



A journal for restless minds

## WHAT LOVE IS THIS

*Is it love ... enough*

### RUDE AWAKENING

*From peaceful slumber*

### A DEFICIENCY OF FAITH

*How great the darkness*

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.

## What Love Is This

*Is it love ... enough?*

**T**wo questions, only two. And no, I do not care to hear the answers, for such thoughts are far too personal to share, and yet, please consider them with all the gravitas they require. Answer then, with deliberateness and grave concern, in silent stillness hear what speaks within your heart.

A song first sung sixty-two years ago in 1955 begins:

*Love and marriage,  
love and marriage.  
They go together like a  
horse and carriage.  
This I tell you, brother,  
you can't have one  
without the other.*

These lyrics sound "nice" yet somehow evoke a sentiment lacking a thing essential; there is no feeling of permanence or deep emotional commitment, no sense of unity or oneness with another. This leads to the first question which I ask of every

couple with whom I meet to prepare for marriage:

**What love is this which you express?**

Love too easily trips the tongue; it is too often but a blithe response to some pleasant experience. In the case of two persons "in love," what they believe love is seldom reaches the lofty heights de-

manded of a life-long commitment to one another. Youthful inexperience denies love beyond their passion, for that is what love is, don't you see, and that leads to the second question:



**Is it love ... enough?**

Perhaps, yet no flame can burn hot for eternity. What happens when passion wanes, when love no longer boils but simmers low? Without the heat of passion's breath, will such love be enough to warm the heart? If not, what then the union in sweet passion's name?

And of God too oft forsaken, thus marriage vows too oft forgotten. Passion lasts but for the moment, love will last forevermore.

## Rude Awakening

*From peaceful slumber*

**N**oticeably absent these days from public discourse, social commentary, or didactic pedagogy is an awareness of and recognition for the essentiality of a strong moral code. Morality is a topic studiously avoided for the simple reason that any discussion of it necessarily raises uncomfortable questions and inconvenient challenges to many of our social norms, behavioral modalities, and perceptions of reality.

We are no longer guided by principles of right or wrong, good or evil but rather by our basest desires and our “feelings”, what feels good, or what is our “right.” We have managed to remove “sin” and “immorality” from our lexicon; we have become amoralists, living only for ourselves and our own interests, nothing more.

Even those who most earnestly desire to live a “moral” life, a good life, have on too many occasions succumbed to the enticements that are laid before them. The secular, relativist vacuum which has managed to suck every mote of morality from our consciousness is principally to blame for the high level of moral decay in which we find ourselves mired. But each of us also shares in the increasing rot and decay in which we now wallow for all too quickly and easily we find ourselves closing the door on our consciences whenever we find it convenient to do so.

The problem is largely one of coating ourselves with Vaseline so that we can slide past hard moral choices without suffering pangs of guilt or shame, without remorse. Instead of choosing what we know to be objectively and morally good, we rationalize the evil that we do by degree: it’s just a little white lie; it’s ok to steal food if you are really hungry; it’s not really a human being.

Intrinsic evil is by definition naturally evil because the act itself is absolutely contrary to reason, to nature, and to God. Such evil can never be considered good for it is not the opposite of good but rather the absence of good.



**B**ecause good cannot be both good and the absence of good (or evil,) an evil act can never be considered a good act. For instance, a truth by its nature is true and thus is good while a lie is by its nature is false, as the intent is to deceive or hide the truth and thus is intrinsically evil because it is intrinsically untrue and deceptive.

Popes have written numerous encyclicals concerning intrinsic evil:

*“But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrin-*

*sically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good...No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“...it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it — in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general.”<sup>2</sup>*

**T**o demand a “do over,” that is to say, to demand the right to choose to avoid or to eliminate the consequences of a prior choice would be the height of hubris and the epitome of chutzpah. It would also be equally irresponsible and immoral.

Should a person’s first choice be an immoral one, any attempt to avoid the consequences of such a choice would only serve to compound the immorality of the first. It is precisely the principle underlying the idiom “two wrongs don’t make a right.”

Without stepping too deeply into the morass euphemistically salvaged as ‘pro-choice’ let us focus our attention on a choice seldom considered, a choice that is rooted in the immorality so prevalent today, choosing sexual intercourse, not out of love or for procreation but for the mere pleasure in doing so. The consequences of indulging in such hedonistic delights are evident in the genocidal numbers of elective abortions performed every single day.

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No matter what color you wish to paint it, two immoral choices will never make a moral one.

When life begins has now been well established to be at the moment of conception yet those who would disagree will argue that it is irrelevant for they claim that it is not when life begins that is of any importance but rather when a life becomes a person. The mental gymnastics used by some to define personhood are truly mind-boggling, abhorrent, decidedly immoral, and definitively intrinsically evil.

In one instance, two bioethicists, in a well-respected journal laid claim to this astounding bit of logical legerdemain: "By showing that (1) both fetuses and newborns do not have the same moral status as actual persons, (2) the fact that both are potential persons is morally irrelevant, and (3) adoptions is not always in the best interest of actual people, the authors argue that what we call 'after-birth abortion' (killing a newborn) should be permissible in all cases where abortion is."<sup>3</sup> The authors went further to define a newborn as any infant under the age of four!

My first reaction upon reading this piece of unctuous vomitus was to immediately and involuntarily disgorge the contents of my stomach. Inexplicably, far too many ascribe to this particularly grotesque point of view.

After a particularly difficult night I woke with a somewhat more pleasant thought, thinking of the experience shared by each of us yet remembered by none, of that time when the entire

universe which we know is confined to our mother's womb.

Although our mind and body may be incapable of cognitive thought or understanding, in those earliest moments of our lives, the soul, created and installed by God at the moment of conception, comes into existence fully formed.

*A long, long time ago,  
much before I knew  
of larger things,  
I slept and  
then I  
dreamt.*

*I knew nothing beyond  
the inviting womb  
where I began  
to grow and  
grow and  
grow.*

*When I heard soft murmurs  
of sweet lullabies,  
I felt somehow,  
the music  
was for  
me.*

*It was a pleasant time  
floating without care  
or worry there  
not knowing;  
growing  
so.*

*What began so empty  
over time grew small;  
it left small space  
to float or  
even  
move.*

*Yet I would often stretch  
my limbs and against  
the shrinking walls  
would attempt  
to make  
room.*

*For the most part I slept  
and dreamed pleasantly  
it seemed to me  
even though  
nothing's  
left.*

*A time came when I woke  
with some urgency  
knowing, sensing  
something strange,  
something  
new.*

*My warm, inviting home  
with waves of action  
was suddenly  
compelling  
me to  
leave.*

*Yet, I did resist it.  
What, I did not know,  
yet I feared it,  
for it was  
squeezing  
me.*

*It was so difficult  
to resist the force  
compelling me,  
pushing me,  
pulling  
me.*

*I felt something touch me  
and then suddenly  
I was blinded  
by a light  
in my  
eyes.*

*The world that I had known  
for so long was gone,  
there were no walls,  
I could move  
freely  
now.*

*And then I felt it, pain!  
It hurt so I cried,  
the noise I heard  
came from me,  
from my  
mouth.*

*So rudely awakened  
from peaceful slumber  
with sensations  
new and so  
I was born.*

1. Pope Pius XI, *Casti Cannubii*.

2. Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, §14.

3. A. Giubilini & F. Minerva, "After-birth abortion: why should the baby live?", *Journal of Medical Ethics*, March 2012.

4. Excerpt from *Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories*, Charles R. Lanham, 2015, 75-87.

## A Deficiency Of Faith

*How great the darkness*

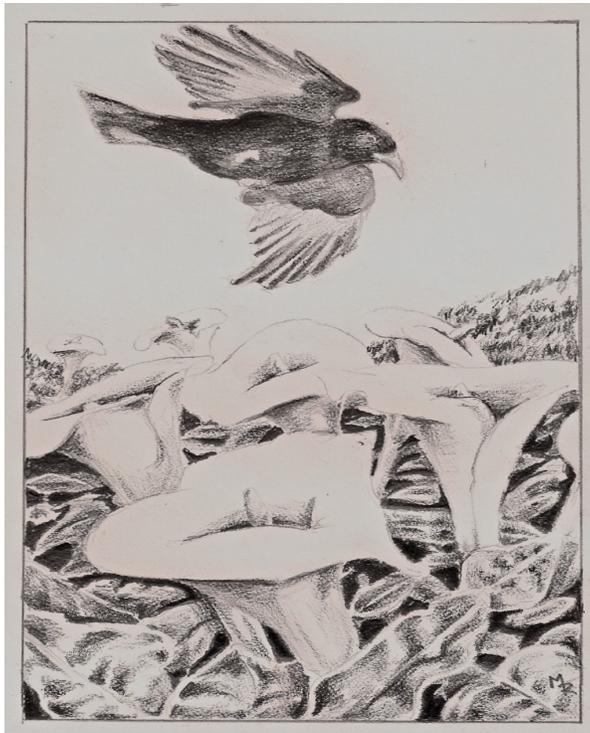
**F**or many and varied reasons, hearing Jesus tell us, *“do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on,”* fails to do much to assuage our anxieties and fears. How many might reasonably question Jesus when he asks, *“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”*

There are times, and this would appear to be one of those times, when translation and modern interpretation can lead us to a false or erroneous conclusion. Here we are presented with *“do not be anxious”* and what immediately comes to the modern mind is experiencing worry, unease, or nervousness, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. But the Greek word *merimnaó* (mer-im-nah'-o), according to scholars does not mean *“be anxious,”* but *“consider,” “think about,”* in the sense of *“be preoccupied with”* or *“absorbed by.”* If we now reread this passage, with this new understanding, *“do not be preoccupied with your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on,”* leads us nearer to what Jesus intended.

Just as is important to our understanding are the two verses which come before, Matthew 6:22-23, where Jesus says, *“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is*

*not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness.”*

Our eyes are windows to the soul; whether our soul is filled with or void of light depends organically on where we focus our ultimate attention. Spending our lives singularly focused on acquiring what is of temporal value—what we will eat, what we will wear, how long we will live—necessarily keeps our eyes off the ultimate prize, eternal life with God.



**T**he marvelous English poet T.S. Eliot, wrote *“Teach us to care and not to care. Teach us to sit still”*<sup>1</sup> which paraphrases Jesus’s words well indeed. *“Teach us to care enough about the kingdom so that we can cease to care so much about our own personal stuff.”*<sup>2</sup> It is only in stillness that we experience the kingdom of heaven; sitting still opens our eyes to see the glory of God.

The passage from the Sermon on the Mount calls for us to place our trust in God. It is a deficiency of faith that causes us to focus on earthly things; it is easy to say we trust God but not so easy placing our lives unreservedly in his care.

**D**eep down we struggle, wrestling with our faults, failures and disappointments. We question whether we have been good enough or successful enough, whether we have accomplished all that we are capable of accomplishing, whether we have made or will make a difference. We worry whether we will get that promotion we believe we deserve, whether our job is at risk, whether we are up to the task set before us.

And then, we worry about those we love, whether we might lose their love or worse, lose them all together. We remember all the hurts and angry moments, the pains and the sorrows, and we allow them to burden our souls, to shutter the light from shining into the darkest corners. Others make unwanted demands while still others are want to ignore us. We feel isolated, alone and forgotten and yet, crowded and pressured by the exigencies of all that surrounding us.

And it is precisely at these moments of quiet desperation that we so often find it difficult to turn toward the light, to let his light illuminate our soul with his unbounded love. His loving arms are there but we turn away, unwilling to let our worries go.

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**A**nd there is more, isn't there? Our world is a frightening place, filled with dark and evil things, ever threatening to engulf us, terrifying, filling us with dread. We cannot escape or hide from the darkness.

Our social, cultural, and political worlds share an ugly meanness difficult to fathom, yet it is real and growing ever more horrifying with each passing day. So many divisive issues and seemingly unresolvable problems.

We have lost our way and our faith has become deficient. We need to hear his words again and again and again: "So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself."

What is important are not the small matters, "things offered by this world, which the Lord has promised to provide for those who believe in him—things such as food, clothing, and whatever else is necessary for the body's well being, health, and the like. About these he commanded us not to have the slightest anxiety but confidently to trust him, for he will supply all the needs of those who make him their refuge.

On the other hand, the important matters are the gifts pertaining to the eternal and incorruptible world, which he has promised to provide for those who believe in him, and who are ceaselessly concerned

about these things and ask him for them as he commanded.

*The Lord said 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be yours as well.' Thus each person is to be tested by these trivial and transitory things to see whether he or she believes that God will supply them. We are to have no anxiety about such things, but are to be concerned solely with the eternal blessings to come...*

*Examine yourself, then, to see whether worldly cares may still have a hold on you; whether you are very preoccupied with feeding and clothing your body, and with your other pursuits and your recreation, as though your own power kept you alive, and you were obliged to make provision for yourself, when you have been commanded to have no anxiety whatever concerning yourself...*

*You who have become a stranger to the world ought to possess a faith, an outlook, and a manner of life which has about it something unusual, something different from that of all worldly people."*<sup>3</sup>

**I**t is our preoccupation with the things of this life that keeps us from seeing what awaits us in the next.

Jesus isn't telling us that we should not eat or drink or clothe ourselves; neither is he telling us we should not earn a living, nor telling us that money in itself is bad. It is when we turn those things—or our selves—into idols, when we begin to be possessed by possessions, that we begin to be anxious and attempt to do the impossible.

*"No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or*

*be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

**J**esus calls us to a radical adjustment in attitude, to quit focusing on the small things of this world, but rather to preoccupy ourselves with becoming worthy of the Kingdom of God.

Saint Paul describes this attitudinal adjustment we need to make in ourselves when he writes:

*"It does not concern me in the least that I be judged by you or any human tribunal; I do not even pass judgment on myself; I am not conscious of anything against me, but I do not thereby stand acquitted; the one who judges me is the Lord."*

What others may think of us is of no true importance, for whether their judgment is just or unjust counts for nothing toward the ultimate end: eternal life in the glory of God.

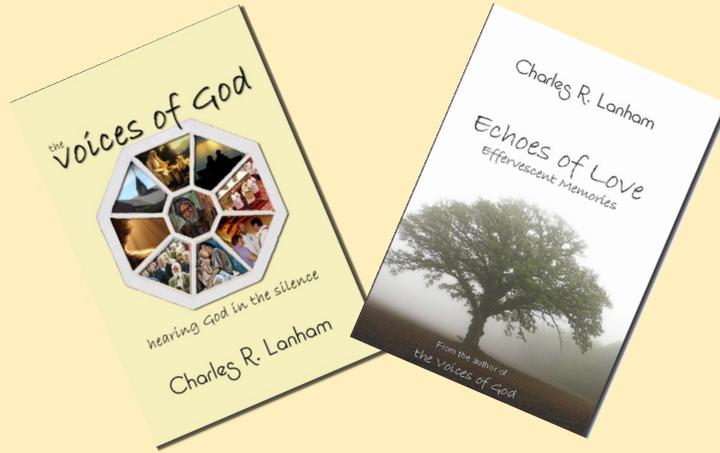
God will be the one who judges each of us, which is all that truly matters.

Amen.



Homily for the  
The Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
Is 49:14-15  
1 Corinthians 4:1-5  
Matthew 5:38-48

1. T. S. Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*.
2. Dennis Hamm, SJ, *To Care and Not to Care*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.
3. Pseudo Macarius, *Homily 48, 1-6: PG 34, 807-811*.



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

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4742 Cougar Creek Trail  
Reno, Nevada 89519