



A journal for restless minds

HERE I AM LORD

The call to holiness

NIGHT IS NOT FOREVER

Ineffable lightness of being

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

Here I Am Lord

The call to holiness

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, popularly known as "*The Little Flower*," writing in her autobiography, "*Story of a Soul*," observed:

"All the flowers He has created are beautiful ... the splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not take away the perfume of the little violet or the delightful simplicity of the daisy. ... Just as the sun shines simultaneously on the tall cedars and on each little flower as though it were alone on the earth, so Our Lord is occupied particularly with each soul as though there were no other like it."

What beauty God has made; with what wondrous care he has created man; what noble purpose he has divined for every human being. Thérèse wrote of the beauty and splendor of the flowers, yet we have been created by God far more

beautiful and precious than any flower for we have been made in the divine image. We are called to be more than beauty, much more. God intends for us to know him, to love him, to serve him with all our heart, mind and soul.

Each is created for a purpose, each given gifts and talents uniquely one's own. We realize and fulfill our purpose through various vocations: vocations common to every human being; those common to every member of the Church; and those specific vocations we choose to call our own.

As Catholics we are called to a vocation of holiness. As disciples of Jesus we are called to spread the good news.

"God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally" (CCC §1719). "God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. With beatitude man enters into the glory of Christ and into the joy of the



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Night Is Not Forever

Ineffable lightness of being

Our imaginations are capable of and do, quite frequently, conjure up improbable visions, impossible realities, and as often as not are accompanied by inexpressible emotions. In the dark of night we sleep—and we dream; fantasies are born on wisps, incandescent tendrils which quickly pass, slip away, and fast forgotten. Comes the dawn and dreams are but a distant memory, fading with the rising and the glory of the light.

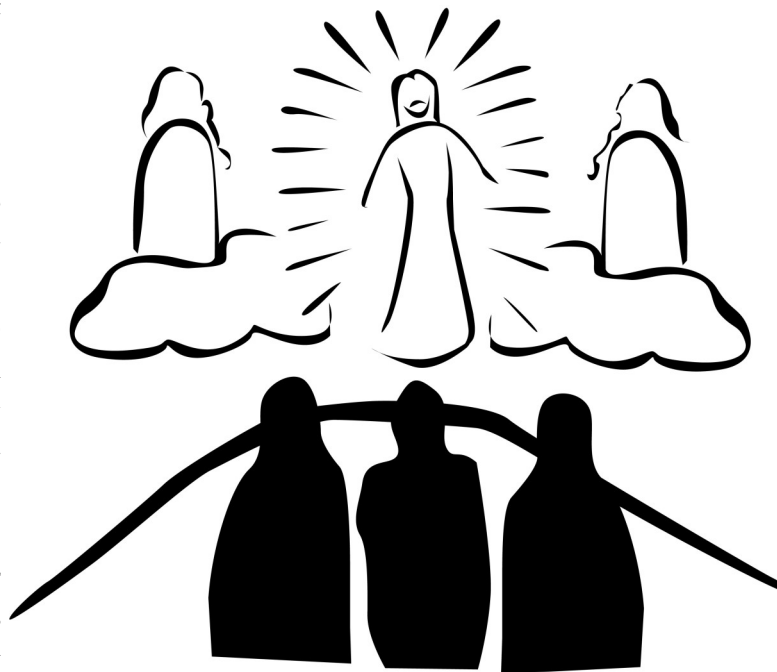
Within the soul there is a yearning, an aching need to know, to comprehend the unknowable, to reach beyond our own existence, to somehow touch that ineffable lightness of being which we can never seem to grasp; that existence beyond our own created lowliness which we can only poorly express as God.

There is always mystery in the transcendent which defies all understanding. What fails the mind to comprehend too often leads to resignation; absent means to quantify or measure, to justify or prove, we shake our fists and shout above the silent roar: *"Thou cannot be and yet I know thou are."*

We understand, and yet, we do not understand at all. For we cannot describe the indescribable; we cannot know the unknowable; we cannot

reach beyond the limits of our small impoverished minds to touch, to see, to imagine the incomprehensible.

We cannot resolve the mystery of the divine, but God, with but a thought, can reveal himself to us. One day he will reveal himself to us; one day we will understand fully as the apostle Paul tells us, *"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood"* (1 Corinthians 13).



For now, we see as in a mirror dimly: indistinct images, blurred visions, through translucent windows. And we anthropomorphize the divine, granting human characteristics to the transcendent, as did Daniel in a dream.

Daniel's vision was symbolic of being and existence which we can neither understand nor comprehend. The symbolic world becomes a way of speaking about the unseen spiritual realities that permeate the physical

world. Manifested throughout history, divine forces work in and through their earthly counterparts, not over or above them.

God's energy permeates and dwells within all that exists; all which by a single thought he brought into existence. There is a brilliance within all existence that shines forth because of God's unseen presence. And yet, we largely ignore that which fills every molecule and atom, the presence of that ineffable lightness of being which is God.

It takes no genius to feel the energy that drives all that exists; beneath and within everything there flows a force, a sacred pulse which sustains all which God has so lovingly given thought.

We sense his presence, his energy, and yet, we remain steadfast in our focus upon the material, upon what we can see and touch, what we can

vouchsafe to be reality; always seeing as through a mirror dimly, burdened by a darkness that shadows our vision.

We are pilgrims, travelers moving through time toward eternity. It is a long and arduous journey of which there is no turning back, no choice but to continue to our final destination.

"Christians, on pilgrimage toward the heavenly city, should seek and think of those things which are above. This duty in

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no way decreases, rather it increases, the importance of their obligation to work with all men in the building of a more human world.”¹

What are we to make of the transfiguration? Unlike Daniel’s dreams and visions, the disciples stood, not asleep, but awake, fully aware of their surroundings. They saw with their eyes and heard with ears; What they recounted was in no way symbolic.

What does Jesus mean when he called himself “the Son of Man?” The presence of Moses and Elijah are obviously important, but why? And the voice, hidden behind a bright cloud, what are we to make of it?

Jesus, as “the Son of Man” sees himself as the one who, before the throne of the Ancient One, receives dominion, glory, and kingship; all peoples, nations, and languages will serve him and his dominion will last forever, it will never end.

Standing atop Mount Tabor, Jesus is seen talking with Moses who represents the Law and Elijah, the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. But it is the heavenly voice which brings it all into proper focus. “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” For the disciples, as it should be for us, this gives us the answer. Everything handed down through the law and the prophets—all that had been communicated before by God—was now fulfilled in the person and teaching of Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of man.

“God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and

the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 9). And Jesus is the call. Thus, the voice from the clouds says, “Listen to him.”

“But what are we called to? What happens if we listen to Jesus? Most of us have been listening for years. Supposedly that is one of the reasons we still show up in church. It’s his call we are heeding. He is our new Moses, our lawgiver. He is our greatest prophet, more glorious for us even than old Elijah. We’ve been listening to him. Now what?

So it is that we want to get on with it, to have things finished once and for all. Let there be a conversion, complete and dramatic. At least let there be some progress. We get tired of waiting. We’ve heard the call over and over, but not much seems to get done.”²

As we grow older we begin to think more of the ending than of the beginning. We see the past as more or less complete; we have arrived; we have become all we were meant to be. Abraham was seventy-five when God called him to leave everything he had ever known, gather his family and possessions and travel to where, he did not know; God knew and that was enough.

“Abraham and Sarah, our parents in faith, remind us that it is not so much a matter of when this life’s journey ends, as it is a matter of where the great hike of hope takes us.”³

Pope Saint Leo the Great taught that: “In the presence of chosen witnesses the Lord unveils his glory, investing with such splendor that bodily appearance which he shares with the rest of the human race that his face shines

like the sun and his clothes become white as snow.

The primary purpose of this transfiguration was to remove the scandal of the cross from the hearts of Christ’s disciples; the greatness of his hidden glory was revealed to them to prevent their faith being shaken by the self-abasement of the suffering he was voluntarily to undergo.

In his foresight, however, he was also laying the foundations of the Church’s hope, teaching the whole body of Christ the nature of the change it is to receive, and schooling his members to look forward to a share in the glory which had already shone forth in their head.

The pages of both covenants agree with one another. He who had been promised beforehand by mysteriously veiled signs was now revealed clearly and distinctly in the radiance of his glory, since, as Saint John says. ‘The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ.’”

Through the transfiguration, Jesus proved his true nature and offered a prelude to his resurrection and ascension into glory. Jesus showed us that night is not forever; it is rather a prelude to day.

Amen.

Homily for the

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (A)
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

1 Peter 1:16-19

Matthew 17:1-9

1. Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World*, December 7, 1965, § 57.

2. John Kavanaugh, SJ, *The Long Haul*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.

3. John Kavanaugh, SJ, *The Long Haul*.

4. Pope Saint Leo the Great, *Sermon 51*, 3-4. 8: PL 54, 310-311. 313.

Trinitarian life" (CCC § 1721). *"God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of very human being"* (CCC § 1604).

As members of the Church, the body of Christ, each is called to a vocation, which is *"the common vocation to holiness and the mission of evangelizing the world"* (CCC § 1533). As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be the face of Christ to everyone we encounter; through our words and in our deeds. Our vocation as disciples is to exemplify Jesus. As St. Paul said, *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

When we are baptized we are tasked with the three offices or missions of Christ: *priest*, the sanctifying office; *prophet*, the evangelizing office; and *king*, the serving office. When the celebrant anoints you with the chrism of salvation, he says: *"As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as member of his body, sharing everlasting life."*¹ And as members of his body, all the faithful are called to participate as priest, prophet, and king *"in accord with the condition proper to each"* (Code of Canon Law § 204.1).

Yet, such a vocation seldom comes to mind when we speak of or think of vocations. We hear the call to evangelize and shy away, for such a vocation is most assuredly the sole domain of "religious" folk—bishops, priests, deacons, nuns, brothers, and others like

them. That's their job, their calling, their vocation—not mine.

Ah, your thoughts betray you, grasshopper. Contrary to what you may now believe, such thinking is contrary to Scripture. It is also not what the Church has taught since her birth.

Let Saint Paul disabuse you of this: *"¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed. ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12).

Paul then continues: *"¹Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy"* (1 Corinthians 14).

You have been baptized in Christ as priest, prophet, and king. As priest, you are called to holiness, to love God and to emulate his only Son, Jesus Christ. As prophet, you are called to evangelize, to speak to others *"for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation"* and to edify the Christ's Church. And as king, you are called to serve the Lord by serving others as Christ did for us.

And then there is this: *"Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men, made the new people 'a kingdom and priests to God the Father.' The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Therefore all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.*

*Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ."*²

All this is to point to what should be obvious: as a member of the body of Christ, no one is exempt from the call to holiness and the call to evangelize, to spread the good news, to share the

Gospel. All members of the Church, irrespective of their *vocation*, share in this responsibility.

We are, as Saint Paul so eloquently points out, called, as individually members of the body of Christ, to use the unique gifts and talents which God has granted to each one for the good of all. Saint Peter wrote: *"¹⁰As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 4).

Thus, the Church teaches that there are three layers of vocations and the third layer is the specific call God asks of each of us. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that there are three vocational groups: clergy, laity, and consecrated religious.

"The very differences which the Lord has willed to put between the members of his body serve its unity and mission. For in the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God. Finally, from both groups [hierarchy and laity] there exist Christian faithful who are consecrated to God in their own special manner and serve the salvific mission of the

Church through the profession of the evangelical counsels" (CCC § 873).

This dichotomy of mission is further explained in the Code of Canon Law:

Can. 207 §1. *By divine institution, there are among the Christian faithful in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons.*

§2. *There are members of the Christian faithful from both these groups who, through the profession of the evangelical counsels by means of vows or other sacred bonds recognized and sanctioned by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and contribute to the salvific mission of the Church; although their state does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, it nevertheless belongs to its life and holiness.*

This cornucopia of choices may at first seem daunting. With such an abundance of choices, which one(s) should one choose? Please note that you are not necessarily relegated to just one, and vocations may change over one's lifetime. Many will change careers. Some will choose the single life only to later choose to marry. Some men may choose marriage and then hear God calling them to become an ordained Deacon and member of the clergy. It all comes down to what God calls you to do.

How do you decide? First, take your time and place yourself in God's hands through prayer. God will answer. (More on this next week)

1. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 65, §98.
2. *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*, November 21, 1964, § 10.

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.

How the West Really Lost God

Mary Eberstadt

Templeton Press
June 9, 2012, 268 pages.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Charles J. Chaput

Henry Holt and Co.
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

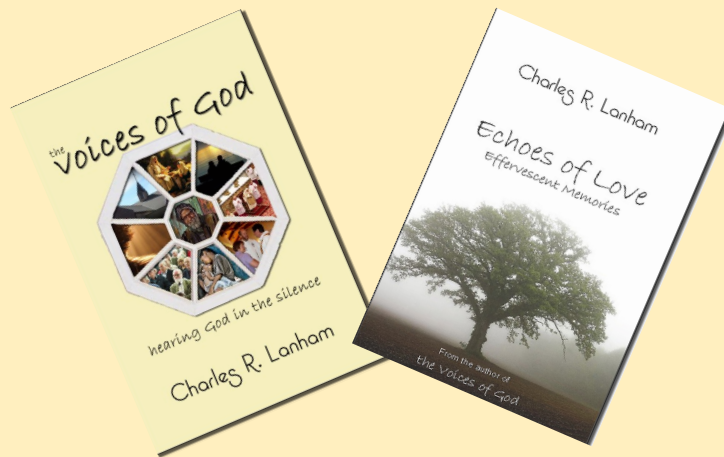
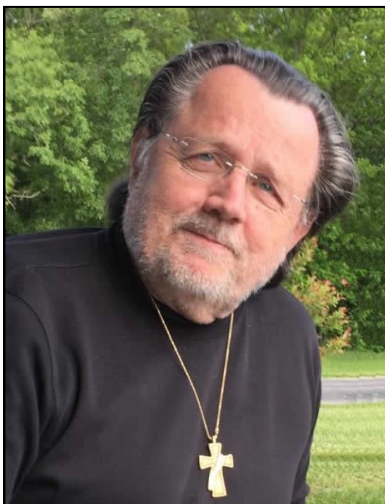
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