



A journal for restless minds

## TIME ENOUGH TO SERVE

*In the blink of an eye*

### BREAKING CHAINS

*Forgiveness entails sacrifice*

### 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.

## Time Enough To Serve

*In the blink of an eye*

No matter the days we spend in this life, the pace of it never slows. Time moves at a peculiar beat, not at all the metronomic measure science professes it to be, but rather, quite irregular and much too clever, confounding those who so desperately wish it to a different speed.

It seems but yesterday, and then again much further in the past: that singular moment, lying prostrate before the altar, the litany of the saints intoned with such solemnity; the moment so profoundly sacred and yet, somehow uncanny and surreal. Five years preparing for that moment; now six years in the past; more than a dozen years since first called by name to serve the Lord.

The Bard expressed it well, this varying pace of time: *"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace*

*from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time;"* we have no sense of regularity in the moment's passing, for time knows no companion; it is in our minds the speed of it.

How do you measure joy, quantify happiness, calculate love? How do you give more than you receive? How do you express gratitude to God for blessings unearned and undeserved?



*They must first be tested,  
and then if there is nothing against them,  
let them serve as deacons.  
1 Timothy 3:10*

Where did they go, those moments? I cannot say, but then, the memories, inked indelibly upon the heart, will never fade or wash away; gone but not forgotten. And why? Why does love procrastinate? The years so long fallow; only dust upon the wind remind of what the har-

vest could have been.

Six years a Deacon, six years ordained. Never have I felt so complete; never have I felt so at peace; never have I received so much more than I can ever hope to give in return. Who knew serving others would be its own reward? God knows.

# Breaking Chains

*Forgiveness entails sacrifice*

Alexander Pope, in his poem *An Essay On Criticism* wrote, *"To err is human; to forgive, divine."*

With these few words, Pope managed to convey the essential message of the readings today.

In our hearts, we know what Sirach says to be the truth: *"Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight."* We know the truth of it, we despise ourselves for clinging to such hateful things, yet, we cannot resist holding onto them, hugging them tight.

Those who have ever read Herman Melville's classic novel *Moby-Dick* will recall the depths to which Captain Ahab was willing to sink in his hatred for his nemesis, the whale, Moby-Dick. His final words speak of his unrelenting hatred, *"Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee."*

It is in our nature to begrudge others who have wronged us, yet we often carry those grudges like badges of honor, garnering satisfaction in just thinking of how we might avenge the wrongs we have endured. But then, *"Revenge is a dish that is best served cold"* and it always leaves a bitter aftertaste.

It is in nursing our feelings of hurt and injury that we begin to think of all the ways we are right and superior to the one who has sinned against us. Yet

that simply leaves us frustrated and angry; no matter how right we think we are in the moment—and we relish that feeling, don't we?—that feeling never lasts, ultimately it comes crashing down around our feet.



Forgiveness is the opposite of wrath and anger. There is a deep and abiding relationship between forgiveness and love. When we refuse to forgive those who have wronged us, we are, in truth, refusing to love them. And it is never acceptable not to love, for Christ has commanded us to love one another just as we love ourselves. The same holds true of forgiveness.

In our time, it seems as though people are consumed with anger, consumed by hatred for perceived injustices, real or imagined; people somehow feel justified in visiting wrath upon each other over their self-assured belief in a righteous cause. We hear it all the time: *"These others owe a debt to me, and I am going to make them pay eve-*

*ry penny."* While there may be truth behind such claims, yet, as Jesus observes: others may owe a debt to you, but to whom are you indebted?

On Easter Sunday of 1960, a year before his death in a plane crash, Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, wrote *"Forgiveness breaks the chain of causality because he who 'forgives' you—out of love—takes upon himself the consequences of what you have done. Forgiveness, therefore, always entails a sacrifice."*

Forgiveness exacts a price, for you can never break free of the chains which bind you to the injury inflicted by others without sacrifice. Refusing to forgive, by its very nature, locks us into a vicious cycle: refusing to pardon the other seals ourselves off from the very experience of pardon. When we harden our heart, setting our judgment in concrete, it is only our heart that grows cold. Refusing to forgive, saying *"I will never forgive,"* hardens the heart.

Unforgiveness is a rejection of love. If we refuse to forgive, we make it impossible to love or receive love.

In a sermon, Saint Augustine spoke of the unforgiving debtor in the Gospel for today. He said, *"The Lord puts the parable of the unforgiving debtor before us that we may learn from it. He has no desire for us to die, so he warns us: 'This is how your heavenly Father will deal with you if you, any of you, fail to forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'"*

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**T**ake notice now, for clearly this is no idle warning. The fulfillment of this command calls for the most vigorous obedience. We are all in debt to God, just as other people are in debt to us. Is there anyone who is not God's debtor? Only a person in whom no sin can be found. And is there anyone who has no brother or sister in his debt? Only if there be someone who has never suffered any wrong.

Do you think anyone can be found in the entire human race who has not in turn wronged another in some way, incurring a debt to that person? No, all are debtors, and have others in debt to them. Accordingly, God who is just has told you how to treat your debtor, because he means to treat his in the same way.

There are two works of mercy which will set us free. They are briefly set down in the gospel in the Lord's own words: 'Forgive and you will be forgiven, and Give and you will receive.' The former concerns pardon, the latter generosity. ...

As regards pardon he says: 'Just as you want to be forgiven, so someone is in need of your forgiveness.' Again, as regards generosity, consider when a beggar asks you for something that you are a beggar too in relation to God.

When we pray we are all beggars before God. We are standing at the door of a great householder, or rather, lying prostrate, and begging with tears. We are longing to receive a gift—the gift of God himself. ...

If we think of our sins, reckoning up those we have committed by sight, hearing, thought, and countless disorderly emotions, I do not know whether we can even

sleep without falling into debt.

And so, every day we pray; every day we beat upon God's ears with our pleas; every day we prostrate ourselves before him saying: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us.' ...

Which of our trespasses, all of them or only some? All, you will answer.

Do likewise, therefore, with those who have offended you."<sup>1</sup>

Forgiveness is a journey that leads us to love, a journey on which we are invited to look deep, not only at those we would forgive, but into ourselves. Forgiveness becomes real only when we discover that the sins of our brothers and sisters are alive in us. Forgiveness cannot be measured, counted, or rationed; it is not a single heroic act, but an on-going journey of redemption that begins in the heart of God.

**S**ome sixteen years ago, I found the strength to ask God to liberate me from my sins; a feeling so indescribably delicious! His forgiveness lifted my soul and changed my life forever. Six years ago, on September 17, 2011, I lay prostrate before the Altar of the Lord, humbly accepting his call to serve him in a new and surprising way. It was in that moment when I realized just how infinite his love and how complete his forgiveness. And for that I pray: "O God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen."

Homily for the  
Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
Sirach 27:30—28:7  
Romans 14:7-9  
Matthew 18:21-35

## 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.

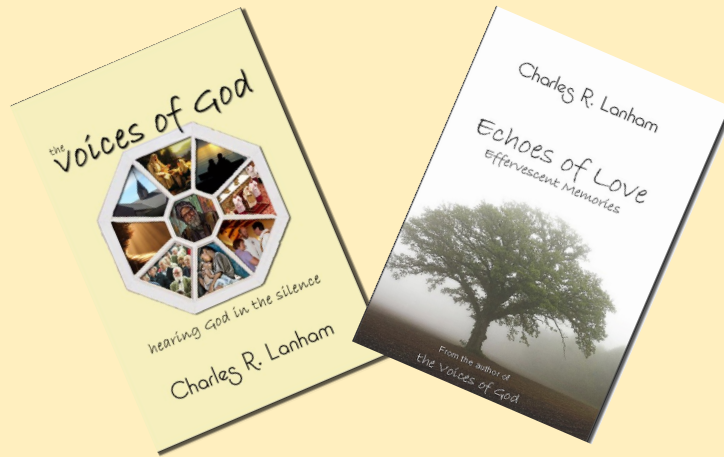
**Strangers in a Strange Land**  
*Charles J. Chaput*  
Henry Holt and Co.  
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

## PERIODICALS

**First Things**  
Institute on Religion and Public Life  
Editor: R. R. Reno  
Ten Issues per year.  
[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

**Touchstone**  
A Journal of Mere Christianity  
Editor: James M. Kushiner  
Bi-Monthly.  
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**Catholic Answers Magazine**  
Share the Faith, Defend the Faith  
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Books are available  
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**Deacon Chuck Lanham** is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

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