



A journal for restless minds

## ABSENT LOVE

*Death of the heart*

## I WAS LOST

*But then I found myself*

## 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

## Absent Love

*Death of the heart*

**C**all me old-fashioned. No, on second thought, just call me old ... and cantankerous; a curmudgeon slightly on the far side of crotchety.

For the life of me, I simply cannot comprehend why, inside of the full seventy years I have now been walking on God's green earth, so much of humanity have absolutely and completely lost their cotton-pickin' minds or, to be a bit more precise, they have, most assuredly, either carelessly misplaced or vacuously discarded what used to be called reason and common sense.

Without a shred of doubt in my ancient and aging mind, no surfeit of bonhomie now exists, for a frigid winter wind now does blow, bringing icy hate and bitter rage, and cold unfeeling death to hearts which once then beat with warmth, laughter and sweet, sweet love.



Mankind predates me, that is true, and yet, one would want to believe that man had progressed a bit since God first breathed life into his magnificent creation. Historians, at least those not intent on rewriting the past to suit their own designs, have long provided evidence of man's cruelty toward man; the near-universal distrust; too often hatred for all but for themselves.

Yet, for all the distrust and the hatred, there has always been some small remnant of love, some sense of neighbor, some fledgling notion of peace.

Like Saint Bartholomew, it feels as though we are being skinned alive by all the hate; inch by inch savagely abraded by the sharp blades of unbridled cold-hearted bitterness; wielded by hearts long cold and dead, no longer beating, connected to empty thoughtless minds.

**N**ietzsche proclaimed the death of God; he was wrong. God is forevermore. It is the heart of man, absent love, which no longer beats with the breath of life. Would that God breathe into man life anew.

## I Was Lost

*But then I found myself*

Some years ago, during a weekend visit to the Lake Tahoe area, my wife went for a walk, an *"into the woods"* hike. As the afternoon wore on and she did not return, I began to be concerned; not overly much, as she often would take such treks to unwind and rid herself of the daily stresses that inevitably tend to overwhelm.

Nearing five o'clock, with concern quickly turning to serious worry, I received a phone call from her, immediately releasing my anxiety, turning concern to relief and then to joy. I will never forget what she said to me: *"I was lost, but then I found myself."* And we laughed at the very thought of it.

Each of us is on a journey, born to a place and time not of our own choosing, but of God's. The road we travel is never quite the same as another, and yet, each will ultimately lead us to the same destination.

What we too often forget or simply refuse to admit to ourselves is that each and every one of us is lost, for no one knows what lies beyond the moment. In our arrogance and presumptiveness we assume too much, we refuse to ask for directions; we keep walking, looking for the familiar to ease our anxiety, to approve our self-confidence, to assure ourselves that *"we were lost, but then, we found ourselves."*

Only God knows the way. Only God holds the map. God is the perfect GPS, always knowing where the road will take us, warning us of detours, roadblocks, pitfalls, and dangers that loom ahead, if only we will listen to his voice, if only we will allow him to point the way.

We too often forget: *"Lost is a place too!"* We may not know where we are, but God does. We may not know how to find our way, but God does.



To this point, Father Ron Rolheiser writes: *"To be saved, we have to first realize that we're lost, and usually some kind of bottom has to fall out of our lives for us to come to that realization. Sometimes there's no other cure for arrogance and presumption than a painful loss of certitude about our own ideas about God, faith, and religion."*<sup>1</sup>

Each of us, at some point, suffers such painful loss of certitude. We find ourselves confronted by the darkness, abandoned, alone, and frightened; we realize we are lost and don't know which way to turn.

Spanish poet, mystic and Doctor of the Church Saint John of the Cross, OCD named this experience of seemingly losing one's faith, *"the dark night of the soul,"* a time and place where God's presence, once solidly and warmly felt, now lies fallow and absent, leaving doubt and uncertainty in its place. Even Jesus experienced such darkness on the cross when he cried out: *"Eli, Eli, la'ma sabach-tha'ni?"* that is, *'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"*<sup>2</sup>

The Canaanite woman in today's Gospel is, in a sense, a model of loss, of living in darkness without hope, without faith, without God; all alone, a woman among men who viewed her as something less than a dog, an enemy and a pagan.

There are times when what is written in the Gospels falls flat and distant. We struggle to understand the meaning of what has been written, it seems so hard, so unchristian, so harsh.

Today's Gospel is one of those instances where we find it all too difficult to reconcile the words with the idea, the human with the divine. Jesus refuses to heal the woman's daughter, telling his disciples and referring to her, *"It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."*

Allison Sullivan, in a wonderful short story written from the person of the Canaanite woman, adds insight into the passage, showing the remarkable determination and courage of the woman in the face of her own doubts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

and the antipathy of the disciples surrounding Jesus.

**A**fter standing outside the house where Jesus was staying, she thinks to herself:

*"I understood Jesus had no obligation to me. Responding to me was not his immediate mission, nor was it his larger one; I was not a disciple, I was not a Jew. But I believed. And I was there to gather one last stone for my baby. So, I caught my breath, called his name, and begged like any mother would.*

*Lord, I shrieked, Son of David! I paced the perimeter of the house speaking of my daughter, screaming her name, screaming the name of the Lord until finally a burly man with curly black hair surprised me, blocking my path.*

*Standing like an armed guard, his hands on his hips, his barrel chest out, he said emotionlessly, Listen, I'm sorry about your daughter. But we are trying to get rest and it keeps getting interrupted. First in the desert. Then in Gennesaret. Now this. This isn't what we are here for. You aren't who he is here for. You understand, right?*

*I could hear the disciples inside pressing Jesus. This is exactly what we were trying to avoid. Send her on her way.*

*Then I heard Jesus speak. I knew it was him by the way they quieted down. With something in his voice, I cannot name—guidance, challenge, merriment—he said with deliberate words, I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.*

*I was straining to hear, my ear as close to the house as physically possible when the black-haired man appeared again*

*and startled me.... He walked toward me shaking his head, helped me up without eye contact, and began to lead me inside. Once I realized what he was doing—he was letting me in!—I tried to remember what Jesus had said. What were the words that caused this gruff man to extend mercy? ... I ran inside, ... crawled to his feet on my hands and knees, wrapped myself around his ankles, and begged, Lord, help me!*

*Sitting me down beside him, ... he gripped my hand tighter and changed his smile from them to me, softening his eyes so the corners fell into their familiar lines.... He leaned in close and said tenderly, It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs. When he said 'children', he gestured to the other men in the room. When he said 'dog,' he nodded towards me.*

*With an earnest smile and the slightest cheek, I challenged him, But Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.*

*I don't know if it was accepting his metaphor, going back and forth with him, or believing his left overs were plenty for me, but with deep affection, he scooped me up and commended my faith. Placing my head on his chest, he smiled over his shoulder, the direction of his disciples.*

*Then with his hands on my shoulder, he extended his arms to look me in the eye. Without words, I told him I knew who I was—a beggar in desperate need. In His eyes, he told me who He was—a compassionate Savior with every answer to any pain. I knew my daughter had been healed."<sup>3</sup>*

**W**hat is key to understanding this narrative is not the differences but the commonalities in which we all share. It

is the persistent hope which we find when we place our lives and our trust in the healing power of Jesus Christ.

**W**hat is key to understanding this verbal dual is to recognize the unshakeable faith Jesus found in the Canaanite woman: a love divine, a hope unquenchable. Jesus tested her, insulted her, even humiliated her, and yet, she refused to yield, refused to accept the scandal; she shared her humiliation with Jesus rather than give up.

Jesus could have healed the woman's daughter without first putting her to the test, but then her faith would have been weaker by the lack of it. For the more we lose the more we win; the more we give, the more we receive; the more we are humbled the greater our glory; the first shall be last and the last shall be first. We must lose ourselves to find ourselves in Christ Jesus.

For this reason, the great spiritual writers tell us that God, at certain moments in our journey, removes our certainty and deprives us of the comfortable feelings which come with sure and certain faith. While disconcerting, God will guide us through it if we but listen to his voice.

Amen.

Homily for the  
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
Isaiah 56:1, 6-7  
Romans 11:13-15, 29-32  
Matthew 15:21-28

1. Ron Rolheiser, *In Exile: Faith, Doubt, Dark Nights, and Maturity*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.
2. Matthew 27:46.
3. Allison Sullivan, *Dark Devotional: Even the Dogs*, Patheos, August 18, 2017.

## Et Quod Hoc ...

*This and that ...*

James M. Kushiner [*The Resentment of the Governed*, The Fellowship of St. James, August 18, 2017) commenting on the escalating violence and increasing secularization of our nation, wrote:

*"While many today assume the possibility of a benign and tolerant society, as long as people would only be nice, this hope in its present form is parasitic on the moral labors of previous generations who built our society, its economies, technologies, culture, and its institutions of government, higher education, science, and healthcare. Healthy societies are not self-sustaining; to flourish they require a measure of selfless labor and virtuous discipline similar to that required to create them in the first place. No dynamic system can coast indefinitely; it must receive continuous infusions of selfless labor and virtuous discipline to escape decline and fall.*

*Only the character-building power of true religious faith can address our cultural decay. If traditional Christianity does not serve as a dynamic and corrective restraint on man's fallen inclinations, more coercive faiths and political ideologies will fill the moral and spiritual vacuum, replacing our freedoms with forms of unyielding servitude.*

*In Charlottesville 2017 we have seen two malignant forces--neo-Nazi fascism/white supremacy and Antifa/antifascism--clashing in the vacuum. Whether an offensive removal of statues or the removal of offensive statues, there are moral demands being made in that vacuum. Indeed, no mob gathers without having what it sees as an injustice in its laser sights. But passions have led to deadly violence.*

*With no moral governance "from above," i.e., true religion, the need for coercion will expand as self-restraint withers. Without a fixed Divine moral code and with a code that is seen as merely humanly*

*constructed, raw political will to power will dominate the public square. This is the way of the serpent, not of the dove.*

*America's past is hardly without sin. But its sins are exposed and seen most clearly in the light of the eternal Word. But now, as in Gadara, the United States in large measure has told Jesus to retreat from public view. It cannot bear his Light. Academic elites wanted nothing to do with my professor friends because of their Christian beliefs. Begone, with your Jesus.*

*So, the secular nation stands alone, naked with a Constitution, a mere fig-leaf of paper that blows in the winds of passions. Many cultural and political elites have declared independence, saying, "We have no king but Caesar."*

*Well, to Caesar shall you go. But note well: Caesar is not abounding in steadfast love, nor does his mercy endure forever."*

There is something to be said for placing all things in proper perspective. By all accounts, the numbers claiming membership in the aforementioned malignant forces—neo-Nazi fascism/white supremacy and Antifa/antifascism—are, relatively speaking, miniscule; far fewer than what one would be led to believe by all the media coverage and the angry, blathering gibberish that endlessly spews forth from the mindless, hate-filled mouths of the mob.

From all the coverage one might surmise these groups to represent the majority, yet that is simply not the case. There are, by any reasonable measure, less than 20,000 individuals

who associate themselves with these extreme radical organizations. Even if one were to assume a larger number, say 100,000, when compared to the total population of the United States, that represents .0000000000000001% of the people, who call this country home.

There can and should be no argument: what happened in Charlottesville must be condemned. Hate and violence, no matter the ideological slant or stated purpose, have no place in any civilized society. Two wrongs will never make a right. Evil can never be good, for goodness is against its nature. But, the inverse is equally as true.

Much has been written concerning the much maligned monuments and statues honoring the those who served in the Confederacy. That is what provoked the mob violence in Charlottesville: the attempt to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

The media and the counter-protesters have argued that these monuments have no place in America because they represent those who fought to defend the odious practice of slavery.

While slavery was the most visible and despicable reason for the great division that ultimately resulted in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

civil war, it was not its singular nor its most palpable cause.



**A**s for General Robert E. Lee, he was never a slave owner; quite the contrary, he was a vocal critic and a strong advocate for the abolition of such odium.

What is lesser known but of utmost importance to this vitriolic debate is this: Under federal law, U.S. Code Title 38, Part II, Chapter 23, § 2306 (formerly known as Public Law 810) passed by Congress in 1958, Union and Confederate soldiers are considered U.S. veterans and entitled to the same benefits as Union soldiers. This applies to their spouses and children as well.



**T**he American philosopher George Santayana wrote in his work, *The Life of Reason: Reason in Common Sense*, “*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*” Sadly, the past is too quickly forgotten. What is remembered and taught has been sanitized and rewritten so as not to offend. Truth is irrelevant; history is irrelevant; the past is irrelevant.

The Antifa/Antifascism gangs protest unknowingly and quite ignorantly their own *raison d'être* for they have no understanding of fascism. They are void of any knowledge of its rise and ultimately, the collapse of every fascist state.

Their buffoonery is as evident as the Emperor’s non-existent new clothes, to wit, they believe they are progressive leftists fighting against the tyranny of fascism when a simple word search will quickly return this bit of definition: “*Fascism is an authoritarian nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization, characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and control of industry and commerce.*”

Much the same can be said for the neo-Nazi fascist/white-supremacist twits: when it comes to history, they are ignorant of the truth and on the wrong side of historical relevancy.



**M**eanwhile, the rest of the 99.9999999999999999%, those of us who love our country, love our neighbors, and love our God ... well we just try our best to make it through another day. We work, we play, we provide for our families, we attend church, mosque, synagogue, or temple.

Life is far too fleeting to spend any time worrying about the vitriolic bile that comes forth from those who know only hate. Their lives are assuredly forfeit. Their thoughts are much the same as Ahab’s whose final words are filled with useless rage and unremitting hate: “*From Hell’s heart, I stab at thee, for hate’s sake I spit my last breath at thee.*” Where hate exists, love cannot.

“*Hate no one. God never comes where there is no love for our neighbors*” (St. Philip Neri).

## Deacon’s Diner

### *Food for a restless mind*

**F**or 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.

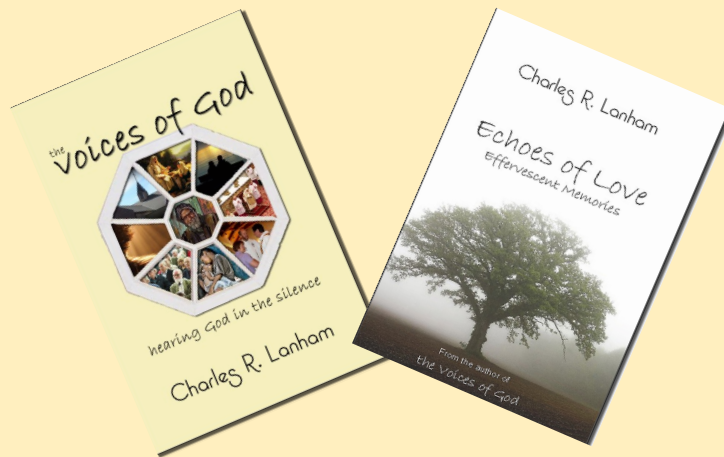
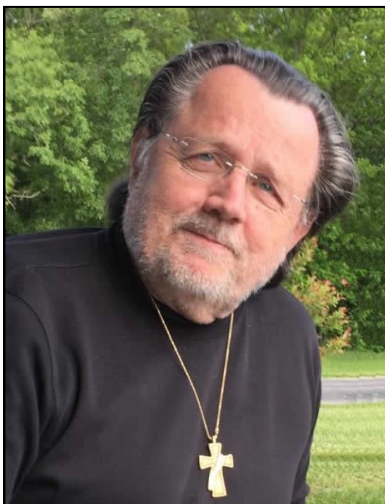
**Strangers in a Strange Land**  
*Charles J. Chaput*  
Henry Holt and Co.  
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

## PERIODICALS

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Institute on Religion and Public Life  
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