



A journal for restless minds

FOR THE LOVE OF ALL

Encountering a life that loved

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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.

For The Love Of All

Encountering a life that loved

Two weeks ago as I was reflecting on the life of a very special human being, what came immediately to mind was the memory of a man who lived to love and loved to live a life of love for the love of life. While this may seem trite or saccharine, nothing could be further from the truth.

Traveling to the Midwest for the Thanksgiving holiday, normally a happy and relaxing time with family and friends, the news of my brother-in-law Dave's passing, while not entirely unanticipated, was nevertheless saddening. Yet, over the ensuing days, in preparing for his funeral, the grief palpable, deep and aching, there was never a disparaging word expressed for a man of seventy-seven years.

At his funeral service I said that if we were to see Dave through the eyes of God, here is what I believe we would see, **love**. It wasn't that Dave loved my

sister Elizabeth although he loved her more than life itself. His last words to her were of how much he loved her. It wasn't that Dave loved his family, although he loved them indeed. It wasn't that he loved Elizabeth's family; he loved them as his own. No, Dave loved much more than that. His love was bigger than that. While I had known him but a brief portion of our lives, I have

encountered very few who loved so completely, so unreservedly, so fully.

I loved the man. I loved him for the deep devotion and unabashed love he had for my sister. Seldom do we find such

love. I loved him for his faith in God, of which we shared much over the years. When diagnosed with cancer he never lost faith, rather he looked to God and prayed "Lord, increase my faith." I loved him for his quiet ways, perhaps it was from his many years on the bench, for he always appeared to be listening in silent contemplation, absorbing all the joy from those around him; he fed on their laughter, he drank of their friendship, he grew young through their exuberance. Dave is with God and their love will never die.

What's This Tradition?

The source of truth

The Catholic Church teaches and we believe that the fullness of divine revelation was revealed to the apostles through and in Jesus Christ and that they in turn handed it on to their successors.

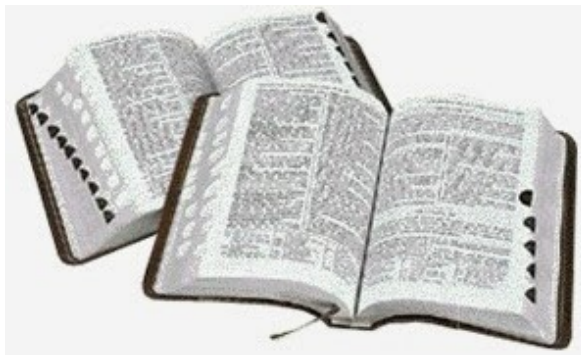
Jesus commanded the apostles and their successors to teach and preach to all the nations everything that he had taught. In Mark, we read that he said to the apostles: *"Go into all the world and **preach** the gospel to the whole creation."*¹ Jesus did not tell the apostles to write the Gospel, but to *preach* it, which means to transmit orally the teaching they received. Likewise in Matthew, Jesus gave them a missionary commission when he said, *"All authority 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 you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*² This is what the Church refers to as apostolic Tradition.

How God has chosen to reveal himself has long been a subject of theological debate and controversy both inside and outside the Church for this is not your typical tradition.

Tradition, as generally understood, is the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. In a limited sense, this remains

true, but Tradition, with a capital T, means much more.

God, in his infinite wisdom, has chosen to reveal himself through two complementary forms: *oral* and *written*. *"Revelation passed on through oral means and through the whole life of the People of God is called divine Tradition, while Sacred Scripture is the inspired communication of God's Word in writing."*³ Through Tradition and Scripture God's Revelation has been and continues to be handed down through the ages. Tradition has been a part of God's plan from the beginning, an essential part of God's salvific Word.



Oral Tradition is not a recent innovation but has preceded, even paralleled the written Word. Through Moses, the prophets, and others the Old Testament was passed on orally before it was written down. Likewise, truths revealed by Christ were passed on orally by the apostles and their successors before they were put down in writing. *"This transmission will continue until the end of the world because of Jesus's promise that He will remain with them until the end of time. Thus, the Tradition that is imparted by the Apostles and their successors is a living Tradition,*

*bringing each new generation of disciples into vital contact with Christ and His Gospel.*⁴

Tradition was defined as a dogma of faith in the Council of Trent to counter Protestantism's denial of Tradition as a source of Revelation, leaving Scripture (*sola Scriptura*) as the only certain source of faith and morals.

*"The holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent ... clearly perceives that these truths and instruction [of the Gospel] are contained in the written books and in the **unwritten traditions**, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Spirit dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand. Following, then, the examples of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; **also the traditions**, whether they relate*

*to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession."*⁵

Tradition is necessary for the Church in all times for many reasons. First, oral Tradition is chronologically prior to Sacred Scripture, both in the Old and in the New Testaments. *"God revealed Himself to our first parents, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, but the Revelation was only written down many centuries later in Genesis. Even the great prophets first taught orally*

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Their prophecies were put together and written down later. Similarly, in the New Testament, the decisive Revelation is the Person of Jesus and His words and actions, especially the Paschal mystery. This was transmitted orally by the Apostles for the first generation of the Church's life. In both covenants, oral Tradition was present from the beginning and was written down in sinpired form only at a later date. This shows that the living and spoken word is the first means chosen by God to reveal Himself."⁶

Secund, without Tradition, Scripture is a dead letter, having no key for interpretation. "Without Tradition, it would be impossible to defend the faith against heretics who cite Scripture against its true meaning. The Fathers and Doctors easily detected the presence of heresy because it clashed with their sense of the living Tradition. The fragmentation of the Protestant world into thousands of branches is a demonstration of what would happen to the Church if she were stripped of her authoritative Tradition."⁷

Third, Tradition contains truths that are not explicitly found within the pages of Scripture. This is evidenced by the conclusion in the Gospel of John: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."⁸

Obviously, John taught many truths that were never written down but handed on orally; truths which were faithfully guarded and transmitted by the first bishops, the successors of the Apostles.

"Not all revealed truths are found explicitly in the Bible, and therefore the

Church can define dogmas of faith on the basis of her Tradition and what is only implicit in Scripture. For example, the Assumption of Our Lady is not narrated explicitly in Scripture, but was defined as dogma on the basis of the living Tradition. ... Another example is the canon of Scripture. No text of Scripture teaches which are the true books of the Bible. The canon of Scripture is known by the Church only through Tradition, confirmed by the Magisterium."⁹

Even when a truth of faith is contained directly in Scripture, Tradition is necessary as a witness of the correct interpretation. Thus truths can be defined solely on the basis of Tradition (although with the aid of what is implicit in Scripture), but never on the basis of Scripture alone without Tradition. The two form an organic unity and together are "like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to Face. ... For Sacred Scripture is the Word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while Sacred Tradition takes the Word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of Truth, they may, in proclaiming it, preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known."¹⁰

1. Mk 16:15

2. Mt 28:18-20.

3. Lawrence Feingold, *Faith Comes From What Is Heard: An Introduction to Fundamental Theology*, (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2016), 206.

4. Feingold, *Faith Comes From What Is Heard*, 194.

5. Council of Trent, Session 4 (1546), in DS, 1501.

6. Feingold, *Faith Comes From What Is Heard*, 201.

7. Feingold, *Faith Comes From What Is Heard*, 201.

8. John 21:25.

9. Feingold, *Faith Comes From What Is Heard*, 203.

10. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, §7, §9.

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

Changing Perspective

The kingdom is here and now

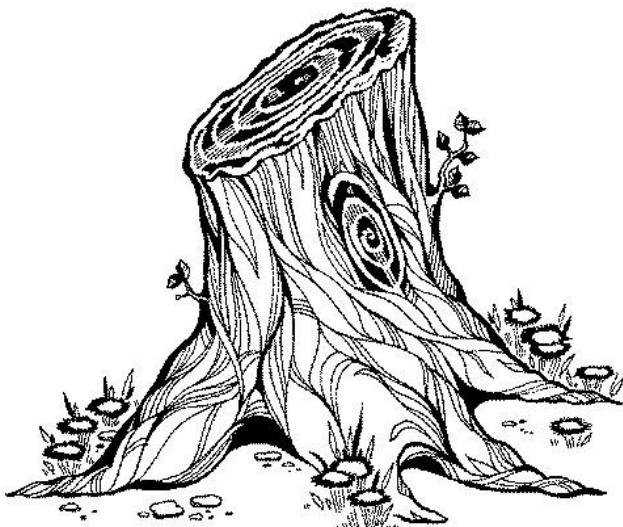
Whenever we read or hear a passage in Scripture we seldom reach beyond the words which come before or those which come to follow and thus too often we find such a passage enigmatic and difficult to understand.

We hear in the first reading: *"On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom."*¹ We want to ask what this could possibly mean? The last two verses of chapter 10 provides a hint: *"Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon with its majestic trees will fall."*² This adds to our understanding of the passage yet falls short of comprehension. What further must be done for us to understand?

The beginning of the previous chapter adds more: *"Woe to those who enact unjust statutes and who write oppressive decrees, depriving the need of judgment and robbing my people's poor of their rights, making widows their plunder, and orphans their prey!"*³ Isaiah here is speaking of the assault and cruelty inflicted upon the Israelites by the King of Assyria. It was God's intention to use Assyria to punish his people who had strayed, who had become an impious nation. But the Assyrian king had total destruction in mind. *"Woe to Assyria! My rod in anger, my staff in*

*wrath. Against an impious nation I send him, and against a people under my wrath I order him to seize plunder, carry off loot, and tread them down like the mud of the streets. But this is not what he intends, nor does he have this in mind; rather, it is in his heart to destroy, to make an end of nations not a few."*⁴

With this understanding we now can better decipher the meaning of this passage. Just when the enemy is about to capture Jerusalem, God intervenes, cutting down and destroying the enemy. Isaiah is speaking of the Babylonian conquest, saying that after the exile only a stump of the Davidic dynasty would remain, but that from it a new shoot would arise, the Messianic King.



Here Isaiah prophesies how the Davidic King will bring peace to all the earth. It is especially interesting that in this passage we find the source of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: piety, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. All but the first are explicitly listed in this passage. Piety is the spiritual virtue implicit in verse 4 concerning how the King will take care of the poor and

afflicted.

The gift of piety is the love of God, which allows us to recognize that every human being—without exception—is a beloved child of God. Everyone—the sinful, the annoyingly stupid, the derelict, the afflicted—in the eyes of God is his beloved and through the gift of piety owed our acceptance as one of our own. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit are like this; if we do not refuse them, they will kindle within the fire of love for God and his people.

The second reading continues the theme of peace and unity that comes from Christ. Paul, addressing the divisions that then seriously challenged the Christians of Rome, urging them to, *"Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I say that Christ became a minister of the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy."*⁵

The late Father John Kavanaugh, S. J. once wrote:

"In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, one of the more elaborate meditations is a study of the Incarnation. Ignatius has us imagine the Trinity gazing upon the world, desiring to save the human race. He paints a vast mural of persons, various in dress, actions, and color, 'some in peace and others in war; some weeping and others laughing; some well, others ill; some being born and others dying."

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But there is great blindness in humanity. People not only lose their way; they lose their souls as well. So Ignatius writes of the great entry. God, in the second person of the Trinity, chooses to be one of us. In an earthly village the Virgin gives herself in gratitude and trust.

The entry of God is not only portrayed as a religious experience by individual persons, it is also an invasion of history itself, a breaching of the geopolitical and social worlds of all humankind.

This global emphasis did not originate with Ignatius of Loyola. It is clear even from the prophetic utterance of Isaiah that the Messiah, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord would rest, was to be of vast importance, not only to Israel, but to the Gentile world as 'a signal for the nations.'

Isaiah tells us that the promised one, with the wisdom and understanding of God's Spirit, will judge the poor with justice and strike the ruthless and wicked.

Paul's Letter to the Romans reminds his readers that the advent of Christ into their lives will require a reform, as well, of the personal relationships."⁶

There are many who find the message of the Incarnation and Advent problematic. Those who do are want to open but a small part of their lives to the love of God, keeping the rest to themselves; they believe that all that is necessary is to allow God to enter their interior "prayer lives" and attempt to limit any reform to that.

What is so intriguing is how we resist the possibility that relations with our families or friends might be transformed. We cannot imagine changing

our attitudes toward our enemies. And, consider for a moment, how intolerant we have become to any challenge to our personal political leanings. The vitriol and hatred, the bigotry and bias, the anger and the fear engendered throughout and subsequent to the most recent elections are indicative of how close-minded and hard-hearted we have become.

"We insist that Democrats and Republicans be reformed. We demand that the church be changed and nations disarmed. But it rarely strikes us that we may be as unjust in our relationships as the principalities and powers are in theirs.

We can't imagine that we, in our own way, could be as narcissistic and self-centered as preening politicians and avaricious misers.

If we restrict the entry of God into our lives, we cannot help but limit the power of God's grace. When we wonder why our path of discipleship seems to lead nowhere, it may be because we have set up too many roadblocks."⁷

Saint Augustine once said: "The Lord Jesus began his preaching of the Gospel with the admonition: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Mt 4:17). His forerunner, John the Baptist, began his in the same way: 'Repent,' he said, 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Mt 3:2).

Today, for those who will not repent at the approach of the kingdom of heaven, the reproof of the Lord Jesus is the same. As he points out himself, 'You cannot expect to see the kingdom of heaven coming. The kingdom of heaven,' he says elsewhere, 'is within you' (Lk 17:21).

Each of us would be wise therefore to take to heart the advice of his teacher, and not waste this present time."⁸

We know not the day or the hour of the end of the world. Only God knows that. Augustine continues: "Whether any of us here present will see the end of the world I know not; very likely none of us will. Even so, the time is very near for each of us, for we are mortal.

We may evade the blows of fortune, but shall we evade death? We may escape perils from without but shall we escape what comes from within us? No, suddenly, we may be attacked by any malady.

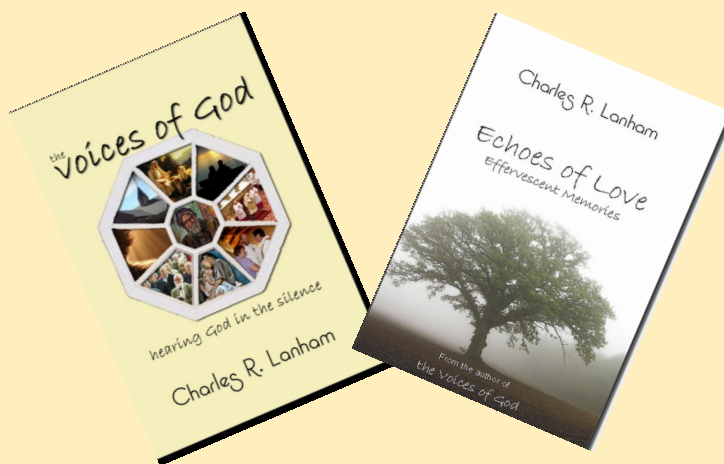
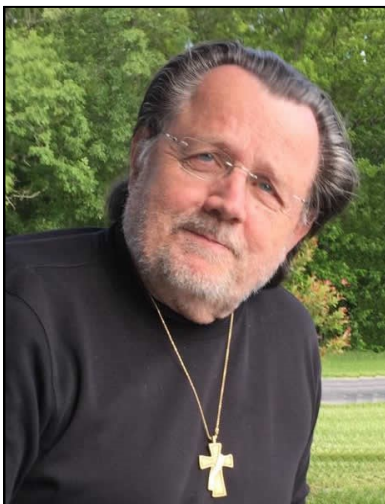
And if we are spared? Even so, old age comes at last, and nothing will delay it."

Indeed, nothing will delay the natural course of our lives. Whether brief or of considerable duration, anticipated, expected or sudden, death will come to us all, for that is certain. Knowing such certainty should call each of us to be prepared, to stay awake, and to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Amen.

Homily for
Second Sunday of Advent (A)
Isaiah 11:1-10
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

1. Is 11:1.
2. Is 10:33.
3. Is 10:1-2.
4. Is 10:5-7.
5. Rom 15:7-9.
6. John Kavanaugh, S.J. *Seeing Daylight*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.
7. John Kavanaugh, S.J., *Seeing Daylight*.
8. Saint Augustine, *Sermon 109*, 1:PL 38, 636.



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

deaconscorner.org

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