



A journal for restless minds

A SILENT SALUTE

To those who served

COMING UP FOR AIR

Reshaping the wind

JUST WONDERING

Has there ever been a time?

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.

A Silent Salute

To those who served

What sad tribute it must be which so darkens the soul with animus for the flag of freedom's toil, while white stars and stripes, now stained by blood once warm and red, cover hearts at silent rest beneath the soil. Those who served for freedom's gain seldom care to boast or brag; they served, served well the call to proudly wave their nation's flag.



Some are want to quake in fear, of what, they will or cannot say, in voices shrill and quite profane; they want, they need, they cry, they pray, they kneel and shake their fists again. Not with their blood, no not theirs you see: to them the price of freedom: free.

The ragged coat of olive green upon the beggar cold and drear, speaks of long

ago and gallantry, of duty, honor, country dear, of battles fought for freedom's gain; the fear of losing life or limb, worth any price, strife, or pain.

Raise the flag now, raise the flag. Hold the torch of freedom high above the dark forbidding throng; let freedom ring and flag unfurl, for God and country, faith still strong.

For those who served and gave their all, a debt still owed, none can repay; the price, the price of purchased death, lies cold and still beneath the clay.

To serve without reserve, to lift the eye in reverent awe, to stand in silent grace before the deathly pawl; to know the price which has been paid, a price too high, yet few there are who would refuse to serve their God and country once again.

To those who have and those who now serve we bow our heads in silent salute for their sacrifice.

Coming Up For Air

Reshaping the wind

Someone inquired a week ago who would win the presidential election. My response was purposefully vague and superficially prescient for I assured them that no matter who won some would be happy and others would not. While my prognosticating talents may leave much to be desired, it certainly fared better than most of the pollsters, pundits, and media who were “shocked” by the outcome. What has shocked most since has been the unrelenting vitriol, violence, and hateful rhetoric which has arisen across the country primarily from those most unhappy with the outcome.

Last issue I began this column with a few words which now seem so apropos that I will simply repeat them here:

“Perhaps in the years to come humanity will grow up and learn how to live with one another in peace and harmony. Perhaps. But then the sceptic would argue: either humanity is incapable of growing up or owns no inclination to a deeper understanding of the human condition.

It requires no effort of the mind to realize how uncommon we have become, each a subspecies of one, incapable of sharing in our common humanity. We speak but do not communicate; we hear but do not listen; we see without seeing; we think without thinking; we feel without feeling; we know without knowing; we exist with-

out living.”

It is truly sad to see how unhappy, bitter, and divided we have become as a community, a society, a nation, and a species created by a transcendent, ineffable, and loving God. The question we should be asking ourselves is “Why?”



Why is there so much hate? Why is there so much anger and bitterness directed toward others? Why can't we just get along?

We have become accustomed, whenever anything fails to please or satisfy, to immediately seek to establish fault, to determine who is to blame for our unhappiness, disappointments, and failures. We seldom if ever look to ourselves for the cause of our discomfiture; the blame always and inevitably lies elsewhere. Our self-importance and our pride permit no weakness or imperfection; we know the truth and the truth has set us free.

The predominant views opined

post-election have been from disaffected writers who in the main expressed some measure of unreasoned, indeterminate fear; indeterminate in that their fear was never or could not be identified or named.

One blogger however posted a well-considered article in which she offered some salient words of wisdom. It is certainly food for thought.

“In less than 24 hours since Donald Trump has been named the President-elect of the greatest nation on this earth, it's become apparent he's being given far more credit than he's due. There's anguished cries of, 'How will my children grow up knowing not to discriminate?' or, 'How can I look my daughter in the eye and tell her she has purpose?' Really? Really, America? You have given Donald Trump, a mere mortal man, far more credit than he deserves, especially considering the man hasn't even taken office yet. Trump does not have the power to mold our families, that is flat-out our responsibility.

Your children will learn to love or hate, be respectful or disrespectful, wise or foolish, not by the character of the family in the White House, but by the family in their house. May I submit to you that your sons and daughters will be far, far more influenced by their teachers, coaches, 4-H, FFA, Scouts or church group leaders than they will a man on TV. I don't feel my character was molded by the Bush, Clinton, or Obama families, but I did learn perseverance from my Dad, work ethic from my Mom, and to do my best

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(and then redo it) from my sister. My college bible study leaders modeled to me how to seek God and my husband leads me in prayer.

Should those in the public spotlight conduct themselves in a honorable fashion with utmost integrity? Absolutely. However, it is not the responsibility of Miss America, the NFL, or the President, to set the example of moral conduct. It is not the government's responsibility to ensure American children have a good example. It is our responsibility, as American citizens, to ensure that we lead our youth in showing what is right and good and honorable and true. One good, God-fearing, America respecting football coach can do far more to shape the hearts and minds of teenage boys than Colin Kaepernick. If we want to make a difference, let's stop worrying about Trump's moral example and take an active role in our classrooms, churches, youth groups, sports team, 4-H and FFA.

Secondly, it is only a lie that one man in Washington can determine another person's value or worth. If you're living and breathing, you have a purpose. Case closed. God fearfully and wonderfully made each one of us, and then continues to work in us for His good pleasure! If I ever, ever seek another man or woman's approval or affirmation to find purpose in my life, I will be sorely disappointed. It does not matter if that individual is a supervisor, friend, husband, or the President himself, no one can provide me with purpose outside of the Lord.

Friends and fellow Americans, *'Your success as a family... our success as a nation... depends not on what happens inside the White House, but on what happens inside your house.'* I

pray these wise words of Barbara Bush should resonate with us. Our nation has always and will always depend on the moral fiber of our families, nothing more, nothing less. God bless, America, and America, bless God!"¹

There is much to chew on here. One thought, which has been percolating for several years now, has begun to crystalize: we, as Christian families, have abrogated our duties and responsibilities in educating our children; in our busyness and singled-minded focus on careers, we have too often willingly and even eagerly released our progeny to the care and feeding by educators who, more often than not, do not share our values, our morals, or our faith. Indeed, this is multi-generational, for it goes well beyond the current one.

We, who have lived well beyond our youth, whose life experiences have tempered the mind, made us less impressionable and more judicial in thought and deed, are now realizing the fruits of our own youthful abnegation of responsibilities toward our children. We are now understandably reaping what we have fatuously sown.

Our youth have no faith: in God, country, family, or anyone. They believe—for that is all they have been taught—that they are entitled. They are, evidenced by their degrees, highly educated yet woefully ignorant, ill-even misinformed on basic truths. With God's help we can correct what we have wrought, but only if we have the strength of mind and will to do so.

1. Purpose on the Prairie, *Don't give Trump so much credit, America*, November 10, 2016, <https://purposeontheprairie.wordpress.com/2016/11/10/dont-give-trump-so-much-credit-america>.

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

Faith Comes From What Is Heard

Lawrence Feingold

Emmaus Academic
July 8, 2016, 756 pages.

Practical Theology

Peter Kreeft

Ignatius Press
November 28, 2014, 400 pages.

Disorientation: How to Go to College Without Losing Your Mind

Edited by John Zmirak

Ascension Press
December 21, 2010, 188 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

Touchstone

A Journal of Mere Christianity
Editor: James M. Kushiner
Bi-Monthly.
www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith
Editor: Tim Ryland
Bi-Monthly.
www.catholic.com

Just Wondering

Has there ever been a time?

Has there ever been a time or an age with such discord, hatred, trial and tribulation? Terrorism, persecutions, racism, murder, violence, armed conflict, famine, earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes... the list is endless.

We too often see the world through the prism of the time in which we live. Rarely do we reflect on the past or admit to our bias for seeing today as the approaching apocalypse, the end times, the last days.

Charles Dickens began his classic book *A Tale of Two Cities* with this unforgettable opening: *"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."*¹ Written one-hundred fifty-seven years ago, I would suggest that there are many who hold that same or a similar view today.

Yet we should ask ourselves whether there has ever been a century without a war or insurrection? Has there ever been an age without plague or desperate times? Has there ever been an age without some natural disaster? When has there been a time when Christians have not been ridiculed and rejected, persecuted for simply trying to live their faith?

Over four-hundred fifty years before the birth of Jesus, an anonymous author, writing under the pseudonym of Malachi, a name derived from the Hebrew expression for "My Messenger" warned:

*"Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch."*²



The Jewish community had lost its way upon its return from Babylon. The sharp reproaches against the priests and rulers of the people are the likely reason the author wished to conceal his identity. It was a time of priestly abuses and religious indifference. The people had strayed from their faith in God, choosing to marry pagans rather than marriages

with Israelite women. They had in many ways lost faith in God and had turned to rational, secular ways. There is something eerily familiar between that time and today. It would serve us well to reflect on how little has changed in nearly twenty-five-hundred years of human history.

While Jesus seemingly offers a stark vision of the future, one which many have utilized to make self-prophetic prognostications of impending doom and gloom, a critical review of what he said is especially revealing. He told those who were listening *"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end."*³

Such things (wars and insurrections) must happen first? Yet, he doesn't stop there, adding *"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky."*⁴ Now astute readers will quickly notice the lack of any indication or mention of an end time. What is evident here is that this is the way life is. Jesus wasn't prophesying about the end of time, but the condition of every time, from then until well into the future.

"There is at least one interpretation of apocalyptic literature (one far more solid than the endless announcements of the end of the world, based on occult reading of

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scripture) that takes such passages as revelations not so much of what is to come, but of what is now the case.

Each day is the last. Each time is the end time. Each human being faces the end of the world in the span of a life, whether it reach eight minutes or eighty years. The world, its opportunities and losses, passes away for us each night. Every sunset announces a closing of a day that will never come again. Each human death is the curtain on an unrepeatable drama, which, without God, amounts to a tragedy. Every generation, in some way, is the last, the termination. And each generation, like each death and every day, witnesses the signs of the end times.

Everything that Christ predicted has taken place and is taking place and will continue to take place. We need not wait until the millennium or turn to Nostradamus to unlock the mystery. Life itself is the mystery, this great groaning of creation that finds its meaning in hope alone.”⁵

Let us briefly return to Malachi, who concludes: “for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.” There are many who express fear of the future, of what tomorrow may bring. Yet such unreasoned fear isn’t what Malachi is referring. Fear of the Lord—one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit—is reverential awe and wonder toward the creator, toward God.

“This kind of ‘fear’ is crucial for us. Only when we have it can we be ready to begin relating to God, to start maturing in our relation with the Most High. Only then do we begin to suspect what it really means to say that God is Love.”⁶

The truth is far too few lay claim to any fear of the Lord. Our narcissism knows few bounds. We are the center of the universe and all must revolve around the center, including God. God has become, for those who deign even to acknowledge his existence, our assistant, standing by to answer our prayers, to calm our nerves, to bring us peace, to help our favorite team win the game.

If only man would admit his own insignificance to the creative love of God. If only we could admit to the obvious: we are not the center of the universe, God is. All that is, exists only for as long as he wills it. We owe our creation and our continued existence to his love. Yet we, in our arrogance and pride, refuse to acknowledge our complete dependence on our creator God.

Bertrand Russell, an avowed atheist, exemplified the hopelessness that pervades when we deny God. He claimed that an honest philosophy could not deny that “no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave. All the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system.”⁷

Without God at the center there can be no hope, and without hope, life is nothing but a cruel joke.

“For those who hope, it is otherwise. As Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans, that groaning of all creation is an act of giving birth. ‘We, too, groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set

free. For we must be content to hope that we shall be saved.’”⁸

History moves us to but one conclusion: our lives are best at peace the closer we are to true center, God. We cannot reach the center as long as we remain seated upon the throne. The longer we hold ourselves in such exaggerated self-esteem we will be incapable of loving any other than our self, an empty love which can never last beyond the grave. It will only lead to hopelessness and despair. Without hope, life has no meaning, no value, no purpose, no love. Without love the universe and all within it are but dust upon the wind.

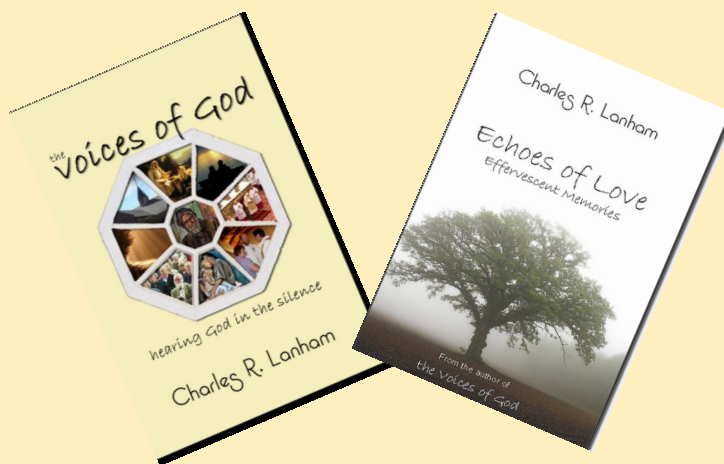
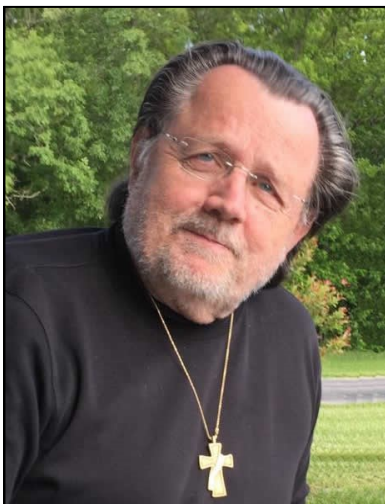
Some twenty years ago, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote “In today’s world, including the world of economics, the prevailing picture is one destined to lead us more quickly toward death rather than one of concern for true development which would lead all toward a more human life.”⁹

We urgently need to recognize, with all humility, who is the center of the universe ... waiting for us to climb down from our thrones. Amen.



Homily for
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C
Malachi 3:19-20A
2 Thessalonians 3:7-12
Luke 21:5-19

1. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859.
2. Mal 3:19.
3. Lk 21:9.
4. Lk 21:10-11.
5. John Kavanaugh, SJ, *The End of the Ages*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.
6. John Foley, SJ, *A Copernican Revolution*, The Sunday Website of St. Luis University.
7. Bertrand Russell, *Free Man’s Worship*.
8. John Kavanaugh, SJ, *The End of the Ages*.
9. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987 §24.



Books are available on
Amazon.com or from
the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

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