



A journal for restless minds

GOD CREATED US

Male and female he created us

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Not all roads lead to heaven

NASHVILLE STATEMENT

A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality

CREATED MALE AND FEMALE

An open letter from religious leaders

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.

God Created Us

Male and female he created us

The *de facto* motto of the United States was, since its founding, considered to be *E Pluribus Unum*, "Out of many, one." In 1956, the U. S. Congress passed H. J. Resolution 396 adopting "In God We Trust" as the official motto of the nation.

These days, both are sorely tested, for we have become a nation divided, or more precisely, fractured and fragmented, both in our collective and personal identities. We have become a people searching for answers to who we are as a people, a nation, a community, a family, and as individuals.

We used to know who we were, for we shared a common ideal, founded upon principles of freedom and independence and "We the people." We trusted in the providence of Almighty God and believed we lived in a land blessed abun-

dantly by a Creator who had endowed us with unalienable rights to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

But, alas, no longer. We have turned *E Pluribus Unum* on its head, no longer are the many united into one nation, but rather, *De Se, Plurimos*, one nation divided into many. Instead of a common ideal we now profess to a multitude of fragmented, incoherent ideologies. Instead of *government of the people, by the people, for the people*, we now find ourselves a *people of the government, by the government, for the government*.



We have relinquished our individual freedoms and independence and subordinated our unalienable rights through apathy and *Weltschmerz* (a growing feeling of melancholy and world-weariness.) Simply put, as a people, we just don't care. We have become a people more interested in our individual creature comforts than what has been

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Walking In The Light

Not all roads lead to heaven

For many of us—we men especially—asking for directions is often difficult; our reluctance to seek assistance an embarrassing acknowledgement that we have absolutely no idea where we are or how we managed to get here. If only we had a map tucked away inside our head that could guide us anywhere and everywhere we wished to go. Life would be so much more enjoyable if only it weren't so unpredictable.

But, we don't have maps inside our heads and we cannot predict the unpredictable. No matter how much we might wish to be able to see into the future, to anticipate what is in store for us, the reality is that life is a journey that requires countless course corrections.

The future is, quite predictably, unknowable and unpredictable; that, in and of itself can be both frightening and daunting, giving us pause to consider whether we should walk another way or weather the storm. And then, there is the darkness; what we cannot see, we fear; our blindness leaves us anxious, we hesitate, wondering where we are; we struggle against the dark forces of evil; we feel apprehensive and very much alone.

And yet, we know that light will always overcome darkness, truth will forever vanquish deception, and good will always prevail over evil. The dark void of chaos reminds us that God's

first act of creation was to create light. "And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness" (Genesis 1:3-4).

There are those who say that light and life are but the result of random chance. We are who we are, they claim, the result of indiscriminate evolutionary forces. Yet, we ask, how can something come from nothing? Nothingness is but the absence of something; it cannot produce what it is not. And darkness is but the absence of light; darkness cannot dispel itself, it cannot create what it is not.



When we look at all that is—the universe, the stars and worlds that fill it; when we look all the living things around us; when we look to ourselves, to our humanity, we find evidence of a creative intelligence beyond our kin. All that is, manifestations; epiphanies of God's creative power and his love for his creation.

Epiphany is about changing course, going in a new direction and it happens to all of us. It happened to the Magi and the shepherds and it happens to each and every one of us as we live out our lives.

Each day we start anew, with expectations for what lies ahead, yet, with an awareness that circumstances may require us to travel a different and unexpected road. At times we may be forced to swerve or slow down for a pothole or a bump in the road—like a chance encounter with a stranger, a passing billboard message, or even a gentle breeze. Or we may encounter a major obstacle that forces us to completely change direction or choose a different path, such as the loss of a job, a sudden illness, or even the death of a loved one.

Epiphany should remind us that despite our uncertainties and doubt, despite the frequent and unexpected course corrections, roadside assistance is always available. We may never have a star to guide us as did the Magi or have heavenly hosts give us directions as did the shepherds but we can trust that God will show us the way if

only we open our hearts and minds to hear His voice .

There is a story that illustrates this very well. In the novel, *The Shack*, by William Paul Young, a man named Mack encounters the Holy Trinity and during a conversation with Jesus, Jesus says to Mack, "Those who love me come from every system that exists. They are Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrats, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. I have followers who were murderers and many who were self-righteous.

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Some are bankers and bookies, Americans and Iraqis, Jews and Palestinians. I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my Beloved."

Mack then asks: "Does that mean that all roads lead to you?"

"Not at all," smiled Jesus as he reached for the door handle to the shop.... "What it means is that I will travel any road to find you."

We want to believe that we are on the road to life everlasting with God; and yet, not all roads lead to heaven. Some may choose not to travel the causeway to heaven, but that doesn't mean God won't reach out to help you get there. That's as true for any Midwestern, church-going Protestant or Catholic as it is for a mother in Iraq, a banker in Singapore or a boy playing soccer in a village in Nairobi. God will pursue you with a relentlessness borne of his great love, for he wills salvation for all.

We are told that the Magi went back by "another way", not just geographically, but with an entirely new perspective on life and God. They traveled with a new spirit, filled with wonder, awe, and thanksgiving for having met their savior.

The Magi, who came from the east, followed the star westward. They left the familiar and traveled toward the unknown. They had nothing but the star to guide them and had no idea where it would lead them or how long the journey would take. Yet they

made the journey.

The uncertainties of life, meeting the unknowable and accepting what life presents you with open arms is what life is all about. Seeing, touching, hearing God in all that surrounds you is to recognize that all of the gifts you have were given to you by Him and that He will never send you down a path you cannot travel.

The Magi travelled a great distance to see a king they had never met and did not know. Their journey was certainly unpredictable and uncertain; they were forced to make difficult decisions but they followed the star to the end and that made all the difference.

Each made sacrifices, leaving behind their homes and families in order to pay homage to the Ruler of Heaven and Earth. Each sacrificed a portion of his treasure, in order to place it as a gift before the new-born King; gifts given in response to a greater gift which they received in Jesus Christ.

"The wise man knows that the whole world, and every land, and every person in every land, will receive from Jesus an infinite blessing, if accepted. The gifts of the wise men are only responses to God's goodness. God's goodness—that is, His love—is primary. Always. Our response is only and always secondary, both in sequence and in the measure of its goodness.

In God the Father giving us the Gift of His Son, the Father calls us to give a gift in response. But we might understandably worry, asking, 'What can measure up to God's gift? God's gift is infinite. I cannot give an infinite gift.'

This is true. We can only give our "all" to God. In this way, at least, we can give as God gives: as the old saying goes, not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice. If we give as God gives—by giving Him our "all"—we tap into what is best in us: the desire to give, not to get; to take joy in showering others with good things, not to accumulate them for oneself; to take interest in the growth of one's soul, not to watch the growth of one's accounts with interest; to sacrifice our time and pride by saying 'thank you' rather than looking for the applause of the world."¹

"The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East... In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations. Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning toward the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament. The Epiphany shows that 'the full number of the nations' now takes its 'place in the family of the patriarchs.'"²

Amen.

Homily for the
The Epiphany (B)
Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-3A, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

1. From the Diocese of Wichita.

2. Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 528.

taken from us; we would rather be served than to serve, spoon-fed rather than self-fed, uninformed rather than well-informed, blissfully intoxicated rather than level-headed and sober.

Trust has been trampled as a result of the seemingly unending onslaught of deliberate lies and distortions which regularly come to light. For many, God is no longer trustworthy; God is but a myth, a figment of the imaginative minds of a dwindling group of unreasoning mental Neanderthals; only the god of self is to be trusted until even that self-same god proves to be untrustworthy.

At the core of our disillusionment and *Weltschmerz* is the steadfast refusal to accept reality for what it is: truth. Reality is a harsh taskmaster for it demands that we see things as they are, not as we vainly wish them to be. No matter how difficult, unpleasant, painful or terrifying life might be, denying the truth of it will not, cannot alter the reality of it. Believing something to be true when it clearly and unmistakably is not so, changes nothing; it is merely a self-imposed fantasy, a delusion forced upon the unwilling mind to deny what the mind knows to be the truth.

Wherever one looks there is an air of self-denial, like a chill wind that blows cold and damp upon the soul, riming the conscience in frigid darkness. Let us consider what has been the disastrous and tragic results from just one thing:

“Today we see the fruits of the so-called sexual revolution manifest in,

among other things, abortion, shattered families, out-of-wedlock births, and the destructive behavior of sons raised without their fathers. This revolution has repudiated the age-old and universal recognition that sexual intercourse must be accorded special protection and dignity in marriage, and must be channeled therein for the flourishing of human society. Today’s post-marital view of sex insists that sexual restraint outside of marriage is mostly repressive and psychologically unhealthy and, further, that individuals may act on any form of sexual self-expression that occurs to them, as long as it is consensual.

Not only have the sexual revolutionaries embraced various forms of sexual expression, they have also redefined sexual embodiment itself, so that one’s ‘real’ sex is now said to be determined by one’s personal preferences. Teaching children that they could be the opposite of their biological sex is another chapter in the ongoing abuse of children, joining abortion, no-fault divorce, and the encouragement of teen promiscuity in assaulting the clear teachings of Scripture and endangering more souls. This is a place where the churches of God have no warrant to retreat even an inch from the witness of the Christian tradition, espoused by a great cloud of witnesses over the past two thousand years.”¹

Thankfully, and with a whisper of hope, there appears to be a nascent awakening to the deep moral abyss now looming so near. Christians of all denominations are raising the alarm and their voices to the dangerous precipice that lies before us. One such notice was produced by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood last year during its national conference. Now offi-

cially known as the *Nashville Statement: A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality*, it is a well-crafted rebuttal to the ongoing assault on human sexuality as divined by God. Although the Nashville Statement is the product of Evangelical Christian leaders, it deserves to be read by all who call themselves Christian, including we Catholic Christians. To that end, I include the Nashville Statement here in its entirety.

1. James M. Kushiner, for the Touchstone editors, “Mere Sexuality: Getting Sex Wrong is a Foundational Error”, Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity, Volume 31, Number 1, January / February 2018, p. 3.

Nashville Statement: *A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality*

“Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves...” -Psalm 100:3

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God’s design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God’s beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual’s autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God’s

good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes glad-hearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's

good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as per-sons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God’s original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God’s design of his image-bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one’s biological sex and one’s self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God’s revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ’s death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and su-

preme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord’s arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

This statement, along with a list of signatories, can be found online at <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement>.

In an open letter, entitled “*Created Male and Female*” and released December 15, 2017 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, four prominent U.S. bishops joined leaders of other Christian traditions in publicly reaffirming the inherent beauty and reality of each person’s God-given sexuality. The bishops’ letter is reprinted here and can be found online at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/promotion-and-defense-of-marriage/created-male-and-female.cfm>.

Created Male and Female
An Open Letter from Religious Leaders

December 15, 2017

Dear Friends:

As leaders of various communities of faith throughout the United States, many of us came together in the past to affirm our commitment to marriage as the union of one man and one woman and as the foundation of society. We reiterate that natural marriage continues to be invaluable to American society.

We come together to join our voices on a more fundamental precept of our shared existence, namely, that human beings are male or female and

that the socio-cultural reality of gender cannot be separated from one's sex as male or female.

We acknowledge and affirm that all human beings are created by God and thereby have an inherent dignity. We also believe that God created each person male or female; therefore, sexual difference is not an accident or a flaw—it is a gift from God that helps draw us closer to each other and to God. What God has created is good. "God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27).

A person's discomfort with his or her sex, or the desire to be identified as the other sex, is a complicated reality that needs to be addressed with sensitivity and truth. Each person deserves to be heard and treated with respect; it is our responsibility to respond to their concerns with compassion, mercy and honesty. As religious leaders, we express our commitment to urge the members of our communities to also respond to those wrestling with this challenge with patience and love.

Children especially are harmed when they are told that they can "change" their sex or, further, given hormones that will affect their development and possibly render them infertile as adults. Parents deserve better guidance on these important decisions, and we urge our medical institutions to honor the basic medical principle of "first, do no harm." Gender ideology harms individuals and societies by sowing confusion and self-doubt. The state itself has a compelling interest,

therefore, in maintaining policies that uphold the scientific fact of human biology and supporting the social institutions and norms that surround it.

The movement today to enforce the false idea—that a man can be or become a woman or vice versa—is deeply troubling. It compels people to either go against reason—that is, to agree with something that is not true—or face ridicule, marginalization, and other forms of retaliation.

We desire the health and happiness of all men, women, and children. Therefore, we call for policies that uphold the truth of a person's sexual identity as male or female, and the privacy and safety of all. We hope for renewed appreciation of the beauty of sexual difference in our culture and for authentic support of those who experience conflict with their God-given sexual identity.

Sincerely Yours:

Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

The Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach
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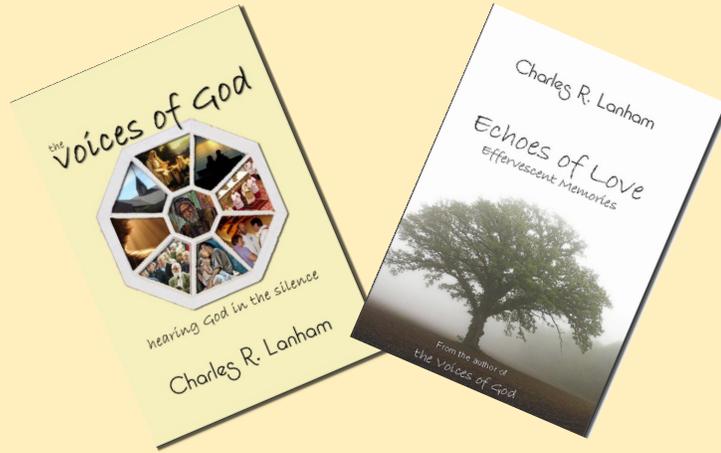
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The National Catholic Register published an article, "*Amid Nation's 'Transgender Moment,' US Catholics Engage With Truth and Charity*" on December 28, 2017.

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/amid-nations-transgender-moment-us-catholics-engage-with-truth-and-charity>.



Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

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Each issue of **Colloquī** can be viewed or downloaded from

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