



A journal for restless minds

LOVED INTO BEING

Not of our own making

RETURNING TO GALILEE

On the road to discipleship

ET QUOD HOC ...

This and that ...

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.

Loved Into Being

Not of our own making

All that exists was brought into being by pure uncaused love. Our impoverished minds have neither the power nor the capacity to comprehend such love—any more a painting can appreciate the artist or a song might acknowledge the composer.

Such incomprehensible, undeserved beauty—an unearned gift of love—this magnificent expression of timeless, unbounded love denies the intellect even as it touches and lifts the spirit.

All that God has created is inherently good; it exists because it pleases Him to bring such pleasure to those whom He has created. It is for us—beneficiaries of His largesse—to acknowledge the goodness of His gifts and to show our gratitude through faithful stewardship and unending worship.

Modern man finds this unacceptable, an insult to our vanity. Such beauty

proves of realities and truths beyond man's own command. It proves the insubstantialities of the human mind, the insignificance of man against the infinitude of God. It reminds of dependence where independence is preferred; the power to control: a narcotic, a faithless drug to sooth and salve man's fragile ego.

What bitter irony when power craved by so many accumulates to the few; the powerless moved not by greed or power but by necessity and fear. The power of man is nothing to that of God, and yet we choose to bow not to His power but to our own.



Man has not the power of creation; such power is beyond our poor genius. It is, to borrow a common euphemism, simply above our pay grade. And yet, we are wont to deny such powerlessness. For to acknowledge the smallness of our nature would be to lay assault upon our hubristic egos, requiring we grant unconditional dependence to a higher power.

Returning To Galilee

On the road to discipleship

How often have we described ourselves as Christians and Catholics, followers and disciples of Jesus Christ. We attend Mass and volunteer for all manner of church events. Many of us actively participate in various ministries, both liturgical and communal, and yet, just how many of us can honestly claim to have a *lived relationship* with God?

*"There is" according to one source, "a chasm the size of the Grand Canyon between the Church's sophisticated theology of the lay apostolate and the lived spiritual experience of the majority of our people. And this chasm has a name: **discipleship**. ... the majority of even 'active' American Catholics are still at an early, essentially passive stage of spiritual development."*¹

Interestingly, the first need at the parish level is not catechetical. Rather, the fundamental problem is that most Catholics are not yet disciples of Jesus Christ.

"They will never be apostles until they have begun to follow Jesus Christ in the midst of his Church."

Accordingly, at the parochial level, this chasm between the Church's teaching and our lived relationship with God has been accepted as *normative*, thus shaping our community culture, our pastoral assumptions and practices with disastrous results. Even more surprising is that many pastoral

leaders do not possess even the most fundamental conceptual definition for discipleship. *"As long as this holds true, the theology of the Laity and the Church's teaching on social justice and evangelization will remain beautiful ideals that are, practically speaking, dead letters for the vast majority of Catholics."*

At dawn of the first day of the week, Matthew tells us two women set out for the tomb of Jesus, intent on anointing his dead body. What they found was an empty tomb and an angel sitting upon the stone who told them, *"He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him."*



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Why Galilee? We tend to think of Galilee as a place, some geographical location, a dot on a map, but Galilee is much more than that. *"It is first of all a place in the heart. As well, Galilee refers to the dream and to the road of discipleship that the disciples once walked with Jesus and to the place and time when their hearts most burned with hope and enthusiasm. And now after the crucifixion, just when*

*they feel that the dream is dead, that their faith is only fantasy, they are told to go back to the place where it all began: 'Go back to Galilee. He will meet you there!'"*²

And that is what we are ultimately asked to do as well, to return to Galilee, to return to the dream, the hope, and the discipleship that once burned within our hearts but has been lost through disillusionment.

The same disillusionment can be found in Luke's gospel, on the road to Emmaus. For Luke, the dream, the hope, and the center of it all is in Jerusalem, where it all began and where it ultimately culminates. The two disci-

ples are walking away from Jerusalem, away from their dream, headed toward Emmaus, a Roman spa, a place of comfort, a place of relaxation where they can forget that which they have lost. Their dream crucified, their despondency real, they are simply walking away, despairing of all for which they had hoped.

It is the essential message of Easter: *"Whenever we are dis-*

couraged in our faith, whenever our hopes seem to be crucified, we need to go back to Galilee and Jerusalem, that is, back to the dream and the road of discipleship that we had embarked upon before things went wrong. The temptation of course, whenever the kingdom doesn't seem to work, is to abandon discipleship for human consolation, to head off instead for Emmaus, for the consolation of Las Vegas or Monte Carlo."

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Discipleship calls us to a *lived* relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one can come to the Father except through the Son, that is through Jesus; and the Father and the Son are one. Through discipleship we demonstrate our faith in Jesus and in God, the Father. And a place has been prepared for those who have faith in God.

There are moments in our lives when we encounter such transcendent beauty which surrounds us and it is in those moments that we feel the intimate presence of the Creator God. Each moment is a gift, created for us out of God's love. But gifts cannot define a relationship, they do not define discipleship.

Such moments are infinitely valuable and meant to be enjoyed but they can also distract us, causing us to lose sight of what is most important. We cannot progress in spiritual growth without a firm relationship—discipleship—with Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Pope Benedict once spoke of the crucial importance in having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. *"Christianity is not a new philosophy or new morality. We are Christians only if we encounter Christ... Only in this personal relationship with Christ, only in this encounter with the Risen One do we really become Christians... Therefore, let us pray to the Lord to enlighten us, so that, in our world, he will grant us the encounter with his presence, and thus give us a lively faith, an open heart, and great charity for all, capable of renewing the world."*³

We hear in the Acts of the Apostles of the appointment of the first seven deacons to a ministry of service.

Over the past two millennia, the function and meaning of the diaconate has taken various forms and its hierarchical importance and position has likewise changed, but it has always been integrally linked to service, whether liturgical or communal. In the contemporary Western church, the hallmark of deacons is that they assist, not preside, even though, in response to need, deacons do preside at baptism, marriages, and burials, thus more closely linking the diaconate to the priesthood. That is not to suggest that the two should or will ever become one and the same. As in the apostolic age, each serves a particular and specific role, each has unique charisms which they are called upon to utilize in the service of the Lord.

As described by Father John Kavanaugh, *"A significant charism of deacons in the contemporary church is related to the fact that most of them are married, have other places of work, have had an active career, and have no reason to give service to the church other than their faith. The work of priests, even their preaching, can be subconsciously passed off as 'what they have to do.' But when a deacon visits the sick, when a mail carrier or a business person gets into the pulpit, something else is going on. And people know this. It is not just 'their job.'"*

He goes on to explain: *"The witness of married folk, living 'ordinary' lives, is most powerful precisely because they do not need to do it, nor are they expected to do so. ... the primary source of vocations to the priesthood or conversions to the*

Catholic faith is the example of family members, friends, and co-workers. It is a matter of persons, not institutional strategy. ...

We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation. The ritual prayer that commissions deacons should be for us all, 'Receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you are; believe what you read, preach what you believe, put into practice what you preach.'

Whatever our office in the church, we are all called to be deacons, just as we are called to the priesthood of faithful believers. The diversity of roles is life-giving."

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and we are his disciples, living stones, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own," called to announce the Good News and to be living examples of Jesus Christ.

We are called to discipleship, to be faithful members of His family. Jesus gave us his Father. At his death he gave us his mother. He calls us all his brothers and sisters. And he asks us to have that *lived relationship* with him and his Father and his mother.

Amen.

Homily for the
Fifth Sunday of Easter (A)

Acts 6:1-7

1 Peter 2:4-9

John 14:1-12

1. Sherry A. Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*, (Huntington, Indiana: OSV Publishing, 2012), 11.
2. Ron Rolheiser, *In Exile: Where To Find Resurrection*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.
3. Pope Benedict XVI, Vatican City, Sept. 3, 2008.
4. John Kavanaugh, SJ, *Deacons*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.

Et Quod Hoc ...

This and that ...

Racism is ugly, despicable, reprehensible, and morally indefensible. The problem with racism within the context of our time is in defining racism and who precisely is racist. At the University of Wisconsin at Madison, outgoing student body chair, Carmen Gosey, writes in a public letter addressed to the university that *"all white people are racist, and that her position as the chairman of the Associated Students of Madison made her a token for white supremacists."*

What galls is that no matter what anyone of the "white" persuasion might say or do, racist has been permanently tattooed across the forehead.

Of course, how one defines racism is crucial to understanding what it means to be racist. Ms. Gosey defines it as a *"system designed to disadvantage people of color and create inequalities in each pocket of our society."* Amazing how that works out for her.

Here is another definition, one gleaned from the pages of the Oxford Dictionary: *"The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races."* Should one apply the dictionary definition to Ms. Gosey's claim that *"all white people are racist,"* what ought we to think of Ms. Gosey? Racist?

While no doubt there are racists aplenty, to label an entire race—whether black, white, yellow, purple, or polka-dotted—as racist, is *de facto*,

racist in and of itself. There can be no trust, no conversation, no meeting of the minds when such final judgment has been rendered.

Fascism is fashionable these days, or so it would appear, especially to those who haven't a clue as to what fascism is. To those for whom the term seems so fashionable and chic it might be useful to recall the words of Benito Mussolini back in 1929:

"It is useless to deny the moral character of the fascist State. It would embarrass me to speak from this rostrum if I did not feel the representative of the moral and spiritual strength of the State. What would the State be if it did not have a spirit, its own morality, which gives strength to its laws and makes citizens obey them?"

What strikes the mind is that fascism is a form of radical authoritarian nationalism, characterized by dictatorial power, forcible (violent) suppression of opposition, and control of industry and commerce. George Orwell wrote in 1944 that *"the word 'Fascism' is almost entirely meaningless ... almost any English person would accept 'bully' as a synonym for 'Fascist'."*

Thus, it is with no small amount of irony, that leftist militants, calling conservative speakers "Fascists," have taken to the Berkeley streets in recent months, demonstrating that they will use violence and intimidation—a decidedly "Fascist" tactic—to control who speaks and what is said. What is especially ironic is Berkeley is well-known as the cradle of the "free

speech" movement.

In a speech delivered at Hillsdale College on April 26, 2017, Kimberley Strassel, columnist for The Wall Street Journal and author of *The Intimidation Game: How the Left is Silencing Free Speech* began with an anecdote about her three children, ages twelve, nine, and five who are your average, normal kids—which means they live to annoy the heck out of each other. As she tells it *"Last fall, sitting around the dinner table, the twelve-year-old was doing a particularly good job at this with his youngest sister. She finally grew so frustrated that she said, 'Oliver, you need to stop talking—forever.' This inspired a volley of protests about free speech rights, and ended with them yelling 'shut up' at each other. Desperate to stop the fighting and restore order, I asked each of them in turn to tell me what they thought 'free speech' meant."*

The twelve-year-old went first. A serious and academic child, he gave a textbook definition that included 'Congress shall make no law,' an evocation of James Madison, a tutorial on the Bill of Rights, and warnings about 'certain exceptions for public safety and libel.' I was happy to know the private-school fees were yielding something.

The nine-year-old went next. A rebel convinced that everyone ignores her, she said that she had no idea what 'public safety' or 'libel' were, but that 'it doesn't matter, because free speech means there should never be any restrictions on anything that anybody says, anytime or any-

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where.' She added that we could all start listening more to what she says.

Then it was the five-year-old's turn. You could tell she'd been thinking hard about her answer. She fixed both her brother and sister with a ferocious stare and said: 'Free speech is that you can say what you want—as long as I like it.'

It was at this moment that I had one of those sudden insights as a parent. I realized that my oldest was a constitutional conservative, my middle child a libertarian, and my youngest a socialist with totalitarian tendencies."

Strassel goes on to summarize the changing environment of the free speech debate in recent years. One observation was decidedly on point. Following the Supreme Court ruling in the Citizens United case, she notes "the Left settled on a new strategy. If it could no longer use speech laws against its opponents, it would do the next best thing—it would threaten, harass, and intimidate its opponents out of participation. It would send a message: conservatives choosing to exercise their constitutional rights will pay a political and personal price."

Perhaps it has escaped everyone's notice, but then again ... It seems to becoming quite commonplace to hear about the introduction of Islam and the Koran into our public schools.

Where is the ACLU in its dogged determination to eradicate any and all mention of religion from the public square? Their silence is deafening.

For that matter, where are the voices demanding the reintroduction of prayer into the classroom? Surely it hasn't gone unnoticed the inherent bias in all this. After all, what is good for the goose ought to be good for the gander, don't you think?

Yet another tragic example of the escalation of violent behavior, no matter the age: After being knocked unconscious by bullies in a school bathroom, an 8-year-old boy hanged himself with a necktie in his bedroom.

The entire bullying incident was caught on video. The coroner expressed dismay that an 8-year-old child would know what it means to commit suicide. No one has suggested that racism was a motivating factor in the bullying.

There is a common thread which binds what first appears estranged: it is woven throughout the fabric of our selfsame humanity. It is the thread of tyranny colored with hatred, oppression, ignorance, anger, injustice, and indifference. Such a dark, foreboding thread strangles freedom, chokes opportunity, and enslaves us all with bitter chains. Freedom can never be obtained through force. Opportunity can be met but by earnest effort. And the bitter chains which enslave us can only be removed with love: love of self, of neighbor, and above all, love of God. May His peace be always with you.

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

On Conscience
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Ignatius Press
2007, 82 pages.

Called To Communion
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Ignatius Press
1996, 165 pages.

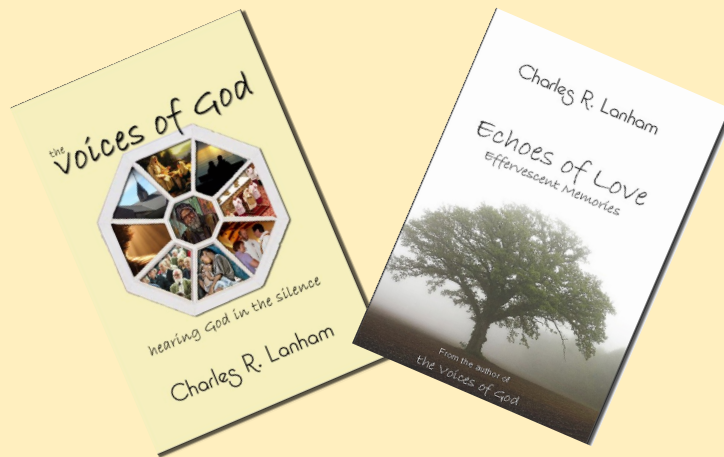
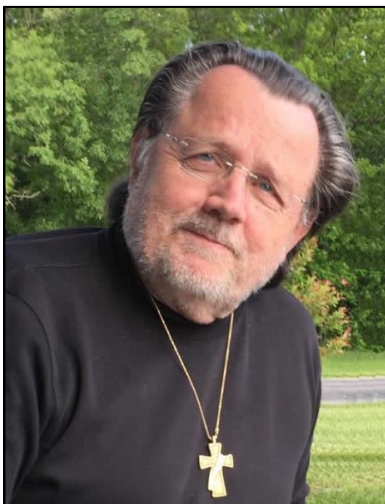
Strangers in a Strange Land
Charles J. Chaput
Henry Holt and Co.
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

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