



A journal for restless minds

## **RUNNING AWAY**

*Going nowhere*

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*Desperately hoping for a cure*

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*A voice of one crying out ...*

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*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.

## Running Away

*Going nowhere*

Once long ago I ran away, and like the fictional character Forest Gump, I kept on running for a very, very

long time. From what precisely I cannot say nor why, just that I was running away from something.

What is equally unfathomable was whether I was running toward something or somewhere or quite simply *going nowhere* at all. If I am to be perfectly honest with myself I must admit it was definitely the latter. Unfortunately it would appear, *going nowhere* was then and remains now a very popular destination.

Not that anyone *going nowhere* would admit to such a bleak observation, far from it. Let's face it, we all have plenty of places we need to go, things we have to do, and no time to go or do everything that simply, absolutely must be watched, attended, traveled, achieved, participated, gathered, received, played,

driven, moved, built, designed, destroyed, etc., etc. Anywhere but God that is, he's optional. And for what?

Where are we going? Are we going somewhere or are we just riding a stationary bicycle or running on a treadmill, *going nowhere* at all.



It seems to me that many have or are behaving much like the prodigal son, running away, just wasting away in Margari-taville searching for our lost shaker of salt.

We have lost our souls, lost any and all concern or fear of what awaits us after death comes calling, for we have indulged in the chimera that we are already heading in the right direction: *going nowhere*.

Unlike the prodigal son who eventually came to his senses and returned home begging his father for mercy and forgiveness, we have yet to wake up knowing that there is *somewhere* much better than *nowhere*. Hopefully we will before it is too late, before we actually get to *nowhere*.

## A Hospital For Sinners

*Desperately hoping for a cure*

**C**hristianity is for sinners. There is no room for those who believe they are above the fray, capable of reaching for and taking the moral high ground, no place for those who believe they are capable of attaining moral ideals on their own.

Jesus said as much when he “addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. ‘Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, “O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.” But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, “O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.’”<sup>1</sup>

We are all sinners whether we wish to admit it to ourselves or not. In some ways we are as Peter Kreeft describes it, *sinaholics*, in desperate need

of a cure, a cure that comes only from God, the physician with every cure for the soul. While God is always willing to make house calls, the church is where sinners are best attended.

*“The church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners. To publicly profess to the world that you are a Christian, by going to church every Sunday, is not to say to the world that you are better than they are but that you are desperately ill.*



*The church is a lot like Alcoholics Anonymous. The very first thing you have to admit and never forget in AA is that ‘I am an alcoholic.’ A Christian*

*is one who knows he is a **sinaholic**, and he has accepted God’s cure. The stupidest of all reasons for not going to church is one of the commonest ones: ‘I’m not good enough.’ The only qualification is to be **bad** enough. Does anyone refuse to go to the hospital because they’re not healthy enough?”<sup>2</sup>*

**T**he parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector adds yet another dimension to our view of church as the hospital for sinners. We cannot help but wonder why: Why would someone so self-righteous and full of self feel compelled to come to the hospital for sinner? After all, he wasn’t like those patients who knew they were broken and were there hoping for a cure. He did not believe he was in the slightest way suffering from any illness (sin.)

So why was he there? It is difficult to surmise precisely why those of such self-righteous estate would feel the need to enter the temple of God, the hospital for sinners, yet they do. Although I suspect more find themselves moving to the other side of the street while averting their eyes lest they suddenly feel the need to enter such a den of iniquity and admit their failures.

We know why the tax collector came to the temple. He knew and admitted that he was broken, a sinner in need of a cure, a dose of mercy and forgiveness from God. He knew he was a *sinaholic* and desperately needed to be forgiven. He knew that the best hope for mercy and forgiveness was to place his trust in the most qualified physician at the best hospital for sinners: God and his church.

**W**e still have Pharisees living among us, those who believe they are better than everyone else, those who know more, have more, and think more highly of their selves, who have no need or time for God. There are tax collectors in abundance although we may not call them such these days. Tax collectors were once considered the worst of sinners. Now we know that we don’t have to be a tax collector to be a sinner for we know we are all sinners whether we admit it to ourselves or not. Once I heard a voice cry out “Go to church you fool!” and now I know why. Do you?

1. Lk 18:9-14.
2. Peter Kreeft, *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Servant Books, July 7, 2011.

# Angelic Stubbornness

*A voice of one crying out ...*

**R**obert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 24, appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Conakry in December 1979 at the age of 34, the youngest ever elevated to the Episcopacy. Pope Saint John Paul II at the end of his three day visit to Guinea in 2001 appointed him Secretary for the Evangelization of Peoples. Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Cardinal in 2010.

His is a remarkable story of faith, hope and love and he has much to teach us of the love of God, unshakable faith, the importance of prayer, and the necessity to speak out forcefully and with conviction against evil no matter the personal cost.

Reading *God or Nothing*, a marvelous book styled as an interview between Nicolas Diat and Cardinal Sarah, you quickly come to understand just how central prayer is and has been in his life. A humble servant of God, Sarah speaks with a refreshing candor. *"In my life", he says, "God has done everything; for my part, I just wanted to pray."*<sup>1</sup>

In his farewell speech at a state banquet given in his honor upon his appointment to Rome in 2001, Sarah

spoke out harshly against the existing regime:

*"I am worried about Guinean society, which is built on the oppression of the insignificant by the powerful, on contempt for the poor and the weak, on the cleverness of poor stewards of the public good, on the bribery and corruption of the administration and the institutions of the republic...I am speaking to you, Mister President of the Republic, even though you are not here. Endowed by the Lord with all sorts of natural and culture resources,*



*Guinea, paradoxically, stagnates in poverty...I am concerned about the young people; they have no future because they are paralyzed by chronic unemployment. I am also concerned about national unity, cohesion, and harmony, which are greatly compromised by the lack of political dialogue and the refusal to accept differences. In Guinea, the law, justice, ethics, and human values no longer provide a frame of reference and a safeguard to regulate social, economic, and political life. Democratic freedoms are taken hostage by ideological trends that can lead to intolerance and dictatorship. In the past, giving your word was something sacred. It is true that a person's merit is measured by his ability to be faithful to his word. Today, the media, demagoguery, mind conditioning, and all sorts of other methods are used to sway public opinion and manipulate minds, giving the impression of a collective rape of consciences and a serious confiscation of freedoms and of thought."*<sup>2</sup>

**I**f one were to simply replace references to 'Guinea' with 'America' Cardinal Sarah's words ring as frighteningly true here as they did for his beloved country of Guinea. Not one for pious evasions, he speaks equally as frank on public issues such as gender theory, abortion, and euthanasia. From his perspective these issues stem from a Western culture that has chosen to "live as though God did not exist" allowing our feelings, experience, and personal desires—rather than moral principles and revealed truths—to rule the day.

1. Bianca Czaderna, *Reviews: Angelic Stubbornness. First Things, June/July 2016, pp. 56-57.*
2. Robert Cardinal Sarah interviewed by Nicolas Diat, *God or Nothing: A Conversation on Faith*, Ignatius Press, August 1, 2015.

## Just Saying...

...for several decades, scholars have taught their students to politicize and relativize knowledge. ...

When it comes to sexuality and gender, the only claim that matters is the sexes are interchangeable and gender is fluid. Scholars seek accounts of historical processes that reveal how anything that appears to contradict such claims is historically false.

In other words, the claims function as premises, not hypotheses or conclusions. Truth isn't something to be pursued or discussed. The only applicable universal, absolute truth—the truth of equality—is beyond question. No one need ask what is true, because truth is either assumed, if it is politically desirable, or relativized, if it is not.

**Molly Oshatz**

*Opinions: College Without Truth*  
First Things, May 2016, pp. 15-17.

# A Fresh Surprise

*A new morning*

**W**e hear today of the restoration of life from death and it would be easy to speak of these miraculous events and the impact that they had on the two widows and their sons. But I believe that what is of far greater importance is to recognize in these events the manifestation and expression of God's love, a love that is unbounded and limitless.

Few would doubt that God loves us. What is a far greater challenge is to understand and accept the true nature of His love. God's love is beyond measure, it is unconditional, and it is eternal. It is a love full of forgiveness and complete acceptance of our human weaknesses and of our failures.

What is also true is that we may never grasp the true depth and meaning of God's love. As with our feeble attempts to know or define God — who is unknowable — we cannot adequately express in human terms the nature of His feelings for all of His creation. We use words such as love, forgiveness, and acceptance yet even as we utter them we recognize their inadequacy to convey the incomprehensible.

What we must recognize is that although we cannot comprehend the true measure of God's love, we are

bound, by the very life received from Him, to love Him in return. How are we to love God? Jesus tells us *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind"* and ... and *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*<sup>1</sup>

And therein lies the rub. How glibly we confess to loving God. We often say it without thought or feeling; we seldom say it with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind. And we conveniently forget our neighbor.



The commandment to love is like a coin with two sides: one side is love of God and the other side is love of neighbor. One coin, two sides. You cannot love God if you hate your neighbor nor can you love your neighbor without loving God. What Jesus tells us is that it requires a triple-play: one, you must love God; two, you must love yourself; and three, you must love your neighbors.

**B**ut how can you love your neighbor who wishes to do you harm? How do you love those who inflict pain and suffering on others, who perform despicable deeds, or who are instruments of evil?

Consider that each of us was created by God and born into this world from the womb of a mother. A mother loves her child no matter what her child may or may not do. She loves her child, not for the child's deeds or actions, but for the pure and simple fact

that the child is hers. She loves her child because she gave so much of herself in order to produce another living, breathing human being. How much more, then, must God love us?

**W**e often find it difficult to love others because we are incapable of seeing beyond the surface, of knowing what lies within another's heart, mind and soul. We see what is exposed but can only glimpse at what is hidden. But God sees into our hearts and as Father Ron Rolheiser wrote recently *"God understands. Crassly put, God isn't stupid! If we, with our limits, can see beyond wound and struggle to a goodness that lies still deeper within a human heart, how much more does God see our goodness, understand our struggles and forgive our weaknesses."*

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## It Means Fidelity

*"The woman, of course, expresses the popular conviction that any calamity was a direct punishment for sin, a belief that Jesus seems to repudiate in the Fourth Gospel (Jn 9:3). But more important, she learns that the word of the Lord in the mouth of the prophet is "truth," that is, it does what it says. Note the biblical meaning of the word "truth." It is not just factual accuracy, nor is it truth in a philosophical sense. It means fidelity—here the fidelity of Yahweh to his promises, a fidelity shown by his acts. So the climax of the story—and here lies its theological point—is that the woman discerns that Elijah is indeed a man of God, and that the word of God is effective in deed."*

**Reginald H. Fuller**  
*Scripture In Depth*

The Sunday Website of Saint Louis University

The readings today speak to us of life and death and life again. They provide us with images of life as we know it now, of a new life that awaits us, and of the fullness of God's love. A poem written by the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore expresses this so very well:

*I remember my childhood  
when the sunrise,  
like my play-fellow,  
would burst in to my bedside  
with its daily surprise of morning;  
when the faith in the marvelous bloomed  
like fresh flowers in my heart every day,  
looking into the face of the world  
in simple gladness;  
when insects, birds and beasts,  
the common weeds,  
grass and the clouds  
had their fullest value of wonder;  
when the patter of rain at night  
brought dreams  
from the fairyland,  
and mother's voice in the evening  
gave meaning to the stars.*

*And then I think of death,  
and the rise of the curtain  
and the new morning  
and my life awakened  
in its fresh surprise of love.*

I believe that it is that "fresh surprise of love" that embodies God's love. If we live our lives loving God and all that surrounds us – even the common weeds, the unlovable, and the despised – then on that new morning we shall awaken to a fresh surprise of love.



Homily delivered on June 8, 2013.  
10th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C.  
1 Kings 17:17-24  
Galatians 1:11-17, 19  
Luke 7:11-17

## Enriching the Mind

*Where's the fun in that*

**T**echnological advances are much like a double-edged sword: while there are generally benefits to be derived from every new or improved thing, there are always (please note the emphasis here) downsides, unintended consequences that tend to negate or even leave us worse off than before.

Not that I am proposing a complete and utter moratorium on new and improved technology, far from it. What I am suggesting however is that perhaps we have become far too enthralled in adopting every new widget, gadget, toy, or cure-for-what-ails-you that we seldom if ever consider the consequences.

It doesn't take much to see how great a deleterious impact technology—and here I am focusing on media and entertainment technology—has had on the acquisition and understanding of knowledge, particularly knowledge that has been known for millennia. On the one hand it is difficult to fathom how we have become so ignorant of the past and yet on the other hand we invite the technological gods to strut before us, preening and gloating with their enticing immediacy and alluring mindless gratification.

In a nutshell, we no longer read, ponder, or cogitate on weightier matters or consider entertaining a quiet moment in silent reflection with God. Truth is, video games await, with

all their noise and mayhem to desensitize and dull the mind and heart and soul. Saint Augustine once observed:

*"Our Lord Jesus Christ wished us to understand that what he did for people's bodies he also did for their souls. He did not work miracles merely for miracles' sake; his object was that his deeds might arouse wonder in the beholders and reveal the truth to those capable of understanding.*

*A person who sees the letters in a beautifully written book without being able to read them will praise the skill of the copyist because he admires the graceful shape of the letters, but the purpose and meaning of these letters he does not grasp. What he sees with*



*his eyes prompts him to praise, but his mind is not enriched with knowledge. Another, praising the artistry, will also grasp the meaning; one, that is, who is able not only to see what everyone else sees but also to read it, which is a skill that has to be learned. So too, those who observed Christ's miracles without grasping their purpose and the meaning they had for those able to understand, simply admired the deeds. Others went further: they admired the deeds and also grasped the meaning. As pupils in the school of Christ, we must be such as these."*<sup>1</sup>

But I wonder if we have not become less than the "person who sees the letters in a beautifully written book without being able to read them" in that we have lost more than the desire to admire, we have lost the desire to see. Knowledge is no longer a desirable acquisition for where's the fun in that.

<sup>1</sup> Sermon 98, 1-3: PL 38, 591-592

<sup>1</sup> Mt 22:37-38.

## On Becoming A Cat *Artificial Intelligence?*

**W**hat in the world is the world coming to? <sup>1</sup> Or to be more precise, are we now sinking so low as to be heading toward the dogs, or should I say cats?

Pope Benedict XVI once spoke of the dangers that surround the growing tide of relativism, what he called the *dictatorship of relativism*.

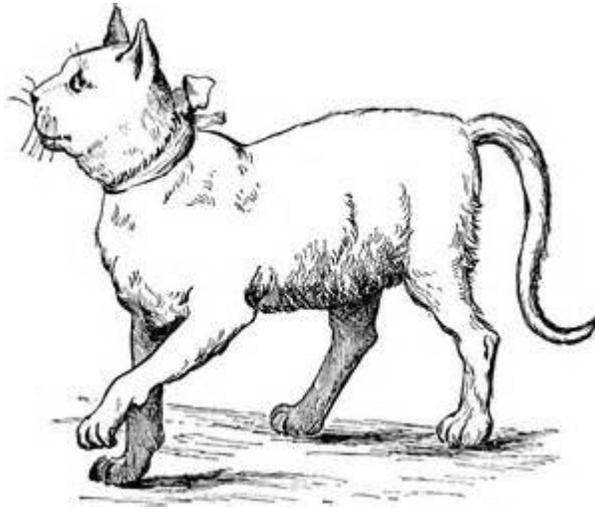
*"How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves - flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth. Every day new sects spring up, and what St Paul says about human deception and the trickery that strives to entice people into error (cf. Eph 4: 14) comes true.*

*Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be "tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine", seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely*

*of one's own ego and desires."* <sup>2</sup>

In his book styled as a conversation between Peter Seewald and then Pope Benedict, he explains his remarks made in his homily.

Peter Seewald asks: *"In his futuristic novel Brave New World, the British author Aldous Huxley had predicted in 1932 that falsification would be the deci-*



*sive element of modernity. In a false reality with its false truth – or the absence of truth altogether – nothing, in the final analysis, is important any more. There is no truth, there is no standpoint. Today, in fact, truth is regarded as far too subjective a concept for us to find therein a universally valid standard. The distinction between genuine and fake seems to have been abolished. Everything is to some extent negotiable. Is that the relativism against which you were warning so urgently?"*

To which Pope Benedict replies: *"It is obvious that the concept of truth has become suspect. Of course it is correct that it has been much abused. Intolerance and cruelty have occurred in the name of truth. To that extent people are afraid when someone says, "This is the*

*truth", or even "I have the truth." We never have it; at best it has us. No one will dispute that one must be careful and cautious in claiming the truth. But simply to dismiss it as unattainable is really destructive.*

*A large proportion of contemporary philosophies, in fact, consist of saying that man is not capable of truth. But viewed in that way, man would not be capable of ethical values, either. Then he would have no standards. Then he would only have to consider how he arranged things reasonably for himself, and then at any rate the opinion of the majority would be the only criterion that counted. History, however, has sufficiently demonstrated how destructive majorities can be, for instance, in systems such as Nazism and Marxism, all of which also stood against truth in particular."* <sup>3</sup>

**T**here are far too many who read Benedict's response and quickly walk away with the attitude *"why should I care, he is talking egghead stuff, philosophies, nothing that really pertains to me"* but they would be wrong to so cavalierly dismiss his insights.

Palpably it feels as though we are all breathing in 'dead air.' While there are many other voices *"crying out in the desert"*<sup>4</sup> much like Benedict—Robert Cardinal Sarah immediately comes to mind—it seems as though no one is listening, as if no one really cares. And that should sound an alarm heard everywhere and to everyone.

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What so shocks the soul is what no longer bothers. We have become in a real sense zombies, the walking dead, mindlessly absorbing the philosophical claptrap that the 'more enlightened' are want to feed us. We have better things to do than walk among the living, searching like Diogenes for and "honest man" or objective truth.

**W**e have ceased caring to know of such things as universal truths and unalienable rights. We even doubt our own existence, believing that nothing is real, it is all just a simulation, our own virtual reality.

If you doubt this you might listen to what Elon Musk, the founder of Tesla and SpaceX believes. When asked if he's considered whether advances in video games have been so great that our existence actually takes place within a simulation created by a future civilization, Musk answered, "A lot. Even in hot tubs, so much so I had to be banned from a hot tub." Musk referenced the evolution of video games from Pong more than 40 years ago to nearly lifelike graphics and the rise of virtual reality. "If you assume any rate of improvement at all, then games will become indistinguishable from reality," he says.

Artificial intelligence, such as Amazon's Alexa or Google Assistant, sounds useful, but what happens when it gets smarter than humans? Musk says advances in AI could progress to the point where humans would be nothing more than a house pet. "I don't love the idea of being a house

cat," he said. His solution: neural lace, a mesh that fits on your brain to give it digital computing capabilities.

Musk said this will be key to avoiding a future as domesticated "cats." He said he sees neural lace as an "AI layer" working symbiotically with your brain that would allow humans to stay on pace with AI. "It will be sort of a direct cortical interface." he said.<sup>5</sup>

Now I would point out here that while I am in complete agreement with Musk on having no real desire of becoming a domesticated house cat, neither do I have any desire to be cortically enhanced with his 'neural lace'. I like myself just as God created me, thank you very much Elon.

What Musk envisions for the future is both frightening and symptomatic of the degree to which we have accepted the inevitability of so-called scientific advances. Not all such 'advances' are necessarily beneficial; neither should we subscribe to the ideology which touts science and social engineering as all good and all knowing. It would be good to remind ourselves at times of what Joyce Kilmer wrote: "Poems are made by fools like me, But only God can make a tree."

1. Oh how Sister Ann Maureen would cringe at the dangling participle! My apologies, Sister.
2. Homily of his eminence Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals, delivered at the Vatican Basilica, Monday, April, 18, 2005.
3. Pope Benedict XVI, *Light of the World: The Pope, The Church and The Signs Of The Times*, Ignatius Press, 2010.
4. Jn 1:23.
5. Brett Molina, *Tesla's Elon Musk wants to die on Mars. Really*, Reno Gazette Journal/USA Today, June 3, 2016.

## Deacon's Diner

*Food for a restless mind*

**F**or 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.



*Bon Appétit!*

### BOOKS

#### God or Nothing

**Robert Cardinal Sarah**  
Ignatius Press,  
August 1, 2015, 285 pages.

#### Return

**Brandon Vogt**  
Numinous Books,  
2015, 231 pages.

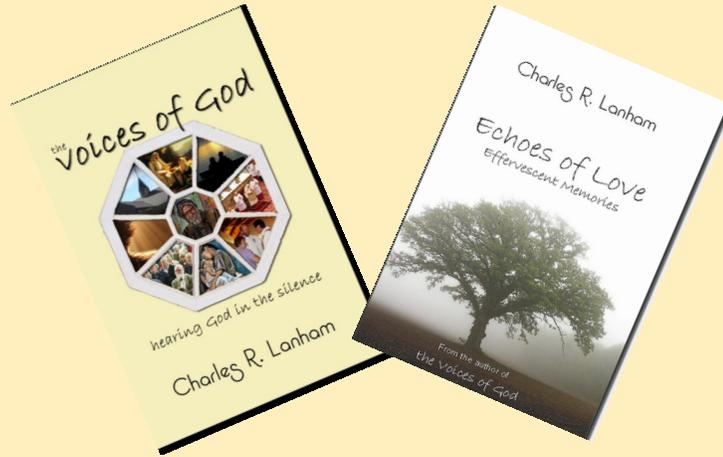
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