



A journal for restless minds

## THE SCIENCE OF ART

*Discovering the art works of God*

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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.

## The Science Of Art

*Discovering the art works of God*

Within the mind of man resides an insatiable desire to discover truth, to acquire knowledge, to know what precisely makes a thing tick or tock, whichever the case might be.

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote "Natural things are midway between the knowledge of God and our knowledge; for we receive knowledge from natural things, of which God is the cause by His knowledge.

Hence, as the natural objects of knowledge are prior to our knowledge, and are its measure, so the knowledge of God is prior to natural things and is the measure of them."<sup>1</sup>

Aquinas saw knowledge (Truth) from two different perspectives: man's and God's. Man discovers truth by observing what exists prior to acquiring knowledge of it; God creates truth so man can observe it and come to know it.

Peter Kreeft further explains: "Truth in science is discovered; truth in art is created. God is an artist, not a scientist; He designed and created the world, which is first of all the product of His art and then becomes the object of our science. ... And since all art reveals something about its artist, the knowledge of creatures, by its very nature,

leads us in the direction of the knowledge of the Creator, if we are only fair and honest and open-minded toward it."<sup>2</sup>

Following a similar train of thought perhaps we should consider precisely how great the distance sits between "knowing God" and "knowing of God."

Those who claim to "know God" claim the impossible for no one who has not seen God can lay claim to such a truth, yet by truth discovered through reason and common sense all men may "know of God."

1. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 14, 8.

2. Peter Kreeft, *Practical Theology: Spiritual Direction from St. Thomas Aquinas*, 17, Ignatius Press, Dec 16, 2014.

## In Name Only

### *Self-defined Catholicism*

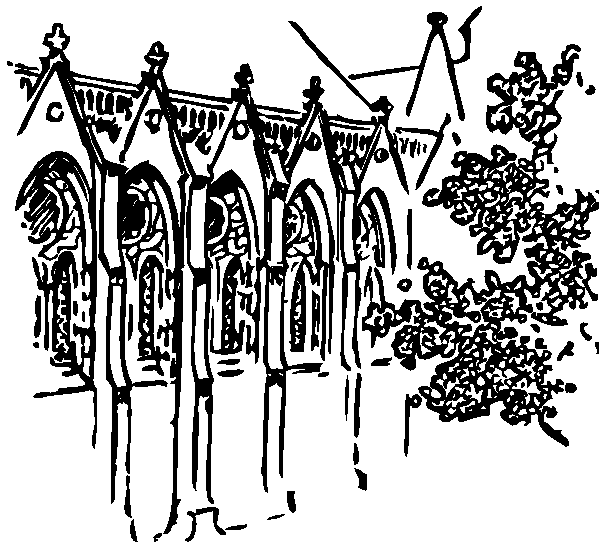
There appears to be no end to the parade of political know-it-alls and wannabes along with other prominent public figures, be they policy wonks, advisors of every ilk and kind, or talking heads who are eager and willing to proclaim that they are strong, faithful, practicing Catholics. It's enough to make we less-than-well-known Catholics dive for cover, ashamed and embarrassed by the company suddenly forced upon us.

Don't get me wrong. I applaud those who stand up, unafraid and unapologetic, witnesses to their faith and faith in God, no matter to what church or religion they may ascribe or follow.

What abrades are those who pompously claim membership in the Catholic faith while publically rejecting and/or renouncing fundamental church doctrine, even well-established dogma, either for the sake of political or personal expediency or because they find it too difficult to comply.

That is not to say that disagreement with Church teaching doesn't exist. It does. To be perfectly frank, the odds of finding but one Catholic who doesn't find something that bends the nose one way or the other are so high as to be impossible to calculate. We all can find something that doesn't set right, that we question or

that we accept but only reluctantly. And thankfully most of what we find disagreeable or question falls well short of heresy and the threat of excommunication. And again thankfully most disagreements are kept private or at least at a level to where reason and dialogue have a chance to satisfactorily remove or mollify the disagreement.



Most disagreements arise out of misunderstanding or miscommunication. Few rise to the level of being antithetical to Church doctrine and dogma and fewer still are laid bare before the ravenous anti-Christian secular media and the public to chew on.

What truly rankles are the public figures who profess to be Catholic but by their own admission have publically smeared and splattered their anti-Catholic positions in bold headlines across the front pages of every tabloid and scandal sheet unworthy of print.

The most recent example of this inexplicable public disagreement with Catholic Church doctrine is none other than Democratic Vice-presidential

nominee, Tim Kaine. Before the balloons had hit the floor at the recent convention the Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, Bishop of Providence, Rhode Island, posted a sharp critique of Kaine's Catholicism and anti-Catholic positions:

*"Democratic VP choice, Tim Kaine, has been widely identified as a Roman Catholic. It is also reported that he publically supports 'freedom of choice' for abortion, same-sex marriage, gay adoptions, and the ordination of women as priests. All these positions are clearly contrary to well-established Catholic teachings; all of them have been opposed by Pope Francis as well."*

*Senator Kaine has said, 'My faith is central to everything I do.' But apparently, and unfortunately, his faith isn't central to his public, political life."*

Kaine's support for abortion rights certainly breaks no new ground. John Kerry was told by then Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis in 2004 that he would deny him communion for his pro-choice advocacy. Vice President Joe Biden and Former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi have likewise come under increasing scrutiny for their pro-choice views, votes, and advocacy.

As a Catholic I try my utmost to faithfully follow Jesus Christ. That includes following and obeying all that his Church teaches. It is what I must do in order to call myself a practicing, faithful Catholic.

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**W**hen we as Catholics come in conflict with some aspect of Church teaching, there are questions you should ask and steps you can take to narrow the gap between your personal views and what the Church teaches. You can begin by asking yourself:

**Do I agree with everything the Catholic Church teaches?**

Not likely. As with most Catholics you will disagree with something the Church teaches. Where there is disagreement, make a concerted effort to discern the why and the what regarding the Church's position. Study and research the issue. Ask questions of those who are better acquainted with the issue. In short, become informed. In the end you may still disagree but you will have a better understanding of the Church's position.

As Catholics we have every right to disagree but no right to disobey. The Church teaches what Jesus commanded of the members of his church. Willful disobedience to the rules and doctrine of the Catholic Church is disobedience to what Jesus taught us. Moreover, it is hard to argue with 2000 years of tradition and teaching from the likes of Augustine, Aquinas, John Paul or all the other saints and doctors of the church.

**Am I obligated to follow what the Church teaches even when I disagree?**

Always. Remember, the Church is the voice of Christ on earth. She speaks authoritatively for him. Whether we agree or disagree, as disciples of Jesus

Christ we must follow where he commands us to go. If for no other reason we must obey what his Church commands. Jesus told the apostles, his Church *"All power 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 of you."*<sup>1</sup>

I find no latitude, no equivocation in this. We are to observe all, not some or only those with which we agree but all that he commands. While we may object or disagree with some of what Jesus, through the apostles and their successors, teaches, we must, as Catholics, obey all that he commands, including what his Church teaches.

**Do I make public my disagreements?**

Never. Of what business is it to anyone else? To publicly bare disagreement serves no good purpose; it is self-serving; it is the cause for scandal, from which no good can result for either you or the Church.

Martin Luther disagreed with certain actions of the Church and because of his public display he was branded a heretic and excommunicated. Whether his disagreements were valid or invalid did not alter or remove the scandal that resulted from his public declaration.

No doubt Jesus had much to disagree with the Romans especially with regard to the cruel nature of his crucifixion. If he could bear his disagreements in silence, all the more so should we.

What is most troubling with those politicians and other public figures who admit so publicly to their fundamental break with Church teachings is the impression they leave with the unsuspecting public. In the minds of the public they are seen as good faithful Catholics who just happen to have some disagreement with the Catholic Church. It's no big deal, right?

Sadly, nothing could be further from the truth. They are catholic in name only and have chosen to self-define what Catholicism and being Catholic means. Like Thomas Jefferson, they cut out those sections of faith which they find objectionable and follow what ever they feel like following.

**T**he result of their self-defined, self-proclaimed catholicity is nothing short of heretical. It leads others to the false conclusion that they too may self-define their own Catholicism and still call themselves faithful Catholics.

Too many Catholics have fallen for the false narrative and the snake oil that Tim Kaine and others public figures are selling. Catholicism is not, never has been, and never will be up for debate or self-definition. It is all or nothing, there can be no in-between.

For those who believe that the Catholic Church is out of touch with the modern world and believe it needs to change, to modernize, to get with the program: sorry to disappoint. Jesus said *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* Jesus said this. I believe him and will do what he asks of me. I may not like it but faithful I will be.

## Trust, But Verify

*How far are you willing to go?*

**T**he late President Ronald Reagan was once advised that *"The Russians like to talk in proverbs. It would be nice of you to know a few. You are an actor—you can learn them very quickly."* One of the first soon became his signature phrase whenever he discussed U.S. relations with the Soviet Union: *"Doveryai, no proveryai", "Trust, but verify."*

Trust seldom comes easy or quickly, even more so today it would seem. Will Rogers once quipped, *"It takes a lifetime to build a good reputation, but you can lose it in a minute"* and so to it is with trust. These days the virtue of trust has become rarer than hen's teeth.

Without the virtue of trust all are suspect; safety and security casualties of paranoia and fear; and the enemy includes all but the self. Truth, that is to say, irrefutable, objective verity, must be present for there to be trust. But truth is now to be construed as subjective and relative, it is nothing more than whatever one wishes or believes it to be.

Human bonding, the desire to form a communion of community, is entirely dependent on trust. Because of the severe paucity of this holy virtue we deceive ourselves: we substitute for it overloaded schedules, we invent excuses, and then we rationalize why nothing ever seems to work out. Everything and everyone has become dis-

posable and replaceable; without trust long-term, permanent relationships must inevitably fail.

Trust presumes risk. Where there is no risk, trust becomes a non sequitur. Risk-aversion has become a cultural mantra. The elimination of any and all risk, under the guise of *"public safety,"* has become a campaign to be won, no matter the cost. Every aspect of our lives must be scrutinized and made safe from the tyranny of risk, and the price demanded is our ability and willingness to trust.



To trust means to have faith, to believe in someone, and to believe in their promises and in their fidelity to those promises.

**C**onsider how far Abraham was willing to go, how much he believed in God's fidelity. God asked much of Abraham: asking him to travel far to a distant land,

across difficult and treacherous terrain, and to believe that, even though their old age made them *"as good as dead,"* he and Sarah would have *"descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore."*

**I**magine how great Abraham's faith was tested when God ordered him to sacrifice the son which God had promised them in their old age! This was not a question of obedience to God but a matter of trust. Abraham made his decision to do as God commanded because he *"thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy."*<sup>1</sup>

Saint Paul tells us *"Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. ... By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible."*<sup>2</sup> In the first part, Paul uses two Greek words, *hypostasis* and *elenchus*, which have been subject of some dispute as to how they should be translated.

*Hypostasis* usually means *'substance,'* or *'being'* as used in Hebrews 1:3, or *'reality'* as found in Hebrews 3:14; in this instance however it connotes something

more subjective, and so *'realization'* has been chosen rather than *'assurance'*. In a similar way, *elenchus* is normally interpreted as *'proof,'* but here it is used in an objective sense and so *'evidence'* has been used rather than the transferred sense of *'(inner) conviction.'*<sup>3</sup> While this may be of some significant merit to Biblical scholars and linguists,

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it is of little importance to our understanding of what Paul intended to tell us. It may indeed be easier to understand if we apply the usual usage to it: *"Faith is the assurance of (belief in) what is hoped for and our (inner) conviction of things not seen."* Either way, it is through faith that we may come to know with confidence all that God has promised: eternal life with him. We must trust in him, believe in him, and hope in him.

**T**he evidence of God's fidelity can be seen in all that is visible to us. The universe (all that is visible) we know and believe came to be, *"ordered by the word of God,"* by his willing it all into existence; his will and his alone caused all things to be.

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote: *"On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. xv), 'Not because they are, does God know all creatures spiritual and temporal, but because He knows them, therefore they are.' For the knowledge of God is to all creatures what the knowledge of the artificer is to things made by his art."* God created the world by thinking it into being, by knowing it into existence.<sup>4</sup>

If through faith we realize what is objectively true, that is, we come to know and accept the truth which is manifested in God, then we must necessarily and rightly place our complete trust in his promises, his covenants. This ought to be a natural and obvious understanding and yet the modern world rebels against such a dogmatic attitude. It asks how anyone and most specifically the Catholic Church can justifiably claim to have real and cer-

tain knowledge—as opposed to mere opinion or personal belief—of objective truth and objective reality, especially when it pertains to God.

Aquinas refutes the ideological premise that reality is either subjective or relative through two arguments. First, if all of reality is subjective and relative then all of science must necessarily be reduced to a single science: psychology. For if nothing is except what the mind conceives then there can be no study (science) outside the soul. His second argument states that if there is no objective reality, then what the ancients had maintained, *"Whatever seems, is true,"* must necessarily result in contradictories that are true simultaneously.

Kreeft explains that this is what logicians call a *"reduction to absurdity"*: if this subjective theory were true, absurd consequences would follow. And yet, as he continues *"the modern mind no longer considers it absurd to reduce all sciences to psychology or to say that truth = nothing more than whatever seems true to you; that appearance cannot be distinguished from reality with certainty, only as opinion."*

*This is an extremely useful philosophy for two classes of persons: salesmen and demons. (The Devil invented advertising; he founded the first Apple store back in the Garden of Eden.)"*

**J**esus tells us *"Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks."* We are all servants of God, some good and some not, some faithful and others who are

not. Jesus admonishes us that those who place their faith and trust in the him and are prepared for when he should arrive (and we know not the day nor the hour of his coming) will be blessed. Those who are unprepared, who have considered only their own needs and desires and have not attended to the needs and desires of those who are subject to them will suffer cruelly when the Lord says to them *"Depart from me, all you evildoers."*

Parents who do not attend to the needs of their children or who allow them to misbehave or bully other children are bad stewards. Managers who promote or give raises not on merit but for revenge or favoritism are bad stewards. Those who are willing to lie or cheat to attain a stature or office are bad stewards.

**B**eing a good and faithful servant is hard work. It may even call for suffering and pain but as Jesus tells us: *"Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."* But for those who trust in the Lord, the keys to the kingdom of God will be theirs.



Homily for  
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C  
Wisdom 18:6-9  
Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19  
Luke 12:32-48

1. Heb 11:11-12.

2. Heb 11:1,3.

3. NAB, footnotes on Hebrews 11, p 351.

4. Peter Kreeft, *Practical Theology: Spiritual Direction from St. Thomas Aquinas*, 16, Ignatius Press, Dec 16, 2014.

## What Matters Most

*Oblivious to the obvious*

Last week our pastor introduced his homily with a bit of humor. Now often humor within a homily runs the risk of falling flat, either because the delivery is off or it simply isn't a very good joke. But in most cases the humor fails simply because it doesn't fit well enough with the message one intended to convey.

But this time the humor was spot on. Not only was it thoroughly enjoyed by the congregation (based solely upon my own personal laugh-o-meter) but it was perfectly suited for and germane to the readings and the gospel that had just been read.

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There once was this yuppie (short for Young Urban Professional for those too young to remember) who enjoyed a high degree of wealth. Among his possessions was a perfectly maintained and very expensive BMW. It was his pride and joy and he loved to drive it and to be seen in it.

One day he drove his beautiful automobile downtown to go to the bank. Parking near the curb he opened the door only to have a large truck pass by tearing the door from its hinges and leaving the yuppie in tears. Angry and upset, he cried at the injustice, the terrible tragedy, of

the destruction and mutilation of his marvelously beautiful automobile.

When a policeman arrived on the scene, the yuppie kept going on and on about what had befallen him, loudly and angrily bemoaning how unjust and incomprehensible that such a great tragedy could happen to him and his beautiful automobile.



The policeman stood by quietly listening and as soon as he could get a word in asked "Sir, aren't you the least bit concerned that you are missing your left arm?" To which the yuppie exclaimed in abject horror: "Oh no, my Rolex!"

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While humorous the parable hits solidly on point. It should make us pause; it should make us think, it should ... but ... will it? Or will we gently nod our heads even as we remain oblivious to the obvious: the wooden beam protruding from our own eye?

It is far too easy to blind ourselves, to ignore what should be obvious. Here is another parable, although this one is true.

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At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. Both he and his wife Lucy, also a physician, were the first to review the scans and understand what they meant. When *Breath Becomes Air* chronicles the transformation of a naïve medical student possessed by the question of what makes a virtuous and meaningful life into a young neurosurgeon at Stanford, guiding patients toward a deeper understanding of death and illness, and finally into a patient and a new father to a baby girl, confronting his own mortality.

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That wooden beam lodged in my eye? It is a reminder of our own mortality, for while we know neither the day nor the hour, we can be certain that death will come to us all and when it does it will come like a thief in the night. Equally as certain is that all our dreams and our desires, all that we possess—houses, cars, watches, rings, money, power, or fame—will no longer be of any importance. Standing before God no one will feel compelled to shout, "Oh no, my Rolex!"



## Counter Witness

*The USCCB responds*

**F**rom the USCCB website, a post written by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, Bishop Richard J. Malone and Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski in response to Vice-president Joe Biden, a Catholic, presiding at a same-sex union:

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When a prominent Catholic politician publicly and voluntarily officiates at a ceremony to solemnize the relationship of two people of the same-sex, confusion arises regarding Catholic teaching on marriage and the corresponding moral obligations of Catholics. What we see is a counter witness, instead of a faithful one founded in the truth.

Pope Francis has been very clear in affirming the truth and constant teaching of the Church that same-sex relationships cannot be considered *"in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family."* Laws that redefine marriage to deny its essential meaning are among those that Catholics must oppose, including in their application after they are passed. Such witness is always for the sake of the common good.

During our Holy Father's remarkable visit to us last year, he reminded us that all politicians *"are called to defend and preserve the dignity of [their] fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics."* Catholic politicians in particular are called to

*"a heroic commitment" on behalf of the common good and to "recognize their grave responsibility in society to support laws shaped by these fundamental human values and oppose laws and policies that violate [them]."*

Faithful witness can be challenging—and it will only grow more challenging in the years to come—but it is also the joy and responsibility of all Catholics, especially those who have embraced positions of leadership and public service. Let us pray for our Catholic leaders in public life, that they may fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to them with grace and courage and offer a faithful witness that will bring much needed light to the world. And may all of us as Catholics help each other be faithful and joyful witnesses wherever we are called.

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**T**he Bishops' response, while clearly articulating the challenges Catholic politicians face in their responsibility to faithful witness, nevertheless falls well short of confronting the ever menacing gorilla standing directly in front of them. In their view, Biden acted as a counter witness to the truth, yet they are either reluctant or afraid to take him (and other Catholic politicians of similar suasion) to task for their egregious behavior and blatant disregard for Church teachings. The bishops reaction is something akin to *"see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil."*

Actions have consequences, except and unless you are a Catholic politician, obviously that grants you a free pass.

## 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.



### BOOKS

**Disorientation:** How to Go to College Without Losing Your Mind  
*Edited by John Zmirak*  
Ascension Press  
December 21, 2010, 188 pages.

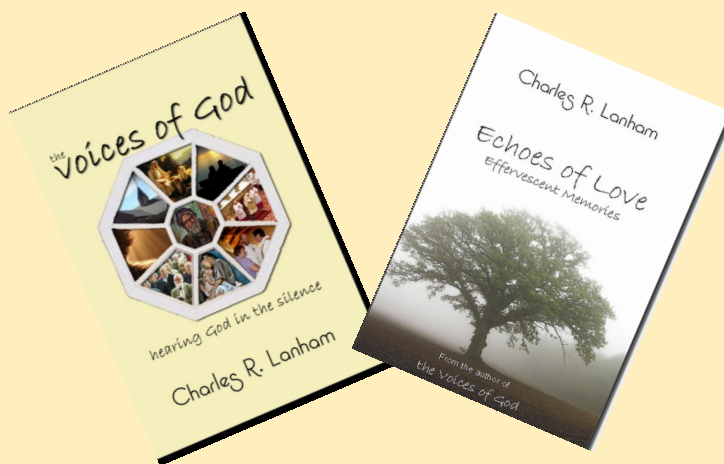
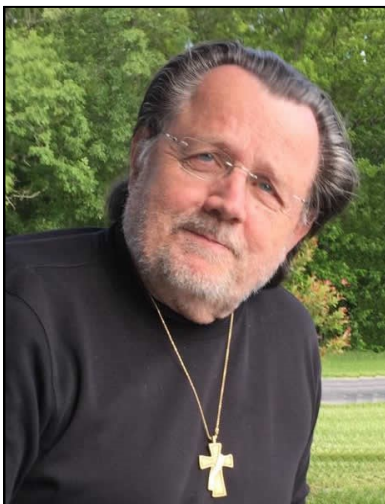
**Old Errors and New Labels**  
*Fulton J. Sheen*  
Alba House  
(1931) May 30, 2007, 222 pages.

**City Of God**  
*Saint Augustine*  
Doubleday  
February 1958, 551 pages.

### PERIODICALS

**First Things**  
Institute on Religion and Public Life  
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**Deacon Chuck Lanham** is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

He is the bulletin editor for Saint Albert the Great Catholic Church. He has written over 230 articles on religion, faith, morality, theology,

Each issue of **Colloquī** can be viewed or downloaded from  
**<http://deacons corner.org>**.

Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at

**[deacon.chuck@deacons corner.org](mailto:deacon.chuck@deacons corner.org)**

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