



A journal for restless minds

RECEDING HAIRLINES

Diminished attraction, nogaine

READY OR NOT

Failure to plan is planning to fail

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.

Receding Hairlines

Diminished attraction, nogaine

Each day it seems, there is something new which offers us ever more insipid, monotonous banalities upon which to satisfy our insatiable appetites for mind-numbing meaninglessness. What is it that drives so many to trivialize anything and everything; what calls for all that once was sacred and holy to now be looked upon with disdain, viewed as foolish nonsense; from where does the desire come to abase, demean and denigrate all that is moral, ethical, beautiful, and precious?

We have arrived at a drear moment, once considered inconceivable, when even the unique qualities of our own humanity are called into question. No longer is man considered created in the image and likeness of God. No, man has now been made, by random chance, into an amorphous mass of chemicals and

matter, worth less than a diamond or pearl or even a common stone.

How else to explain the unexplainable? How else to understand the inexplicable casuistry of those who would equate love to physical attraction and measure such love by the number of hairs on one's head, or lack thereon? As the lyrics go: *"Who can explain it? Who can tell you why? Fools give you reasons; Wise men never try."*¹



Recently, a writer, identified as *Turned Off in Cincinnati*, opined to Dear Abby *"My physical attraction to my boyfriend has significantly diminished due to his baldness. I know*

this may seem shallow, but I have lost all interest in intimate contact with him. When I look at his bald head or he rests his head on my shoulder, it literally makes my stomach lurch!"

Shallow? You think? "Shallow" doesn't even begin to convey the utter meaninglessness of such a relationship. Tragically, it has become all

Ready Or Not

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Eliezer ben Hurcanus was a first and second century rabbi who was known to tell his disciples to "Repent one day before your death." And when asked, "How will we know when that day is?" he would reply, "All the more reason to repent today, lest you die tomorrow."

Each of us is called to seek the wisdom of God, to seek divine understanding. God should be the source and center of all our wisdom. Wisdom is no longer in vogue. We have no need of it, just as we have no need of God, just as we have no need of any other but the self.

Knowledge is brain food but wisdom is soul food. The gift of wisdom in Latin is 'sapida scientia' which means "tasted knowledge." Wisdom cannot be obtained from a book or learned in a classroom. Rather it comes from within, from the soul. Wisdom is not "knowing what one values" but rather "valuing that which is worth knowing."

But just what is Wisdom? Is it sound judgment or a sharp intellect? I personally believe it is the act of making wise choices, choosing between what is good and right rather than what is opportunistic and self-indulgent. Wisdom presumes that we are prepared for the unexpected, to anticipate and put ourselves in the best position to act wisely when the unexpected happens, to wait with sure confidence that we have done all that we could have and should have done.

Wisdom comes when we overcome our desire for power, possessions, and pleasure and learn to live as

Christ commands: loving God with every fiber of our being, heart, mind, and soul and then loving our neighbors as we love our self. The more we seek a perfect relationship with God the more His wisdom will hasten to us and the more wisdom we will receive.

actually accomplished?

We hear Jesus admonishing us to always be prepared, to "stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Only God knows when that time will arrive and he isn't talking. Despite wishful thinking, the fact is that we cannot know the time or place for ourselves or for anyone else.



All too often we fail to prepare ourselves for the unexpected, we live "in the moment" without any thought for tomorrow. We believe we have all the time in the world to reach a goal, break or make a habit, build a relationship, eat right, exercise more, or to do all those things that we would love to do but haven't taken the occasion to accomplish. As Benjamin Franklin once observed, "By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail."

Many of us have developed 'bucket lists', things to do before we die. And yet, how many items have we managed to check off, how much have we

Visit any assisted living facility where the residents generally are eighty years old and older. Ask any one of them how much longer until they see the Lord. Believe me, no one there has a clue when that hour might be.

My parents died in an automobile accident when they were fifty-eight and fifty-nine years old. They were healthy and expected to live many more years; after all they still had children at home.

My youngest daughter, Charlene, once asked me to offer prayers for someone she knew. She wrote "Andrew is someone I work with who was recently released from the hospital on hospice care with colon cancer. He is 38 years old and has two boys Ben and Cooper, ages 9 and 7. Dad, I know you've said life's not fair, but it's really not fair that a 38-year old has to say goodbye to his wife and two boys."

My father's oldest brother, and my namesake, was killed at the age of twelve in a hunting accident.

We all know someone, young and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

young and old, who have died; never when or as they expected, seldom under circumstances of their choosing.

We all have things we regret or wish we could "do over." We have many opportunities to do the right thing and to correct the mistakes we have made, but too often we miss the moment and simply let things slide. After all, there is always tomorrow.

No one on their death bed wishes they had spent more time at work; no one regrets not having kept a cleaner house. What we do regret is far more important and far less tangible. We regret not saying "I'm sorry." We regret not saying "I love you." We regret not stopping to "smell the roses", not spending time with those we love, helping those who are in need, giving the gift of time to others, or spending time with God. Like the foolish young women in the Gospel, we burn our oil on things that do not matter and fail to pack extra flasks of oil for contingencies. We fail to plan, we fail to prepare for the inevitable, and thus, in truth, we plan to fail.

Have you ever been so tired you simply could not keep your eyes open? Sitting in a comfortable recliner there is little to be concerned if you fall asleep. Falling asleep while sitting behind the wheel of an automobile traveling a lonely mountain highway in the dead of night is a far different and deadly situation, isn't it? We hear Jesus constantly telling us to be vigilant, to "stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour." How can he expect us to always be on high alert, to con-

stantly stay focused on that unknown hour, to always stay awake? It makes no sense, for we all must sleep sometime.

"All of us know how difficult it is for us to be inside the present moment, to not be asleep to the real riches inside our own lives. The distractions and worries of daily life tend to so consume us that we habitually take for granted what's most precious to us, our health, the miracle of our senses, the love and friendships that surround us, and the gift of life itself. We go through our daily lives not only with a lack of reflectiveness and lack of gratitude but with a habitual touch of resentment as well, a chronic, grey depression, Robert Moore calls it. We are very much asleep, both to God and to our own lives."¹

How are we supposed to stay awake? There is a plethora of literature offering advice on how to get into the moment and experience the richness of our lives. We are told to live each day as if it were our last. That might be useful advice for a day or two but no one can possibly live their entire life as if each day was their last. Can we?

"Spiritual wisdom offers a nuanced answer here: We can and we can't! On the one hand, the distractions, cares, and pressures of everyday life will invariably have their way with us and we will, in effect, fall asleep to what's deeper and more important inside of life. But it's for this reason that every major spiritual tradition has daily rituals designed precisely to wake us from spiritual sleep, akin an alarm clock waking us from physical sleep."

It's for this reason we need to begin each day with prayer. What happens if we

don't pray on a given morning is not that we incur God's wrath, but rather that we tend to miss the morning, spending the hours until noon trapped inside a certain dullness of heart. The same can be said about praying before meals. We don't displease God by not first centering ourselves in gratitude before eating, but we miss out on the richness of what we're doing. Liturgical prayer and the Eucharist have the same intent, among their other intentions. They're meant to, regularly, call us out of a certain sleep.

None of us lives each day of our lives as if it was his or her last day. Our heart-aches, headaches, distractions, and busyness invariably lull us to sleep. That's forgivable; it's what it means to be human. So, we should ensure that we have regular spiritual rituals, spiritual alarm clocks, to jolt us back awake—so that it doesn't take a heart attack, a stroke, cancer, or death to wake us up."

We need to remain watchful while we wait. The key is to be prepared—and that is wisdom. While we can determine neither the day nor the hour we must be ready for it every moment of our lives. To be wise, then, is not to try to calculate the appointed day or time but to spend the present moment—now—as if it was your last; to ask the question "Am I ready to meet God?" Or perhaps more importantly "Am I ready for God to meet me?"

Amen.

Homily for the
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Wisdom 6:12-16
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

1. Ron Rolheiser, *Staying Awake*, The Sunday Website of St. Louis University.

too common to base a relationship principally, if not wholly, upon physical attraction.

The degree of intimacy to which the writer so crassly admits is predicated, not on any desire to have a close personal and loving relationship with another person, but rather, wholly determined by the volatility of her stomach as she peruses his balding pate!

"Our romance began 20 years ago when he still had hair. It fell out two years ago. I still have feelings for him, but I don't know how to get past this. I have tried turning out the lights and even imagining I'm with somebody else. I'm sure other women feel the same way I do."

Reading this woman's pathetic complaint makes my stomach lurch. What possible "feelings" can there be in such a relationship? It is inexplicable how or why such sufferance, such a facile, mindless "*romance*" could have been endured for twenty years. Nowhere is love mentioned; only feeble feelings of "*intimacy*" (translation: sexual conduct) which can only be conjured under the cover of darkness.

Her supposition that "*other women feel the same way*" carries no weight; it is but a superficial attempt to justify her diminishment with a sweeping and arbitrary generalization, unsupported by fact. This is unfortunately the method used by far too many far too often.

"...I am so turned off. ... I haven't said anything because I don't want to offend him. I am upset and discouraged and no longer look forward to seeing him because

of this. It would be an awful reason to leave him, yet I can't stand looking at his head!"

One must wonder why anyone so "turned off" by another's physical appearance would be so reluctant to move on. What possible motive could there be to continuing in such a vacuous and dissatisfying relationship? After twenty years, it should be more than obvious that neither holds any desire to build a deeper, permanent, loving union. This "*friends with benefits*" association is sadly all too prevalent in our society.

Wherever physical attraction is the principal foundation of a relationship, the specter of its inevitable demise looms ever large, for as someone once said, "*You can fool Mother Nature, but you can't fool Father Time.*"

Aging, and the consequences of it, knows no stranger; it dances to the march of time; it will not be hindered or delayed. Sooner, much sooner than most expect, fruit ripens. What then will captivate the mind and engender love for the other when youthful beauty fades, as it inevitably will, when hair recedes and falls away, and skin, once smooth and taut, gives way to sags, folds and wrinkles?

Here then, we ought to take a moment to consider: "*The typical modern man practically never thinks about sex.*" Now that I have your undivided attention, allow me to explain. In his book *Society and Sanity*, Catholic theologian Frank Sheed quite astutely observes that our society's obvious hyper-sexualized culture does not think about sex.

"Man dreams of it ... he craves for it; he pictures it, is stimulated or depressed by it, drools over it. ... But this drooling is not thinking, picturing is not thinking, craving is not thinking, dreaming is not thinking. Thinking means bringing the power of the mind to bear; thinking about sex means striving to see sex in its innermost reality and in the function it is meant to serve."²

The reality is we no longer bother to *think*, for it is much easier and far more enjoyable to simply drool, picture, crave, or dream about sex than to exercise the least amount of time and effort to think about the whys and wherefores.

But then, what purpose does it serve? We most certainly have come to deny memory of its nature and intrinsic purpose. Ask the question yet, expect no proper answer; the best to be expected is some tiresome superficial promise of momentary pleasure. What more is there to intercourse than self-satisfying pleasure?

"Human beings are no different from other living things in that we have a nature or essence with characteristic faculties for the sake of pursuing certain ends, the achievement of which is perfective of human nature. For example, besides the faculties and capacities that we share with the animal kingdom (e.g., sight, hearing, digestive system, sexual powers, etc.) we have faculties unique to us as rational animals—namely, intellect and free will.

The intellect by nature is ordered toward knowing the truth inasmuch as the truth ('being as known') is the proper object of the intellect, and thus knowledge of

the truth is good for human beings. Your reading this article testifies to this.

The free will by nature is ordered toward free actions; this has as its proper object the universal good ('being as desired.') Therefore, to decide freely, without coercion, which belief you will choose to embrace after reading this article is a good thing for you as a human being.

The same line of reasoning applies to our sexual faculties. As philosopher Edward Feser writes, 'For if what is good for us is determined by what realizes the ends inherent in our nature, then what is good for us in the sexual context can only be what realizes the ends of our sexual faculties' (Neo-Scholastic Essays, 387).

Therefore, if our sexual faculties exist for the sake of certain ends, and as rational agents we naturally possess these sexual powers that we might pursue these ends, then it cannot possibly be good for us to use our sexual faculties in a way that prevents the realization of these ends."³

Heavy stuff, no doubt. Surely, more than a few will offer but a mere glance at the previous philosophical argument. As difficult as it may be to fully appreciate or comprehend, it would be hoove us all to expend some effort to do so, to think, really think about our nature, what makes us unique, what makes us human: our intellect and free will. No other animal has the capacity to think, to reason, and to comprehend in the abstract; we alone are free to choose what we believe and how we act; no other species knows what it means to love and to be loved.

Although pleasure is a natural by-product of sexual activity, it is not its

ultimate or intrinsic purpose. It may be the subjective motivation for engaging in sexual activity but it is not its *raison d'être*.

Pleasure is a feeling derived from some satisfying or enjoyable activity or experience. It may motivate us to engage in some activity but it is not an end unto itself. In other words, we do not engage in pleasure; pleasure is the reward not the object of our experience. For example, eating is pleasurable, but we do not eat for pleasure; pleasure is not the intrinsic purpose for eating. Pleasure is subordinate to the ultimate end which is to nourish and sustain our bodies and our lives.

The same goes for sex. Pleasure is not its intrinsic purpose, the end for which we act; pleasure is subordinate to the end, a promissory note inducing us to engage, nothing more. Its natural purpose, its *raison d'être* is to reproduce, to "be fruitful and multiply," as it is with all living beings. There is, in addition, another intrinsic purpose beyond reproduction: it is its unitive end or purpose, the physical and emotional union of spouses.

"For sex to be genuinely human, it must be integrated with our rationality, which involves knowledge and love. And where is knowledge and love united but in friendship or interpersonal communion? The bodily union between man and woman that is ordered to begetting children therefore finds its human perfection in what Aquinas calls the 'indivisible union of souls' (Summa Theologiae III:29:2) that exists between spouses.

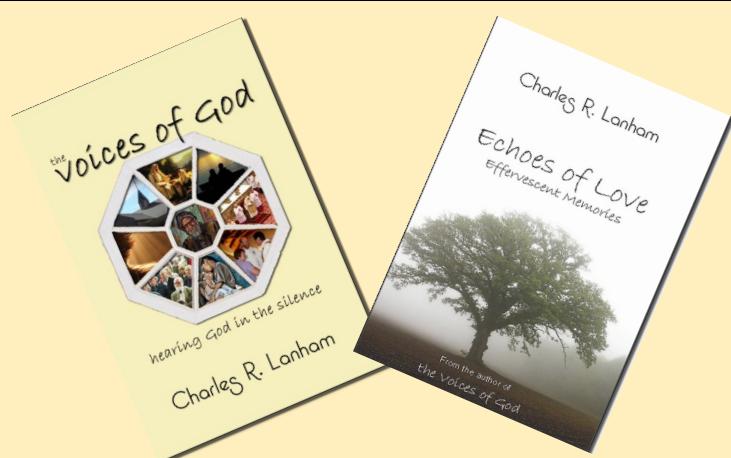
We might say that the unitive dimension of sex is to the procreative dimension what the rational soul is to the human body. Just as the rational soul makes our bodies human bodies as opposed to animal or vegetative bodies, the spousal friendship (communal living) makes our procreative inclinations properly human, integrating them into the rational part of our human nature. So, once again, the unitive end of sex flows intrinsically from the procreative.

Just as a human being is both body and soul, human sex is both procreative and unitive. Nature has made it so that both aspects are essential to human sexuality.

Our sexed bodies are ordered toward the begetting of children, which necessarily involves a man and woman. But because we're human, the procreative end of our sexuality necessarily involves an interpersonal union of knowledge and love between the man and woman. Embedded within both these dimensions are the characteristics of permanency and exclusivity."⁴

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote that "*Love is to will the good of another,*" that it belongs to our rational nature to do what we perceive to be good (*Summa Theologiae, I-II:94:2*). The good derived from our human sexuality is achieved when we use our sexual faculties for their intrinsic purposes and avoid actively frustrating them.

1. Oscar Hammerstein II & Richard Rodgers, *Some Enchanted Evening*, *South Pacific* 1949.
2. Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity*, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), 107.
3. Karlo Broussard, *Let's Think About Sex: How a thing's natural purpose determines what is good for it*, Catholic Answers Magazine, November-December 2017, 10-11.
4. Karlo Broussard, *Let's Think About Sex*, 13.



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