Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

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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.

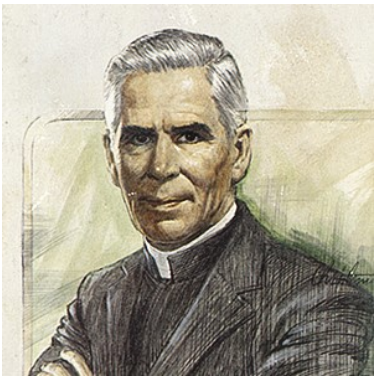
Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

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 Genius Of A Mind

*Life is still worth living*

Perhaps it is nothing more than whispered thought floating on a breeze or memory's lingering scent which is wont to tease forgetfulness. There is, of course, no way of knowing where or how or whence such idle thought or distant memory should tantalize, and yet, from slumber it awakens, demanding much of one's attention.



Few are they who issue thought so profound they transcend the passing of the years or command man's briefest mental exercise. Most are long forgotten, dying stillborn before the tongue can flutter and the lips can separate. But those who make lasting memories are as precious jewels, which shine, not in shadow or in darkness, but only by the light of day.

The genius of a mind, all but now a distant memory, unknown and unremembered by those who care not for what belongs to yesterday, such genius cries out in anguish the need to be recalled and yet again considered, to neither be dismissed nor tossed away. For though years have flown since once his sonorous voice, with wit and laughter did fill the air, the echo of his words still ring of truths which the world has long denied yet so sorely needs today.

The world, it feels, is growing colder, dark shadows hold the light at bay. From thoughtless minds, the Nietzschean throng cries out in anger and in hate: "*God is dead*," "*Live long and prosper*." But no one listens anymore.

We ought to remind ourselves that despite all the ugliness, hatred, anger, bitterness, strife, and evil that abounds, "*Life is worth living*." For those who have yet to abandon their minds to vacant mindlessness and self-desire, dare to read what once was spoken by a man so blessed by God, Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen ( 1895-1979).

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**On God:**

*"The need for God never disappears. Those who deny the existence of water are still thirsty. And those who deny God still want him in their craving for beauty and love and peace, which he alone is."*

*"If the new crime be, to believe in God, let us all be criminals."*

*"God does not frown on your complaint. Did not His Mother in the Temple ask: 'Son why hast Thou done so to us?' And did not Christ on the Cross complain: 'My God why has Thou abandoned Me?' If the Son asked the Father, and the Mother, the Son —why should not you? But let your wails be to God, and not to man. And at end of your sweet complaining prayer you will say: Father into Thy Hands I commend my spirit.' They who complain to others never see God's purposes. They who complain to God find that their passion, like Christ's turns into compassion."*

*"God love you! That is the way I shall conclude my broadcasts, and that is the way I shall begin them today. I want the first word on the air of this New Year to be God. It is God who makes us happy. It is Love which makes old things new. It is you who count the years in terms of God's abiding love. Combining all three we have 'God love you,' which is but another way of saying 'Happy New Year'."*

*"God leaves each one free to reject his infusion of love—for gifts cease to be gifts if they are forced on us. God respects our freedom of will; he did not even enter into this human order of ours without consulting a woman. So neither does he elevate us to partake of his divine nature without our free consent."*

**On Jesus Christ:**

*"It is so hard to admit that one is a sinner; it is so hard to climb the hill of Calvary and kneel beneath a cross and ask for pardon, forgiveness. Certainly it is hard. But it is harder to hang there."*

*"They who have not the Spirit call him a great man, a teacher, a master, but to see Him as the Lord of heaven and earth as the Son of the Living God, comes only through the Holy Spirit."*

*"All of a sudden the world has become filled with a race of people called the 'I am not'. Our Divine Lord seven times said 'I am' e.g. 'I am the good Shepherd'. 70x7 these people say 'I am not' e.g. 'I am not a believer because.' Their words tell how empty they are and how they hunger for the Eucharistic Bread that makes us one. They talk as if they were disappointed in love — and everyone is who has only the world to love. That is why they warn everyone against falling in love with Christ's Mystical Body. Like a man who missed the boat, they tell others never to go to sea for a rest. They admit their thirst, but they do not want others to drink."*

*"A little boy who had been to Sunday School told his father that he learned that God the Father and Son were equal. The father said: 'That is ridiculous. I am your father; you are my son. I existed a long time before you.' 'No,' said the boy, "you did not begin to be a father until I began to be a son.' At Christmas, He Who was eternally generated by the Father is generated in time, in the womb of a virgin Mary. The Son of God then becomes the Son of Man. As the word which I speak to you is not different because I give it breath and sound, so neither is the Word of the Son of God changed because He takes on a human nature like ours in all things except sin. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us."*

**On Faith:**

*"Judge the Catholic Church not by those who barely live by its spirit, but by the example of those who live closest to it."*

*"In vain will the world seek for equality until it has seen men through the eyes of faith. Faith teaches that all men, however poor, or ignorant, or crippled, however maimed, ugly, or degraded they may be, all bear within themselves the image of God, and have been bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. As this truth is forgotten, men are valued only because of what they can do, not because of what they are."*

*"Those who love God do not protest, whatever He may ask of them, nor doubt His kindness when He sends them difficult hours. A sick person takes medicine without asking the physician to justify its bitter taste because the patient trusts the doctor's knowledge; so the soul that has sufficient faith accepts all the events of life as gifts of God in the serene assurance that God knows best."*

**On Morality:**

*"Why is it that the world has confessed its inability to inculcate virtue in the young? Very simply because it has not correlated morality to any love nobler than self-love. Things fulfill their proper role only when integrated into a larger whole. Most lives are like doors without hinges, or sleeves without coats, or bows without violins; that is unrelated to wholes or purposes which give them meaning."*

*"Moral principles do not depend on a majority vote. Wrong is wrong. Even if everybody is wrong. Right is right. Even if nobody is right."*

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*"The first direct, human limitation of infant life in the history of Christianity took place in the village of Bethlehem through an infant-controller whose name was Herod. The prevention of infant life was simultaneously an attack upon Divinity in the person of God made man, Jesus Christ our Lord. No one strikes at birth who does not simultaneously strike at God, for birth is earth's reflection of the Son's eternal generation."*

*"The root principle of birth-control is unsound. It is a glorification of the means and a contempt of the end; it says that the pleasure which is a means to the procreation of children is good, but the children themselves are no good. In other words, to be logical, the philosophy of birth-control would commit us to a world in which trees were always blooming but never giving fruit, a world full of sign-posts that were leading nowhere. In this cosmos every tree would be a barren fig tree and for that reason would have upon it the curse of God."*

**On Love:**

*"If love craves a cross — even God's true love is sacrificial. That is why courtship is characterized by gift-giving — a surrender of what one has. In marriage this sacrificial love should deepen by a surrender of what one has. Because too many measure their love for one another by the pleasure which the other gives, they are in reality not in love, but in the swamps of selfishness. Our poor, frail human souls at best are like jangled strings, made toneless by self-love; and not until we tighten them with self-discipline can we attune them to those harmonies that come from God, wherein each, having given to the other hostage of its heart, finds himself free in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Peace first came to the world when the Wise Men discovered a family. And the dawn of peace will come again when other wise men return to homes where they see the human family of father, mother, and children, as the reverse order of the Holy Family: a Child, a Mother, and a Father."*

**On Knowledge:**

*"Intellectual knowledge is not the one thing necessary. Not all the PhD's are saints, and all the ignorant are not demons. Indeed, a certain type of education may simply turn a man from a stupid egotist into a clever egotist and, of the two, the former has a better chance of salvation."*

*"How many universities in our land founded as religious institutions for the propagation of a particular Christian creed, today adhere to the creeds they were found to propagate?"*

**On Human Nature:**

*"The less we think we are, the more good we do...reducing themselves to zero they leave room for infinity, where those who think themselves infinite, God leaves with their little zero."*

*"The simple words 'thank you' will always stand out as a refutation of determinism, for they imply that something which was done could possibly have been left undone."*

*"Bad temper is an indication of a man's character; every man can be judged by the things which make him mad."*

*"If you do not live what you believe, you will end up believing what you live. Believe the incredible and you can do the impossible."*

*"Courtesy is not condescension of a superior to an inferior, or a patronizing interest in another's affairs. It is the homage of the heart to the sacredness of human worth."*

*"Contentment is not an innate virtue. It is acquired through great resolution and diligence in conquering unruly desire; hence it is an art which few study."*

*"Emptiness as regards the self, is balanced by compassion for others. The less stress on the ego, the more care there is for neighbor. At the moment St. Francis emptied himself of his possession, he made himself free for compassion."*

*"From a material point of view, we are worth so little. The content of a human body is equivalent to as much sugar as there is in two lumps, as much oil as there is in seven bars of soap, as much phosphorus as there is in 2200 matches, and as much magnesium as it takes to develop a photograph. In all, the human body, chemically, is worth a little less than two dollars — So why should any mortal Spirit be proud? But spiritually we are worth more than the universe."*

*"Once our helplessness is rendered up to the power of God, life changes and we become less and less the victims of our moods. Instead of letting the world determine our state of mind, we determine the state of the soul with which the world is to be faced. The earth carries its atmosphere with it as it revolves about the sun; so can the soul carry the atmosphere of God with it in disregard of turbulent events in the world outside."*

*"It used to be that the most popular biographies were the lives of good men for the sake of imitation, rather than scandals for the sake of making ourselves believe we are more virtuous."*

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# Intolerant Of Tolerance

*The sin of perfection*

On the afternoon of October 17th, 1989, as I was preparing to teach a class at Glendale Community College in Southern California, I received a phone call from my mother-in-law in Decatur, Illinois. With concern clearly in her voice, she asked if we were alright. Somewhat puzzled by this, I responded that yes we were fine. Although I was alone at the time, I knew of nothing which was of any great concern, so I asked what had her so concerned.

What had her so worried was something that had just occurred some eight-hundred miles north: a magnitude 6.9 earthquake, later to be called the Loma Prieta Earthquake, had wreaked widespread havoc in the San Francisco Bay area and would dominate the news for weeks to come.

Although distance prevailed at that time—it was not felt that far away—I was no stranger to earthquakes. Just two years before, on October 1, 1987, we were shaken by a magnitude 5.9 earthquake whose epicenter, located near the community of Whittier, was less than six miles away.

Fortunately, and with foresight born of hindsight, the three story condominium in which we were then living had been constructed to allow it to flex, to bend and sway, absorbing the tremors as it was meant to do. Our home sustained no damage, not even the smallest crack.

The wise choices, developed from years of experience and study, resulted in building construction techniques which allowed buildings to not only absorb the tremors but survive major earthquakes without sustaining serious structural damage.

So it is with our lives as well. The very nature of life demands that we choose, that we make choices; God made us that way. He gave us the gift of free will: the autonomy to make our own choices; whether good or bad, right or wrong, the choices we make are ours to make.

Yet, God, in his infinite wisdom, knew that free will alone would never be enough; we needed more than free will to be able to make wise choices. So he sagely endowed us with a conscience, the innate ability to know right from wrong; he embedded within the human heart: intellect, right reason, a moral code, and the natural law. Still, given man's early propensity toward absent mindedness, God went a step further, emphasizing ten of his most important laws by etching them in stone so we couldn't possibly forget.

We have been given all the tools we need to make wise choices, to know right from wrong, to be and to become all God desires of us.

That is precisely what Sirach tells us today:

"*If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live; he has set before you fire and water to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand*." Whether you keep the commandments, whether you place your trust in God are yours to choose; God won't interfere or force you either way. Before you are fire (wrong) and water (right) so stretch out your hand and make your choice. Choose water and live forever with God, choose fire and death will be your reward.

Sirach continues, "*Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him*." It is entirely of our own making, our choice; before us is an endless array of opportunities and options, some good, some bad, some offer life, others only death: none will be denied.

We are free to act as we are wont to act, God will never interfere or stay the course of our lives. As Sirach acknowledges, "*The eyes of God are on those who fear him; he understands man's every deed. No one does he command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin*." God never compels us nor does he grant permission for us to sin; any evil act is solely of our own deliberate refusal to act rightly or justly.

Whether in the beginning or in these current times, our propensity to

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stray from living according to the will of God continues unabated. In every age, there are those who choose themselves over God, who deny and dismiss the existence of any higher authority than their own, who are wont to obey no law but the freedom to act on any moment's whim.

In a very real and frightening sense, we have lost our minds; no longer capable of discerning what is true or false, right or wrong, good or bad, up or down. We have turned away from God, turning inward to an idolatry of self. We have become fundamentalists, rigid adherents to the ideologies of egotism and selfishness.

We have become intolerant of tolerance, unwilling to accept any view or idea not perfectly aligned to our own. This ideological divide grows ever more divided, ever more acrimonious, and ever more dysfunctional. It is tellingly not at all what Jesus taught, for too often the distinctions between yes or no, right or wrong, good or bad are lost in all the angry, hateful rhetoric that spews from the mouths of the rigid fundamentalist.

Our country has become deeply divided, is deeply divided, with quite literally millions of voices demanding recognition and resolution for their grievances. So many voices, so little understanding, so little tolerance. We might loosely categorize these myriad voices as either liberal or conservative, while acknowledging that these categories, in and of themselves, are dysfunctional and problematic, incapable of resolving the problems we face.

*"Nowhere is this more evident than in our moral discourse, especially in our attempts at dialogue about private morality, that is, about such areas as abortion, sex, marriage, homosexuality, and the like. The conservative and the liberal, each in his way, invites us to a certain narrowness and intolerance.*

*The liberal does this by being intolerant of the ideal, of moral principle. Crassly put, liberal ideology tells us that if the majority of people do not, or cannot, keep a commandment, well ... then we should change the commandment. What possible sense does it make, it is asked, to have a moral precept that the majority of people do not accept? How can the church claim to be compassionate and in touch with the suffering and needs of people, if it makes them feel guilty for not keeping certain commandments in which they no longer believe? How can the church be so out of touch, so ivory tower, in its morality so as to ignore the sensus fidelium in these crucial moral areas? Ironically, the liberal is pretty reluctant to apply this same kind of reasoning to the social encyclicals.*

*Conservative intolerance generally puts on a crasser face. The written rules of the church, the commandments and canon law, are the benchmarks. You either measure up or you do not. If you do not measure up, you leave the church or, at very least, assume some kind of penitential or second-class role within it. Ironically, too, like his liberal counterpart, the conservative is not eager to apply that same criterion when it comes to the social teachings of the church.*

*Now perhaps these are caricatures, indicative only of the extreme and are not really typical. Few liberals and conservatives would identify with the positions. That may be true, but good caricatures distort in the same way in which art distorts, namely, by highlighting an essential form that ultimately gives shape to the picture but is not always so consciously clear. Hence, what these caricatures do is highlight what is narrow and dangerous in both liberal and conservative ideologies, at least as these pertain to moral discourse. Neither is really tolerant, compassionate, and wide enough to reflect the charity and catholicity of Jesus Christ.*

*Both the liberal and the conservative, in the end, are fundamentalists because each, albeit in her own way, on the basis of good intention, vastly oversimplifies things."*[1]

What does Jesus say? We know Jesus was neither a liberal nor a conservative. He came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. To this he adds "*unless your righteousness surpasses the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven*." Obeying the letter of the law is not enough, you must go beyond it, you must live it in all things. In matters of discipleship there are no ifs, ands, or buts. "*Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one*."

Difficult, yes. We all fall short, therefore we must not judge; we are all called to holiness, therefore we cannot exempt ourselves. Amen.

Homily for the
The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Sirach 15:15-20
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-37

1. Ron Rolheiser, *Beyond Liberal and Conservative,* The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.

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*"God does not love us because we are loveable of and by ourselves, but because he has put his own love into us. He does not even wait for us to love; his own love perfects us. Letting it do this, with no resistance, no holding back for fear of what our egotism must give up, is the one way to the peace that the world can neither give nor take away."*

*"We always make the fatal mistake of thinking that it is what we do that matters, when really what matters is what we let God do to us. God sent the angel to Mary, not to ask her to do something, but to let something be done. Since God is a better artisan than you, the more you abandon yourself to him, the happier he can make you."*

*"No man discovers anything big unless he makes himself small."*

*"You think you are having a good time, but time really is the greatest obstacle in the world to happiness, not only because it makes you take pleasures successively, but also because you are never really happy until you are unconscious of the passing of time. The more you look at the clock, the less happy you are. The more you enjoy yourself, the less conscious you are of the passing of time."*

*"Sunlight is all about the house, but for sunlight to get in we must open the blinds. The physician of souls can cure, but we must know we are sick and must want to be cured. God Calls! We can pretend we do not hear, we can accept Him, or we can reject His voice. It is each person's inalienable right to decide."*

**On Religion:**

*"A religion that doesn't interfere with the secular order will soon discover that the secular order will not refrain from interfering with it."*

*"A few decades ago, nobody believed in the confession of sins except the Church. Today everyone believes in confession—with this difference: some believe in confessing their own sins; others believe in confessing other people's sins. The popularity of psychoanalysis has nearly convinced everyone of the necessity of some kind of confession for peace of mind. This is another instance of how the world, which threw Christian truths into the wastebasket in the nineteenth century, is pulling them out in isolated secularized form in the twentieth century, meanwhile deluding itself into believing that it has made a great discovery. The world found it could not get along without some release for its inner unhappiness. Once it had rejected confession and denied both God and guilt, it had to find a substitute."*

*"Humanism has been defined as 'the endeavor to keep the best spiritual values of religion while surrendering any theological interpretation of the universe. In its broadest sense it is an endeavor to have Christianity without Christ, godliness without God, and Christian hope without the promise of another life."*

*"I don't want my life to be mine, I want it to be Christ's. The more ego there is, the less there is of Christ."*

*"A man can join any other movement, group, or cult without provoking hostile comment from his neighbors and friends; he can even found some esoteric sun cult of his own and be tolerated as a citizen exercising his legitimate freedom and satisfying his own religious needs. But as soon as anyone joins the Catholic Church, hatred, opposition appear."*

*"The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host."*

*"Neither theological knowledge nor social action alone is enough to keep us in love with Christ unless both are proceeded by a personal encounter with Him. Theological insights are gained not only from between two covers of a book, but from two bent knees before an altar. The Holy Hour becomes like an oxygen tank to revive the breath of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the foul and fetid atmosphere of the world."*

*"The mark of the true Church is that it will never get on well with the passing moods of the world."*

**On Truth:**

*"It is easy to find truth; it is hard to face it and still harder to follow it. The only people who ever arrive at a knowledge of God are those who, when the door is opened, accept that truth and shoulder the responsibilities it brings. It requires more courage than brains to learn to know God. God is the most obvious fact of human experience, but accepting him is one of the most arduous."*

*"Christian love bears evil, but it does not tolerate it. It does penance for the sins of others, but it is not broadminded about sin. REAL LOVE involves real hatred: whoever has lost the power of moral indignation and the urge to drive the sellers from the temples has also lost a living fervent love of Truth."*

*"The examination of one's own conscience is the hardest of all revolutions to begin and only saints have the courage to do it."*

# The Spirit Denied

*That which defines us*

What becomes of those who hold no value for another, whose lives are measured, not by the exceptional, but by the banal and mundane, who deny the existence of that which makes each of us uniquely human? Those who hold the prevailing secular worldview of man as a product of natural evolution, absent any ineffable attributes such as spirit, reason, intellect, and conscience must necessarily move to diminish and denigrate the dignity of the human person.

That which defines us as human, absent from all other living creatures, is the unity of body and soul created in the image of God. Our bodies are animated by our spiritual souls, intended by God to become temples of the Spirit.

"*Though made of body and soul, man is one. Through his bodily composition he gathers to himself the elements of the material world; thus they reach their crown through him, and through him raise their voice in free praise of the Creator. For this reason man is not allowed to despise his bodily life, rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day. Nevertheless, wounded by sin, man experiences rebellious stirrings in his body. But the very dignity of man postulates that man glorify God in his body and forbid it to serve the evil inclinations of his heart.*"[1]

"*The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the 'form' of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.*"[2]

Examples of the precipitous decline in ethical and moral norms within major social and cultural groups are far too numerous to mention. However, one recent example should be sufficient to give evidence of the dismal and abhorrent moral morass in which we find ourselves now slogging.

A recent survey, funded by Dallas-based dating service Match, conducted by Research Now found that nearly half (48%) of Millennials have had sex "***before***" a first date. A biological anthropologist and chief scientific advisor to Match, who helped develop the survey notes, "*We have a real misunderstanding of Millennials. ...they are very career-oriented, so sex before the first date could be a 'sex interview,' where they want to know if they want to spend time with this person.*"

Have we really sunk that low? Really? Sex has been reduced to an interview, utilizing performance as a means of evaluating likeability? That is beyond bizarre, beyond immoral, beyond rational understanding.

But wait! There's more! A licensed clinical social worker and certified sex therapist says that "*In many ways sex has become a less intimate part of dating. With dating apps making it easer than ever to hop in bed, now the intimate part can oftentimes be introducing a partner to friends and family. We used to think of sex as you crossed the line now you are in an intimate zone, but now sex is almost a given and it's not the intimate part. The intimate part is getting to know someone and going on a date.*"[3]

Precisely how anyone can define intimacy as "*getting to know someone and going on a date*" is simply mind-boggling. The most beautiful, loving act designed by God has been diminished to nothing more than an item on a checklist designed to determine how well one may like another.

Is it any wonder why so many see nothing immoral or sinful anymore? The moral decay lies rotting all around us, its stench revolting.

Sex has been demoted to the trivial and unimportant. What is now far more important is the phone. "*Singles don't like people who have a cracked phone or those who use a clicking sound when typing.*" Now those are real turnoffs and absolute relationship killers, don't you know. Really.

1. Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, §14.
2. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §365.
3. Mary Bowerman, *Sex before first date OK, but a cracked phone? Think again*, Reno Gazette Journal, February 6, 2017, B01.

# Et Quod Hoc ...

*This and that ...*

The latest issue of the National Catholic Register (February 5-18, 2017) published the numbers of Catholics in the 115th Congress. The numbers are telling in a number of important ways.

There are, according to Pew Research Center analysis, 168 Eastern or Latin-rite Catholics, comprising approximately 27% of the total congressional membership, the largest faith group in Congress, more than twice the number of the next largest group (Baptists, 72 members.) Of the 100 members of the Senate, 24, nearly one-quarter, are Catholic (15 Democrats and 9 Republicans.) In the House of Representatives, 144, 33.1% or one-third of the House are Catholic (74 Democrats and 70 Republicans.)

What is most telling however, are the voting records of those members of Congress on pro-life issues as recorded during the previous 114th Congress outlining how their votes were in accord with the National Right to Life Committee's (NRLC) positions. The numbers are both revealing and startling.

Of the 9 Republican Catholic Senators, 6 voted 100% pro-life, 1-66%, 1-25%, and 1-0%.

Of the 15 Democratic Catholic Senators, 11 voted 0% pro-life, 1-75%, 2-25%, and 1 (Catherine Cortez Masto, D -NV) is newly elected and has no record.

Of the 70 Republican Catholic Representatives, 54 voted 100% pro-life, 8-80+%, 1-60%, 7-newly elected to Congress.

Of the 74 Democratic Catholic Representatives, 1 voted 100% pro-life, 54 voted 0% pro-life, 3-6%, 1-13%, 1-20%, 1-46%, 1-66%, 8-newly elected to Congress.

What this would seem to indicate is, at least from one side of the aisle, a strong bias toward secular progressive ideology consistently trumping (*no pun intended*) long-standing and well-understood Catholic doctrine and dogma.

On either side of the political aisle there were far too many who failed to follow the teachings of the Catholic Church, placing political expediency above their putative faith.

Let us pray to our heavenly Father that those who have been chosen to represent us will be inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, to follow faithfully the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, to preach the Gospel through their words and actions, and to legislate justly and righteously in all things. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Sir Walter Scott once famously penned, "*Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.*" Never truer words have been written, albeit some two-hundred years ago.

The latest *buzz* surrounding social media, media bias, and fake news only serves to elevate awareness to how gullible and willing we are to accept and believe whatever is set before us.

A recent cartoon in the local paper depicts a young man sitting before his laptop, saying to his father standing next to him, "*Check this out! People go out of their minds when you post any old comment on the Internet. Like ... Let me say...* " as he types something on his keyboard. You then see the two of them staring in amazement at the computer screen where responses begin flying: "*Moron!*" "*You're racist!*" "*It's people like you …*", Ping! Ping! Ping! Ping!

As the posts continue to fly, the father exclaims: "*Chispas (Wow), what did you say?*" to which the son replies, "*The sky is blue.*"

The following day, the cartoon continued this conversation. The son says, "*No matter what you say on the Internet, someone will get mad*" to which the father responds, "*Baldo, that's not true! It's just people being silly,*" to which the son says, "*Uh-oh,*" and the father asks, "*What?*" The son replies, "*My post that the sky is blue has 35,000 thumbs-down ratings … and now Channel 3 wants to interview me.*"

Humorist and writer Mark Twain in *Chapters from My Autobiography*, wrote: "*Figures often beguile me, particularly when I have the arranging of them myself; in which case the remark attributed to Disraeli would often apply with justice and force: 'There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics*."

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Our current problems in discerning what is true and what is not rests squarely with the abandonment in teaching the Socratic method, that is pushing students to always look at everything with a skeptical eye. To read with an open mind, willing to alter one's understanding when what is thought to be true is found to be demonstrably false.

As it is, we form opinions, based on unverified posts, then set them in concrete, to be presented as fact. Ignorant of the truth, we cannot defend what we believe; our only recourse is to resort to slanderous attacks on another. If you can neither state your position clearly nor argue your case on its merits, silence will always be the better part of valor.

Following last week's article, On Holy Ground (Colloqui, Vol 1, No. 37, Feb. 3, 2017, pp. 4-5), as expected, several readers opined, both in support or not, and their words were inciteful, gracious, and welcome. In response to one who suggested it might have been better to have said, "*tone it down, please*" I responded, in part, thus:

Thanks for writing. While I share similar feelings with some of what you have to say concerning who we are as a people and our desire to socialize and love one another, I must, with all due respect, disagree with you on a number of points.

Yes, we are not in a seminary or convent and yes we are perhaps as you write "*sinners, irreverent, improper, gouache, and debauched bunch group of attendees ('irritating, rude, offensive', et al)*" but we are nevertheless in the presence of God in **His temple**. One does not need to be a seminarian, clergy, or religious to recognize and give due reverence to Almighty God and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

It seems to me that one of the biggest challenges we face as members of the Body of Christ and his Church today is the serious and prevailing lack of reverence and awe we display whenever we enter into His presence.

If you have ever been present in a courtroom you will recognize how **solemn** and **silent** the room becomes whenever the judge is seated behind the bench. Those in the courtroom are not asked to simply **tone it down please**, but to **be silent**. How much more so should we be whenever we find ourselves in God's presence?

Those who find themselves facing judgment in the courtroom generally act with decorum, whether guilty or innocent, and should they insist on not acting thusly are summarily removed from the courtroom while their trial continues without them. Again, shouldn't similar rules of etiquette and decorum be applied when before our Lord God, the final judge of the universe?

The Church is a place where we come together as a community **to worship** and to give praise and glory to the One who made us. It is not a bawdy house, brew pub, dance hall, or social club. If and when we enter the house of God with the understanding that it is other than a place of **worship**, we make a very public affirmation that it is **we** who are of greater importance than our Creator God.

When we "*come in off the streets*" as you wrote, and enter the narthex, we have yet to enter the church proper and therefore brief social conversations may and can occur as long as they are conducted quietly and with deference to those who have entered further into the nave of the church. Traditionally, the narthex, while considered a part of the church building, has not been considered part of the church proper, and therefore quiet conversation is permitted.

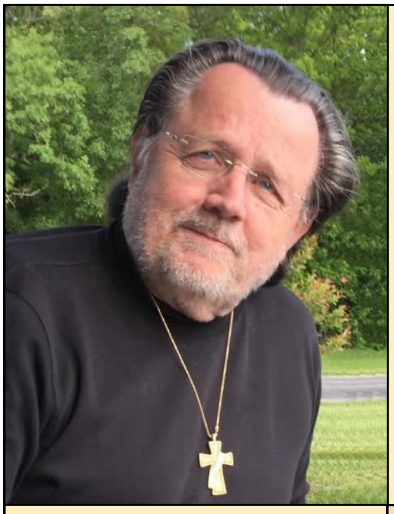
**But once you enter the church proper you are in the presence of our Lord God, on Holy Ground, and God commands all our respect, honor, and reverence.**

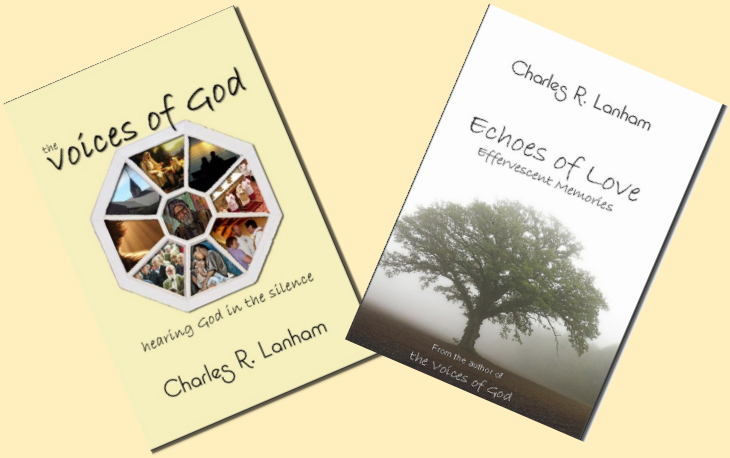
We all, and I include myself here, need to be reminded from time to time of the reason we come to church and the One with whom we truly come to worship, to praise, and to give thanks for all we have received.

We come indeed because we are sinners, broken people in desperate need of God's forgiveness and mercy. We come to be filled with God's grace and love. We come to be fed through the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, so that we can be healed. If we come for any other purpose we have come to the wrong house.

So to paraphrase: "*I say parishioners: …silence please! Bow your heads and pray for God's mercy, for you are in His Holy Presence! Blessing be upon us for more reverence to God our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*"

Peace be with you. Amen.



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