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A journal for restless minds

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Tough Love, Hard Truth

Saying so does not make it so

Within the play there is a lie which belies the truth. No matter how strident the squeal, pork is still a pig quite comfortable wallowing in the mud and muck of its own making. I am not sure where this originated, but it has a certain porcine smell to it: “How can you tell when a politician is lying? When the lips are moving.” During Act III, Scene II of *Hamlet*, Hamlet asks his mother, Queen Gertrude, “Madam, how like you this play?”, to which she replies ironically, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks”, meaning the protestations of love and fidelity spoken by the queen in the play within the play are too excessive to be believed. The aging politician and the stolid bureaucrat, the fatuous movie star and the witless athlete, the progressive leftist and the asocial socialist, the secular humanist and the liberalized “Catholic” all “doth protest too much, methinks.” So enamored with their righteousness and the rightness of their position in the mud and muck, they dare not admit they are just so much uncured bacon.

Benjamin Franklin, known for pithy sayings, once quipped, “Details are but trifles, but details make for perfection, and perfection is no trifle.” Attention to details is essential when striving for perfection, no matter what imperfect trifle one is attempting to perfect.

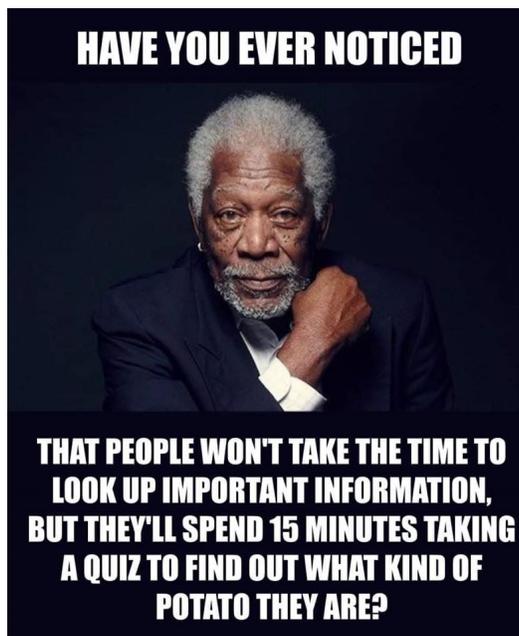
Some number of readers have asked whether I should consider binding these weekly musings into a book. As Chesterton noted introducing his marvelous book *Orthodoxy*: “It was perhaps an incautious suggestion to make to a person only too ready to write books upon the feeblest provocation” and so, in order to satisfy those who have made such an “incautious suggestion,” a few weeks ago I began the tedious process of doing just that.

Now, as Colloqui is but a toddler, a mere four-and-a-half years of age, I thought there might be enough for a small book or four (one for each volume). But, like many a guileless parent, I was caught completely unawares at my child’s prodigiousness. The fifty-two issues of Volume 1—June 2, 2016—May 19, 2017—soon filled well over 500 pages, well beyond my poor expectations, and more than the small book or four which I had thought to bring up to adulthood. It became appallingly clear that some corrective discipline would be necessary. As I bent to the onerous task of reexamining old annoying habits I discovered inattention to trifles a problem most in need of disciplinary action and serious remedy.

Every parent has, no doubt, played the fool at the unremitting childish game of “Why?”... “Because”. That was precisely what came to mind as I leafed through the pages of that first year of Colloqui. At the same time, there were echoes—pleas, more precisely—of that catchphrase, “Can you hear me now?” with deafening silence from the insouciant crowd. It seems too many have become infected with the severest case of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), unable or unwilling to pay attention to the details, lacking the will to seek perfection, to be perfect, “as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). There are simply too few Abels and far too many Cains. It seems as though I have

been preaching to the choir and ignored by the congregation, a common enough complaint of prophets and lunatics. It is maddening to the madman; more so to the prophet.

There is an aphorism—often attributed to Einstein—I much admire which states “insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different results.” Perhaps, then, I am insane. Why else should I insist upon such self-immolation? But then, there is—there always is—another perspective to consider, one which Nietzsche proposed: “In individuals, insanity is rare; but in



groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule.” Yet, I cannot help but think best of Poe’s remark, “Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence—whether much that is glorious—whether all that is profound—does not spring from the disease of thought—from moods of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect.”

There is a common claim that we are living in the *post-modern* age. I cannot help but ask whether it is better or worse than the preceding *modern* age; whether it is the “terrible threes” or the “golden years”? Personally, I tend think it the former rather than the latter, more a three-year-old throwing a temper tantrum, screaming madly while throwing a fit on the living room floor, in front of company.

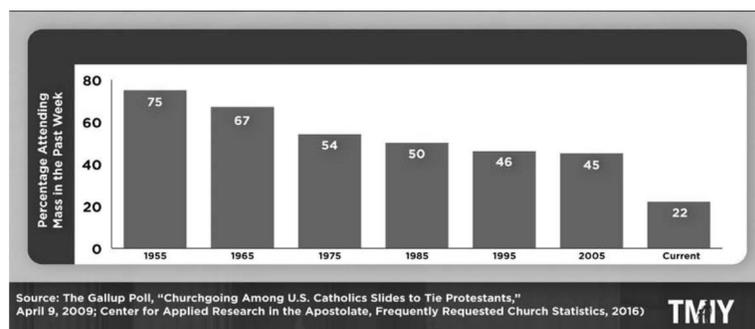
Parents and children are, from the very beginning, adversaries: parents know from their own childhood experiences what is right; children know nothing from experience but are firmly convinced their parents are either insane or simply stupid (until they themselves suddenly morph into adulthood.) How often have you heard something like this: “I’m right!” “No, you’re not, I’m right!” “No, you’re not, I’m right!” “No, you’re not, I’m right!” “You’re an idiot!” “Well, you’re a scumbag!” “Well, you’re a scummier scumbag!” “No, you’re the scummiest scumbag, ever!” *Ad infinitum*. Anyone who does not see the futility and the nonsense in such childish tit-for-tat has steadfastly remained in never-never-land.

It is much the same with societies and culture. There are the adults and then there are the Peter Pans, children who refuse to grow up. The post-modern world has been turned into Never-Never Land, populated by the lost boys and girls, pirates and ticking crocodiles. Their parents are waiting, patiently praying and hoping their children will soon come to their senses.

The mind of a child is puerile, needing parental guidance and careful formation in order to grow into a mind

capable of reasoning and rational thought. Tragically, we have abrogated our parental responsibilities in pursuit of self-interest and godless self-idolatry. We used to rely on our reason and our minds to discern the truth. No more. The truth is but opinion, seventy percent of those polled agree. Opinions are not facts, opinions are not verifiable, opinions are not immutable, opinions are not truth. Opinions carry no crosses, suffer no pain, cure no diseases, bear no sorrow, share no guilt or burden. Opinions solve nothing, prove nothing, mean nothing. So, why have we allowed Opinion to become our master? Is it because we have become too complacent, too comfortable sitting in our lazy chair in front of the “boob tube” to get up and investigate what our children are doing behind our back? Or perhaps it is because Opinion has become our source of truth. We have forgotten that mere saying so does not

make it so. In this post-modern age of asocial media, social distancing, twitters and tweets everyone of a sudden is an opinionated expert at anything and everything (see the back page).



Mark Twain, among others, is often attributed with popularizing the phrase “Lies, damned lies, and statistics” describing the persuasive power of numbers, particularly the use of statistics to bolster weak arguments; it is also used to doubt statistics used to prove an opponent’s point. Thus, out of an abundance of caution, I am reluctant to use statistics (and opinion) as the basis for any argument. But, occasionally statistics can prove a point otherwise ignored.

In 2016, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) reported that from 1955 until 2016 (61 years) the percentage of Catholics attending Mass in the preceding week had steadily declined from 75% to 45% over the first six decades and in the latest decade had sharply decline by more than half to 22% from the prior decade—a 53% decline since 1955. In 2019, a Pew Research Center study reported seven-in-ten Catholics believe the Eucharist (bread and wine) are symbolic, only 31% believe the consecrated bread and wine are the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The question one must ask

is why? What has caused the continuing decline in attendance and commensurate loss or dissolution in Catholic faith?

This, of course, is an argument for endless debate and a source of much speculation. The truth is this is complicated, as so much of human history contends, and there are no easy answers—no hard ones either. But, there is something to think about, something to consider beyond the irreconcilable and the imponderable. Instead of playing the childish games of “Not me” and “you’re wrong, I’m right” why not let bygones be bygone?

When I looked at the graph showing the decline in Mass attendance my immediate and visceral response was to assume a causal relationship between the decline and the results of the Second Vatican Council. A friend saw no such relationship. Who was right and who was wrong? Upon further thought and reflection, I have concluded: neither and both. To place the onus solely and squarely on the council is the merest hyperbole, a childish taunt to garner a negative reaction. Likewise, to refuse to admit the impact—both negative and positive—that the council has had on the Church and the body of Christ is equally as gross an overstatement. So, where does that leave us? Where do we go from here?

Returning briefly to the beginning of this essay, let me suggest the cause is irrelevant, it is the Truth that is relevant, even more so from today until the close of the age. Pork is still a pig and a pig is still pork no matter how much you brush the mustard. That does not in any way wipe the mud from the eye, no matter how it got there. The Church that Christ instituted two millennia ago has endured, grown, and held tight to his command to “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” (Mt 28:19-20).

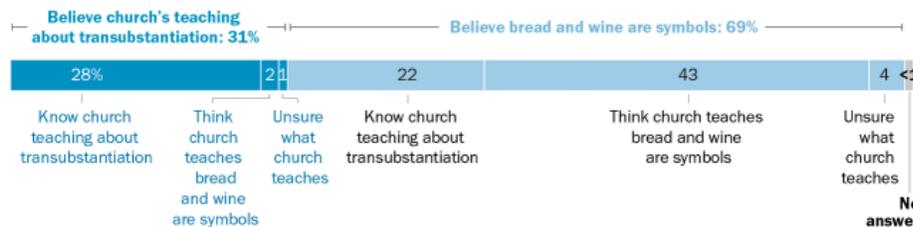
Christ did not institute his church with novelties and kumbayas, dancing dervishes and community entertainment, he authorized his disciples to faithfully transmit all that he had taught, all that he commanded them. For two-thousand years, the Church has taught all that he commanded, faithfully through ages of turmoil and protest, wars and persecution, never yielding to the temptation to bend the commandments to fit the culture, the society, and the fickle will of man.

I am a Catholic, a Catholic in the Roman Rite, a member of the Body of Christ. I was raised in the faith, educated in the faith, and believe in the faith. I do not take my faith lightly nor do I believe I have the hutzpah to argue with God. God, through his only Son, ordained and instituted the Church and authorized the Church, through the Magisterium, the bishops, the apostolic successors to lead and guide us, to teach us all that God has commanded of us. I believe what I pray when I recite the Apostles’ Creed.

*I believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended into hell;
on the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*

Seven-in-ten U.S. Catholics believe bread, wine used in Communion are symbolic

% of U.S. Catholics who ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Source: Survey conducted Feb. 4-19, 2019, among U.S. adults.

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*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the communion of Saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.*

My faith is the Catholic faith, the one true faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. I profess it and I believe it, all of it, whether I personally agree with, like it or not. If I disagree with something that the Church teaches, I seek understanding. Two-thousand years of magisterial teaching provides nearly inexhaustible resources to reason and resolve any disagreement I might have. Those who come to join the communion of saints, wanting to become full members of the Body of Christ and his Church are required to make a personal affirmation of faith. "I believe and profess all that the holy Catholic Church teaches, believes and proclaims to be revealed by God." It is unfortunate that all Catholics are not of the same suasion. There is much more that underlies this personal affirmation.

I affirm and believe the Church's teaching about the inviolability of human life. In accord with that teaching I affirm that human life is sacred and must be protected and respected from the moment of conception until natural death. I affirm that I reject direct, intentional abortion and I do not recognize the legitimacy of anyone's claim to a moral right to form their own conscience in this matter. I am not pro-choice. I further attest that I am not affiliated with, nor supportive of, any organization which supports, encourages, provides or otherwise endorses abortion or euthanasia. (cf. CCC 2270-2283)

I affirm and believe the Church's teaching about the sinfulness of contraception. I affirm, in accord with the teachings of the Church that "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil. (CCC 2370)

I affirm and believe that every person is called to chastity in accord with their present state of life and that it is only in marriage between man and woman that the intimacy of spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion. (CCC 2337–2365) I accept the Church's teaching that any extra-marital sexual relationships are gravely evil and that these include pre-

marital relations, masturbation, fornication, the viewing of pornography and homosexual relations.

I affirm and believe the teaching of the Church about the evil of homosexual acts. I accept the formulation in the Catechism which states: "Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved." (CCC 2357)

I affirm and believe all that the Church teaches about the Reality and Presence of Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist. Specifically I believe that Jesus is present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity under each of the forms of bread and wine and that receiving either one is Communion with the whole Christ. I recognize that worship and adoration are appropriate, not only during Mass but also outside of Mass and that the Most Holy Eucharist must always be handled with the utmost care and devotion. (CCC 1373-1381)

I affirm and believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and I embrace the teachings about the Church, as enunciated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. (cf. CCC 748-962)

I affirm and believe that the Church teaches with God-given authority and that the promise of Christ to remain with His Church always, until the end of time, is a reality. I further acknowledge that those teachings pronounced in a definitive manner, even though not as an infallible definition, are binding on the consciences of the faithful and are to be adhered to with religious assent. (CCC 892)

To these and to all the teaching of the Catholic Church I give my assent. I attest that I believe these things and, while I am aware of my own sinfulness and shortcomings, I strive in my beliefs and life style to conform to this Affirmation of Personal of Faith.

Those who trend toward novelty, who object to the strictures and limits imposed on them by all that Jesus Christ commanded, have no right, no authority, no cause to demand their way or the highway. This is not a game of "I'm right and you're wrong." There is the way, the truth and the life, no other. All the novelties and innovations are not of Christ, not for the glory of God. The *sole* purpose, the *only* reason one is "obligated" to attend Mass is to *worship* God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Church has always taught this; too many "Catholics" have forgotten why they are there.

A Catholic Moment

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day

The Third Commandment places a demand on our lives and reminds us of our creaturehood and for whom we owe our worship.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the alien living with you. For in six days Yahweh made the heavens, earth and sea and all that these contain, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred (Ex 20:8-11).

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as Yahweh your God has commanded you. Labor for six days, doing all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You must not do any work that day, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servants—male and female—nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your animals, nor the foreigner who has made his home with you; so that your servants, male and female, may rest, as you do. Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt, and that Yahweh your God brought you out of there with mighty hand and outstretched arm; this is why Yahweh your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:12-15).

The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath (Mk 2:27-28).

Notice the precision of this commandment from God. There is a preciseness in what God has commanded, a detailed explication of how we are to observe and keep holy the Sabbath. For Christians, the Sabbath of celebration and rest has become “Sunday,” the day which memorializes the resurrection of the Lord. The Christian weekly celebration is the *dies Domini* or *dominicum* (CCC 2174).

These expressions are similar but different. They are expressions in which time and space intertwine and in which the ecclesial event and the gathering of the congregation, including its sharing in the body of the Lord,

are evoked.

Jesus rose from the dead “on the first day of the week.” Because it is the “first day,” the day of Christ’s resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the “eighth day” following the sabbath, it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ’s Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord’s Day (*he kuriake hemera, dies dominica*)—Sunday.

We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead (CCC §2174).



The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship “as a sign of his universal beneficence to all.” Sunday worship fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people (CCC §2176).

“A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop. It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ’s saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love:

You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests (CCC §2179).

The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass” (CIC, can. 1247).

A Catholic Moment is a regular feature of Colloqui. The intention is to catechize Catholics on authentic Church teaching, rubrics and ritual. If you have a question, never hesitate to send it to Deacon Chuck.

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: What Every Catholic Should Know

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.

Socrates' Children, Volume I: Ancient Philosophers

Peter Kreeft

St. Augustine's Press

2019, 169 pages.

G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume XXXVI

The Illustrated London News 1932-1934

Ignatius Press

2011, 613 pages.

Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism and the future of the West

R. R. Reno

Regnery Gateway

2019, 182 pages.

The Irony of Modern Catholic History:

How the Church rediscovered itself & challenged the modern world to reform

George Weigel

Basic Books

2019, 322 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

www.firstthings.com

Touchstone

www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

www.catholic.com

Catholic Herald

www.catholicherald.co.uk

Chronicles

www.chroniclesmagazine.org

Gilbert!

www.chesterton.org

The National Catholic Register

www.ncregister.com

Our Sunday Visitor

www.osvnews.com

ONLINE

Crisis Magazine

www.crisismagazine.com

The Imaginative Conservative

www.theimaginativeconservative.org

Catholic Exchange

www.catholicexchange.com

Intellectual Takeout

www.intellectuالتakeout.org

Life News

www.lifenews.com

Life Site News

www.lifesitenews.com

OnePeterFive

www.onepeterfive.com

Catholic Vote

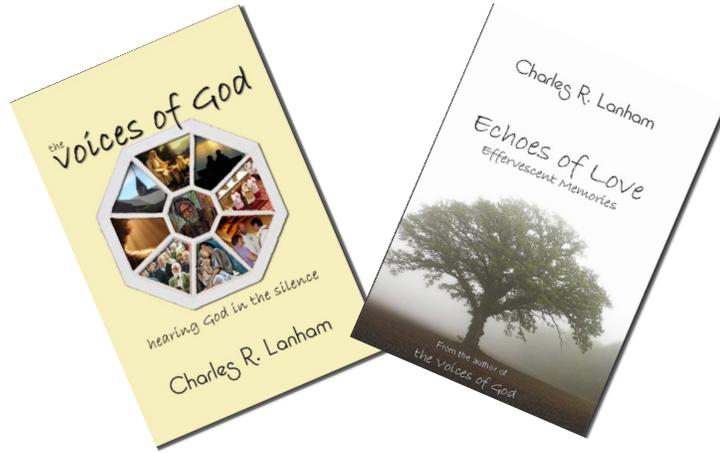
www.catholicvote.org

The Catholic Thing

www.thecatholicthing.org

PragerU

www.prageru.com



Books are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is a Catholic author, columnist, speaker, theologian and philosopher, a jack-of-all-trades like his father (though far from a master of anything) 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 has written over 400 essays on religion, faith, morality, theology, and philosophy.

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"THAT'S ODD: MY FACEBOOK FRIENDS WHO WERE CONSTITUTIONAL SCHOLARS JUST A MONTH AGO ARE NOW INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERTS....!"

Colloquī, the present infinitive of *colloquor* (Latin: *to talk, to discuss or to converse*) 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! Essays may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the expressed intent to seek the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, so help us God.

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