

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

Making Better Sawdust

Is that is what you really want?

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

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

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

Making Better Sawdust

If that is what you really want?

Some fifty odd years ago I purchased the first—and, as it turns out—the only table saw I have ever owned. Bought it from the local Sears store—on sale I would imagine—because back then a buck private in the U.S. Army brought home a whopping \$99 a month, that is about \$3.30 a day, give or take, more or less depending on how many days were in the month.

It worked well back then, works just as well today. You see, it is not the “new” of a thing or the “improved” whizbang techno-gadgetry that builds a fine piece, but the skill of the craftsman behind it; new and improved are both temporary and subjective: new only before and improved, how so and by what measure?

It is up to the craftsman to make the most of the talents gifted from God, along with studying those who had come before, lots of elbow grease, splintered fingers almost always covered with dust and glue and paint; above all, it is the accepting and the knowing that failure always comes before success.

Nothing ever gets built by tool alone, new, improved or otherwise. New and improved may create better sawdust ... if what you want is sawdust; but sawdust does not make fine craftsmanship.



There is an old maxim, “Rome wasn't built in a day,” well neither was the Basilica of Saint Peter's. For *San Pietro in Vaticano*, often called the New St. Peter's Basilica, construction was begun in 1506 and opened 120 years later in 1626. It is one of the largest churches in the world with a

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capacity of over 60,000 people. Standing at 448 feet tall, 730 feet long, and 500 feet wide, it covers approximately 240,000 square feet.

The interior dimensions of *San Pietro* can only be described as magnificently vast. As one author described it, "Only gradually does it dawn upon us—as we watch people draw near to this or that monument, strangely they appear to shrink; they are, of course, dwarfed by the scale of everything in the building. This in turn overwhelms us."¹

I once advised a young priest on the eve of his first journey to Rome to take two items when visiting San Pietro: a face mask and a travel pillow. Somewhat amused, he asked whatever for, so I explained how one's head will be tilted back so much looking at the magnificent artistry on the ceilings several hundreds of feet above that the travel pillow will make the viewing less a strain on the neck. As for the face mask: to cover the gaping mouth ... pigeons.

There is a sublime greatness, a wondrous beauty to be encountered at every turn. It was, I believe, Ralph Waldo Emerson who described Saint Peter's as "an ornament of the earth ... the sublime of the beautiful."

Construction of *Piazza San Pietro*, Saint Peter's Square began in 1656 and was completed eleven years later, in 1667. The square is bordered on two sides by semi-circular colonnades which, according to the architect, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, symbolize the outstretched arms of the church embrac-

ing the world. The colonnades consist of four rows of 284 Doric columns, each column 66 feet high and 5 feet wide, hand-carved and sculpted out of quarried stone.

Stand at the foot of one, look up in gaping wonder at the mammoth monolith; marvel at the elegance of its construction and wonder what man or beast could have improbably raised such a giant up. For three-and-a-half centuries they have stood embracing the world, built not with tools not yet imagined, but by men with ingenuity, grit and determination, using the hands, the mind and the will endowed them by Almighty God.

Would *San Pietro* if built today be built to last millennia? Could it be *better* built by modern means? Would it be made of quarried marble hand-crafted by generations of skilled stonemasons or made of "new and improved?" concrete, steel, plastic and glass? Who might be found the equal of a Michelangelo, Bernini, Bramante, or Maderno?

What then are we to think of patience, that virtue so severe it tries the will and strains the nerves of the most violent of men. There is no need to waste a moment wondering what Mr. G. K. Chesterton might say of modern technological progress, time- and labor-saving devices, robotics, virtual reality and artificial intelligence or of the mighty engines of industry, the advances in medical science or of general everyday science. "The question is not now whether the man is a tool-using animal. It is whether the tool is to be a man-using animal."²

We have become slaves to our conveniences; addicted to immediate gratification. We have no patience for waiting. We read "Rome was not built in a day" and without a moment's thought ask "Why not?" and if not, we shrug and say it simply is not worth the wait. Impatience cannot stand a second still; all too obvious to those who have the patience to observe the unsettled itch and incessant scratch. Good enough is good enough; best or better is overrated.

The poet and mystic Rabindranath Tagore wrote some time ago, "The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life." We have neither the time nor patience to contemplate the shade; life is become meaningless and nothing in the end shall come of it.

Before I come round again to where I at first began, I would be remiss if I did not add a few words more from the inestimable Mr. Chesterton:

Everybody understands by this time, I imagine, that our age is specially the Age of Psychology and therefore not the Age of Philosophy. Or, if we prefer to put the point otherwise, it is the Age of Suggestion and therefore not the Age of Reason. **The world does not ask whether propositions are proved, but only whether people are persuaded.** [*emphasis added*] The tricks of every trade are tricks of selling things rather than tricks of making them. Peace has her victories no less renowned than war, but the supreme victory of peace is in what is called delivering the goods, rather than in making sure that the

goods are good. ... Yet we retain the habit of working through psychology; through the subjective moods of multitudes rather than the objective truth about objects.³

Where I first began I shall now recontinue. What has captured my poor attention of recent memory is perhaps best illustrated by that rather grotesque and disconcerting tendency to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. By this, I am in nowise referring to that abhorrent, despicable, murderous and gravely immoral evil of sucking the life out of yet unborn human beings only to then discard the remains among the most common of waste. I cannot help but shudder at the thought of such sociopathology.

Yet, far less pornographic, the idiom aptly expresses what so many are wont to do with excessive zealotry, that is to say, the all too pedestrian practice of discarding whatever and whomever has had the bald temerity to progress beyond a decent age.

It is well-established that a new car loses half its value the moment it is driven off the lot. The very thought of somehow having been taken for a short ride off a steep cliff should land one directly in the madhouse or at the very least drive one mad. Is it not insanity to pay twice over before "new" demands first feeding? Would it not in humble honesty be the hallmark of common sense to reasonably pay half the sticker? And then there is the question: When is new no longer new? "Look here at my *new* car," the proud "new" debtor shouts, but, is it new or mostly new? When does the newness

wear vapor thin, develop wrinkles and of a sudden turn old and cranky? When does the wandering eye espy the "new" and "improved" shiny bauble and turn a blind eye from the "old" tired thing long past its prime. When does old love turn to lust for a newer model and then how quick the divorce? What arrogance to believe newer must always be the better of the elder. And then, according to current liberal fashion, improved *must* be better than what was perfectly acceptable *before* it was found wanting some ambiguous improvement. How so, who can say? Would it make a difference one way or the other?

Now what is more disturbing, more so than the illogic employed for the sake of argument, is the intransigence of a man who outside his own religious habits dares not yield an inch to reason. Facts be damned should the facts turn out to be too damnably close to disproving the lie so fervently believed. Truth, having got uncomfortably long in the tooth, is mercifully euthanized to make room for ever new and improved prevarications.

I am finding all the more to admire of the thoughts professed by Mr. G. K. Chesterton though much of what he wrote has become lost to the post-modern illiterati. What troubles most is in the discovery that little if nothing much has changed from when he wrote (the early part of the twentieth century) and what belongs to the here and now. It is painfully clear that we have failed to learn our lessons in that regard. Chesterton, among his many other hobbies, was a journalist with a conscience, a creature now fast coming extinct.

As a columnist he excelled in being what can only be described as "politically incorrect" pointedly pointing out the foibles, fallacies and faults of those who were too full of themselves. In an essay "*What I Intend in These Columns*" from February 20, 1932 he wrote:

Such remnants of a conscience as remain in me as a journalist, touching such rags of responsibility as may still belong to the function of journalism, lead me to say a word at this stage about my relation to practical politics, now that politics are becoming painfully practical. For practical politics generally arise out of the action of unpractical politicians. It has never been my purpose on this page to draw final conclusions; to force them on the reader or to apply them directly to practice. I mean that I should not use this column to tell people directly to vote for such and such a tariff or turn out such and such a Government, save in very exceptional cases. It seems to me the wrong place to be placarded with such positive and practical directions; if for no other reason, because there is no very practical way of inserting any reply.

What I have attempted to do is this: to take any or all of the conflicting statements; to endeavor to elucidate what a statement really means; occasionally with the result of discovering that it means nothing. But the practical policy might lead to something, even if this particular statement of it means nothing. I do not say that all the arguments used in the argument are worthless; still less that all the arguments used on one side are worthless. I merely point out that people on that side, on both sides, on all sides, have got into the habit of using worthless arguments. Or rather, to speak

truly, of using catchwords and slogans that do not really pretend to be arguments. There are other places where I may more properly press the definite claims of my own very definite private convictions about politics, economics, ethics, and religion. Here I deal chiefly with what is common to all views of all these things. I deal with the use and abuse of logic; the use and abuse of language; the duty of talking sense even on the wrong side; the duty of not talking nonsense even on the right side. There may be things I think so absolutely abnormal as to deserve to be treated as monstrosities. ... But by the greater part of what I have written here has been directed, not against things, but against theories supposed to support those things; not against the Government, but against this or that howling headline glorifying the Government; not against the Opposition, but against this or that noisy sophistry employed by the Opposition. So far as this critical function goes, what they say is more illuminating than what they do; and even what they do is not so important as why they do it.⁴

From the week before, Chesterton had written "We are watching the end of a process of which we did not watch the beginning." The world was changing and the "spotlight of social importance" had come to focus on the seller rather than the buyer.

Almost all codes of morals or manners, from the Ten commandments to the Declaration of Independence, had been conceived from the point of view of the consumer. There was not then a new set of codes or commandments intended to inspire the trader. The man who was commanded not to covet his neighbor's ass was the sort of man who was

employed in youth in keeping his father's asses. But it was in keeping the asses, not in getting rid of the asses to any human being who was ass enough to buy them.⁵

The average man has been taught a good man has the goods which is little more and nothing less than a sorry bill of goods. What the ordinary man has been constantly fed is a religion of everlasting need and unceasing dissatisfaction, a religion of hellish desire not heavenly reward. To want not is a mortal sin against the gods of Sellingmore. The devil is in the details and the details are the souls of men. Once it was assumed that the average person was an honest consumer seeking only what was necessary to live without fear or want. That assumption has now been turned on its head: the consumer is no longer the common denominator, the seller has assumed that envious position. "The proof of the pudding was no longer in the eating; indeed, the Age of Suggestion did not condescend to proof. The act of virtue, the great civic duty, was the construction of the most convincing suggestion that Poddle's Puddings Are The Best."⁶

A refrain seldom heard or leastwise heard much too infrequently is that happiness cannot be bought, it cannot be sold nor purchased at any price nor can it be given away; that you cannot buy happiness online or anywhere else is the likeliest reason so many find themselves so miserably unhappy. And yet, there are madmen who would try; try to convince you to buy what cannot be bought and to sell you on what cannot be sold.

That there are people with a cer-

tain madness, a mental malady—some would call it genius which only further proves their own insanity—who imagine the possibility of the impossible and then try their level best to sell ice cubes to Eskimos and flying Mercedes to Santa Claus. The epitome of such madness has in recent years become an annual reprisal of a sort, torturing the sanity of any unfortunate soul compelled to watch it for the thousand-millionth time. Here I am speaking of the advertisement shown constantly on the television during the latter months of the year where a man (presumably the husband, though these days it is increasingly unlikely) entices a woman (his wife I hesitantly suppose) to step outside to be surprised with not one but two enormously expensive automobiles—a red one and a black one—to which the woman exclaims while pointing to the black one with lust in her eyes, "I love it!" while the man tries to explain that the red one was for her, not the black one. "I love it!" she gushes, pointing again to the black one, whereupon he shrugs his shoulders and mutters, "I like red."

How mad is that! Everyone knows that any man would quite naturally choose racy red over government black! And I know of no woman who would gush lustfully over funeral black rather than luscious lipstick red. It makes absolutely no sense at all. What were those madcap madmen thinking?

What truly bothers and boggles this bulbous brain is in wondering how many? How many are enticed to purchase black and red automobiles

as gifts, one for you and one for me? How many uber rich fools must the advertisers fool to make themselves uber uber rich fools? How many fools believe love and happiness and joy can be bought—at any price? How many know only of the *love* of things and never of the love of neighbor? How many more times must this insanity be foisted upon us before we are certifiably certifiable?

Truth no longer comes to be known by reason of reasonable men; truth is a poor commodity sold by madmen to useless idiots. Truth is true only for so long as it fits the foot of the one who would care to wear it. As Chesterton noted, “the Age of Suggestion did not condescend to proof.” Nothing in the slightest has changed, only the names have been altered to deceive the innocent. The Age of Suggestion was but a nascent cry for help, a crying need and a hope for change; a change to believe in; a cry of desperation for a *new* and *improved* age. Thus, the Age of Opinion sprang forth like a noxious weed covered with pricks. Truth is fiction unless Opinion says otherwise; what is true today according to a majority of Opinion is just as likely to be false tomorrow. The greater the percentage of Opinion, the truer the truth must be; no reasonable person should expect the truth to reach or exceed 100 percent (According to a recent poll of an unknown number of Opinions who have requested anonymity.)

Among the piles of clutter that have taken unkempt residence near, below or on my desk one pile caught my meandering attention. While what

initially caught my eye was a headline of a news article, it was soon on a computer screen, and, since the screen is on my desk, it amounts to the same. The headline “*The Mass Of Paul VI Turns 50 Part I: Why the Mass was revised*” was on the front page of the December 8-21, 2019 issue of the National Catholic Register and published online December 11, 2019. There was an earlier article posted on December 1, 2019 “*The Mass of Paul VI at 50: Marking the Golden Jubilee of the New Order: Why the Mass was Revised*” written by the same author, Joseph O’Brien and a commentary by Father Roger Landry posted on November 30, 2019, “*Celebrating the Novus Ordo as It Ought to Be.*” All three make for interesting reading. As O’Brien reports,

The Second Vatican Council brought about a sea change in many aspects of the Catholic Church, and none more so than, 50 years ago, when the Mass of Paul VI—the *Novus Ordo*, the New Order of the Mass—was officially promulgated on Nov. 30, the First Sunday of Advent, 1969.

The emergence of the new order of the Mass marked a historical change in the way that the Church prayed in its liturgy and celebrated the Eucharist.

The reason for this change is linked directly to the Council’s constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which called for a revision of the liturgy, including **greater use of the vernacular** [*emphasis added*], the introduction of a three-year cycle of scriptural readings for Sunday Mass compiled in the Lectionary, and a restoration of general intercessions (the Prayer of the Faithful).

Additional changes in the Mass stem from the work of the Consilium, a body of bishops and liturgists

commissioned by Paul VI in 1964 and led by its controversial secretary, then-Father and later Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, who according to memoirs of some Consilium members pushed for novelty in the reforms. The Consilium’s members served as architects for the changes to the Mass called for—and others that were not called for—by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Since its promulgation, the new order of the Mass has been called the Mass of Paul VI, although, according to Father Dennis Gill, director of the Office for Divine Worship of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and professor of sacred liturgy at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, the idea for a new form of the Mass did not originate with Paul VI but was the result of an interpretation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the proposals pushed by the Consilium.

“*Sacrosanctum Concilium* gave an overview of potential areas of reform,” Father Gill said, “and then the Consilium, which was established by Paul VI to carry out the constitution, had its own project of reform. ... He was directed by both of those tracks—what *Sacrosanctum Concilium* indicated and what the Consilium proposed.”

But according to Msgr. Gerard O’Connor, director of the Office of Divine Worship for the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, ... “The key term that goes through *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the work of the Consilium is active participation,” he said, noting that the term is used 11 times in the document itself, including most famously in its discussion of the general goal of liturgical reform:

“The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as also the connection between them, may be more clearly

manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved" (SC, 50).

Father Thomas Kocik, author of *Singing His Song: A Short Introduction to the Liturgical Movement*, told the Register the Council's goal of "the promotion of 'active participation' (*participatio actuosa*) in the liturgy for all of Christ's faithful ... called for pastors to be 'thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy,' and to impart this spirit to their people through widespread liturgical formation."

The Conciliar document on the liturgy also called for a balanced approach to reform by retaining "sound tradition" on the one hand and being "open to legitimate progress" on the other, said Father Kocik. He noted that the document pointed to examples of such balance: **allowing for greater use of the vernacular, while also preserving the use of Latin in the liturgy, and allowing for cultural variations in the Mass while also maintaining the unity of the Roman Rite** [*emphasis added*]. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* also noted that Gregorian chant — the sacred music of the Church — "should be given pride of place in liturgical services" while also allowing for "other kinds of sacred music" and music from within particular cultures.

"These are balanced proposals for reform," Father Kocik said.

But this same balance was missing when it came time for the Consilium to integrate these principles into the revised form of the Mass, said Father Peter Stravinskas, president of the Catholic Education Foundation and editor of the apologetics journal *The Catholic Response*.

"The Consilium had been deputed to make changes the Council Fathers had in mind," he told the Reg-

ister, "but there was a sort of hostile takeover, and the Consilium went far beyond the mandate of the Council Fathers. A very heavy ideological scalpel was taken to the Roman Rite. And of course we move on from there to things that aren't even in the Roman Missal, like standing for Communion, facing the people, altar girls, Eucharistic ministers and Communion in the hand. ... If the Council Fathers went to the average parish Mass today, they would be stunned because none of this was envisioned."

According to Susan Benofy, former research editor and longtime contributor to the liturgical journal *Adoremus Bulletin*, the motivations behind the Consilium's derivations reach back to early 20th-century efforts at liturgical reform.

"The principles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* were largely the same as those that guided the reform that had already taken place from the time of Pope Pius X onward," Benofy told the Register. "These principles had been promoted by the preconiliar liturgical movement, but within that movement there were different emphases."

"One group stressed catechesis so the people understood the liturgy and so could participate more fruitfully in it. Another group stressed adapting the rite as the way to encourage participation," Benofy added. "It was the latter idea that apparently dominated the Consilium and those prominent in the implementation of the reform."

The Consilium introduced a number of changes to the Mass not called for by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Father Kocik said, including a new penitential rite and new offertory prayers, and "three new Eucharistic Prayers were added (and more came later) for optional use as alternatives to the Roman Canon, which for more than a thousand years had been the sole Eucharistic

Prayer of the Roman Rite in all its legitimate variants."

Father Kocik acknowledged that there may be good arguments for these changes, "but the fact remains that these are radical reforms contravening [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s] insistence that 'any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.'"

Needless to say, when the *Novus Ordo* was introduced as the standard form of celebrating the liturgy of the Mass, it was greeted with mixed reviews. Catholics were literally caught by surprise at the enormous change suddenly thrust upon them with little notice and with even less catechesis. It was as if a plate of strange and unknown food was placed before them and they were told, "Eat it and you better say you like it" or else. Unfortunately, more than a mere handful chose the else. More than an exodus of disgruntled souls, it turned to a rout of lay and religious Catholics who left the Church.

"There were two sides to this story" of how the new Mass was received, Msgr. O'Connor said. "One side would say 'It was great' and the other would say—' ... To a certain extent, what we did, dropping the Latin, turning the priest to face the people and using table altars instead of high altars, we certainly did look more Protestant than ever before, and that became a problem for some people.'"

One unintended result of the new Mass being introduced, according to Father Kocik, was dwindling congregations. "Reputable sociological studies attest to the rapid decline in Mass attendance following the imposition of the new Mass."

Father Kocik noted that other factors—such as the social revolution of the 1960s—also played a part in this decline, “but the fact remains that the adaptation of the Church’s liturgy to the perceived needs of ‘modern man’ did not, as was expected, herald a new springtime of Christian life and worship.”

In his Nov. 26, 1969, Wednesday general audience address, Pope Paul VI announced on the First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30, 1969, that the new Mass was to become the new liturgical norm of the Roman Rite. Quoting Swiss theologian Maurice Zundel, he reminded the faithful that at its core “the Mass is a mystery to be lived in a death of Love. Its divine reality surpasses all words. ... It is the Action par excellence, the very act of our Redemption, in the Memorial which makes it present.”

Yet, between then and now, that same mystery has in large part been lost to the faithful, said Father Thomas Kocik. “Few today would dispute that poor decisions were made in an excess of enthusiasm. Different ‘styles’ of Masses proliferated: folk Masses, home Masses, clown Masses, charismatic Masses and so on,” he said, adding, “Where the forces of secularization, individualism and political ideology took hold in the Church, the liturgy was emptied of a sense of the sacred, destabilized by gimmickry of all sorts, or made a platform for political causes.”

To restore this sense of mystery to the new Mass, said Susan Benofy, longtime contributor of *Adoremus Bulletin*, the new Mass needs to be celebrated as it always has: with a primary focus on the sacrifice on the altar, as indicated by the Second Vatican Council’s document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

The Council, Benofy said, “encouraged active participation of

the people, but stressed that the liturgy is ‘an action of Christ the Priest’ (SC, 7) and of his Body, the Church” so that “in the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that Heavenly Liturgy” (SC, 8).

As the liturgy is now celebrated, however, Benofy said, the focus on sacrifice and looking ahead to heaven has been de-emphasized.

“Given the way the reform was presented and the liturgy is generally enacted, many people now believe that the liturgy is a ‘celebration of community.’” she said, adding that “a casual style of celebration also contributes to an impression of a secular, this-worldly, rather than a heavenly, liturgy.”

According to Father Peter Stravinskis, president of the Catholic Education Foundation and editor of the apologetics journal *The Catholic Response*, such teaching must also include explicit lessons on proper worship, including a few basic principles that lie at the heart of the liturgy.

“First, God is God and I am not,” he said. “Secondly, because I’m a creature, I have a duty to worship God. Thirdly, the Church’s primary reason to exist is to provide communal worship of the Triune God. We bring men to God and God to men when we come together for Holy Mass. If these principles were etched in the consciousness of the average Catholic, our whole style of worship would change.”

1. Georgina Masson, *The Companion Guide to Rome*, Companion Guides, 2001. pp. 615-6.
2. G. K. Chesterton, *G. K.’s Weekly*, Nov. 28, 1931.
3. G. K. Chesterton, *The Age of Suggestion*, *The Illustrated London News*, February 13, 1932; cf. G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, Volume XXXVI, 1932-1934, (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2011), 38-39.
4. G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, “*What I Intend in These Columns*”, 42-43.
5. G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, “*The Age of Suggestion*”, 40.
6. G.K. Chesterton Collected Works, “*The Age of Suggestion*”, 41.

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

Salvation

Michael Patrick Barber

Ignatius Press
2019, 189 pages.

Faith and Politics

Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

Ignatius Press
2018, 269 pages.

The Day Is Now Far Spent

Robert Cardinal Sarah

Ignatius Press
2019, 350 pages.

PERIODICALS

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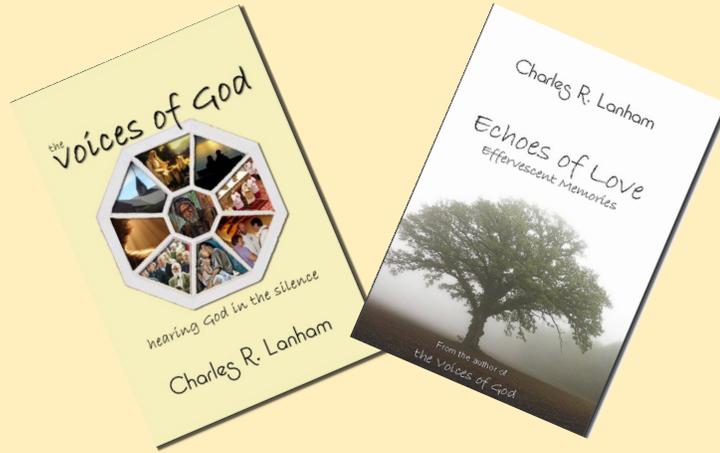
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Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

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

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**If one is called to be Catholic,
one follows what the Church teaches;
that is the correct understanding of conscience
(as upheld also by Vatican II). And if one really
cannot follow what the Church teaches, then
one's conscience requires that one leave
the Church. That is the adult decision.
One's conscience does not require that one
makes up one's own personal religion
and then pretend that it is Catholic.**

-- Bishop Robert C. Morlino

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