher and scholar Hughes Oliphant Old writes, “Like so many other

preachers of my generation, I find myself asking what has happened to preaching." It's a decline felt in the pews too. Kendrick Lamar, for example, the popular rapper, made headlines recently talking about the "emptiness" of the sermons he heard as a child. It's a decline that's been felt for years. More than a half century ago, Martin Luther King Jr. lamented that too often "the contemporary church is a weak ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound." Having been corrupted by prosperity-Gospel delusions, twisted patriotism, or therapeutic idioms of tired progressivism, Protestant preaching is also in crisis. And for that, too, the mission of Jesus suffers.

Throughout the Church's history, preaching has at times suffered and at other times flourished. Beatrice in Dante's *Paradiso*, for example, criticizes the preachers of her time for "inventing new ideas." "Christ did not say to His first congregation: 'Go preach idle nonsense to the world,'" she complains. Bad preaching is nothing new. Still, the poverty of preaching in our day is an urgent crisis, an evangelical crisis impossible to ignore.

Never mind that we live in an age of generally poor public speaking and impoverished orality, an age overwhelmed by miniscule, fragmented digital texts and shallow memes. It's an age, as Mark Thompson, CEO of the New York Times, wrote, witnessing the collapse of "public language" and the rise of a "rhetoric of rage." More tragically, we preachers have contributed to it. The substance of many sermons or homilies is often no longer the substance of the Gospel, a sin of omission belonging to both conservatives and liberals, traditionalists and progressives. I often wonder about the providence that placed the Creed after the homily: Was God seeing to it that after a bad

homily his people would hear at least some essential truth?

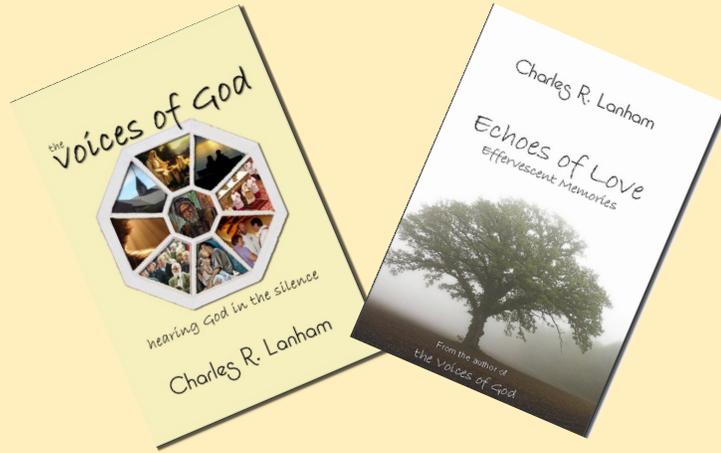
And again, it's a crisis because our bad preaching is part of the reason so many people have given up the practice of the faith or have left the Church. It's why some either have given up on Christ altogether or simply refuse to consider the Lord meaningfully at all. For an untold number of ordinary people, the Gospel no longer even dawns on them, not faintly. For them, Christianity or the Church or anything pertaining to faith simply isn't in the conversation. As Charles Taylor said, ours is truly a secular age, one in which materialist narratives enjoy "the false aura of the obvious." That is, for a growing number of people, it just doesn't occur to them to look to the faith for any sort of wisdom at all, much less salvation. Today, social scientists, celebrities, economists, random doctors, and sham gurus all enjoy more default credibility than your average preacher. Johann Hari, for instance, is a best-selling author—brilliant, humane, and important. One of his books, *Lost Connections*, about the causes of depression and anxiety, runs almost three hundred pages long. Almost every page details his discovery, via social scientists, of wisdom basic to Christianity and Judaism, ancient wisdom lived for centuries. But Hari doesn't see that. He dismisses faith in one parenthetical phrase. For him, he seeks wisdom everywhere but from the Church. And that's because the Church has probably never spoken meaningfully to him, her witness never compelling. And that's not Hari's fault. It's ours.

Which is why I say we preachers need to repent, rouse ourselves from clerical lethargy, and get to work becoming better preachers. Because the matter is urgent, and believe it or not, souls are at stake. And because there's still hope!⁵

Though the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Father Joshua Whitfield focus on the preacher and preaching, the laity, the bulk of the body of Christ are nowise absolved in their ignorance of the faith. Christ Jesus did command every disciple to love "God with all your heart, and with all your soul, *and with all your mind.*" As Dr. Barber noted, one cannot be a disciple of Jesus and ignore the need to know him through your mind. A disciple is a student and students must study. "If we are called to be Jesus's disciples, we are also called to grow constantly in understanding our faith."

Thus we begin. Until next week. Amen!

1. Michael Patrick Barber, *Salvation: What Every Catholic Should Know*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press; Greenwood Village, CO: Augustine Institute, 2019), Chapter 8: Not Inevitable, p. 140.
2. *Sacrosanctum Consilium: Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*. Promulgated by his holiness, Pope Paul VI, 1963, § 2.
3. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, First Unabridged Edition, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2011), 7.
4. Michael Patrick Barber, *Salvation*, pp. 4-5.
5. Joshua J. Whitfield, *The Crisis of Bad Preaching: Redeeming the Heart and Way of the Catholic Preacher*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2019). Joshua Whitfield is pastor of St. Rita Catholic Community in Dallas Texas, where he has served in a variety of roles since his conversion to Catholicism in 2009. He is the son of a Protestant preacher, previously served as an Episcopal priest, and was ordained in the Catholic Church under the pastoral provision of St. John Paul II in 2012. Whitfield is a contributor to The Dallas Morning News, for which he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2016. His work also has been published in The Texas Catholic, Newsday, and America magazine. He has appeared on Catholic Answers Focus and local television affiliates in Dallas. He is the author of *Pilgrim Holiness*. He is a 1999 graduate of Texas Tech University, with a bachelor's degree in English and history. He trained for ministry at the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, England, from 2000-2003, while earning bachelor's and master's degrees in theology and a master's degree in theology and pastoral studies from the University of Leeds. He earned his master's degree in theology from Duke University in 2008.



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