

# Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

## Climate Changes

*Meandering marigolds*

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.

## Climate Changes

*Meandering marigolds*

Strange how one thing may or may not lead to another; how disconnected thoughts are wont to play a tantalizing game of hide and seek with Cheshire Cat whose grin belies a motive. It is as if the mind is playing connect-the-dots, choosing each dot at random, no order to the order, no logic to the logic, no rhyme nor reason to the play.

Beginning at the beginning is always the best place to begin and yet, there are so many beginnings from which to choose that the meanest choice may be to not begin at all. But then, to not begin to begin will only get you nowhere which I quite insist to be a quite dull and boring commonplace.



Allow me then to begin with a rather odd, alien thought which has only of late arrived unbidden at Gray Matter Station. A stranger looking all the worse for age stood with studied insouciance at the gathered throng of hard resolve and ignored the unwelcome glare of their unseeing eyes. What came to mind was so foreign and yet all too familiar; seeing for the first time what had been known for a long time, a stranger no longer strange but a long-lost friend so eager to embrace.

The only logical conclusion to be concluded was that jumping to conclusions was conclusively inconclusive and that foregone conclusions were, as one might well conclude, generally ill-advised. Nevertheless, conclusions have a tendency to stick around and calcify, most noticeably they become

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as terribly difficult as a rock, unable to bend or move or to contemplate its lot. A rock has no options, nothing from which to make a choice; it cannot think or mind at all its fate; it can only be.

**H**ere then is the conclusion to the beginning of the tale. I have come of late to realize that labels have far outlived their usefulness. This of course may seem bizarre to those who believe honesty and truthfulness are normative and good; who think a label should best describe a thing for what it is rather than what one may think of it.

The label is quite useful when it is both simple and direct, above reproach, beyond reprove; it must above all else be true and “there’s the rub.” Whether your truth or mine or that teenager’s absent-mindedly stocking shelves at the local supermarket it makes no difference, none at all. That can of peas you hand-picked from the neatly rowed and perfectly aligned cans by that utterly bored stocking clerk comes labeled “young peas, hand-picked at the peak of perfection, fresh from our organic gardens to your table,” a perfect side for dinner tonight.

But wait! Should not one inquire as to where the “mature peas” might be located? Might the “young peas” be a bit too young and immature? As for the rest, an astute shopper might be well-advised to ask “hand-picked” by whom or whether “fresh” and “organic” are but so much barnyard waste piled high to keep the pea plants looking “young” and feeling “fresh.”

Labels seldom require an oath to truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In point of fact—and here is where my recent epiphany was born—labels often lend credence to the mischaracterization of a truth, that is to say, a lie.

If I were asked to describe my neighbor I might say he is a man of average height, a few extra inches here and there who has identified himself as Jack Jones. I have thus ascribed a number of labels in response which may or may not be true, accurate or honestly applied.

Now, not so long ago one might take *prima facie* that my neighbor was therefore a male, a member of the *heterogametic* sex with a pair of XY chromosomes and thus logically conclude that the label was true, accurate and honest in saying my neighbor was a “man.” But is that label true? Is it accurate? Is it honest?

I may believe it to be true, I may harbor doubts or I may know it to be untrue. How I respond will necessarily be colored by what I believe, my feelings toward men and Jack in particular, and by what qualities and attributes I associate with being a man.

Suppose that Jack was indeed a heterogametic male but I find Jack to be less than what I personally believe a man should be. Suppose further that in my response I had shaken my head, curled my lip, sneered and with obvious disdain said, “he’s a *man*. ...”

**W**hat would you think then of my neighbor? And if asked by someone else, how would you then describe my neighbor whom you have never met and know only what you have heard? I dare say, too soon Jack will be sur-

prised to find someone knocking at his door inquiring as to his sexual habits and perverted inclinations and I quite naturally will label Jack a sexual predator or a pervert; I may even add that according to what I have heard Jack is into some very kinky perversions. None or all of it may be true but no matter, Jack has been labeled and the labels have been affixed with permanent adhesive. All from the use of a label.

**A**ll this is but a prelude, but it is of crucial importance in order to understand what follows. Labels once were naked, unencumbered by implication, agenda, ideology or unwarranted intent. Words have meaning; labels are but words and nothing more, unless and until we make more out of them than we should. In our drive for inclusivity we grilled hamburgers and served them as steak, drank vinegar while boasting of our refinement, laughed when we should have been crying, cried when we should have laughed and otherwise made complete and utter fools of ourselves.

We call a man a fool for reading Tolstoy or Steinbeck or Sandburg. Anyone who would waste a moment on Shakespeare, make any effort to read and understand the likes of Aquinas, Aristotle, Socrates and Plato is labeled reckless and a clear and present danger to society writ large. Bradbury wrote of this, as did Huxley, Orwell, Solzhenitsyn and many others.

When we fail as a society to engender a devotion to reading we lose more than an interest; we lose ourselves to ignorance, we deny ourselves

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our humanity only to follow the herd, to accept without question. But there is more to it than merely reading for reading's sake, much more. We have become either sycophants or blathering idiots; it is increasingly difficult these days to tell the difference.

**F**or several generations far too many have boarded the next bus for Simpleton, disengaged the mind, and left the thinking, the learning and the knowing to up-and-coming third-graders. By this I mean no disrespect to those who will soon be entering the third grade for they are just as likely as any third-grader to have an inquiring mind and an eagerness to learn. What must be said is simply this: a large number of those who enter the third grade never leave. The third grade is their stopping point, the point where they lose their minds. The remaining school years are spent on anything but scholarship; thinking is simply too difficult a task.

This of course runs counter to the long-heard plaint of the importance of "higher" education in pursuit of a sheet of sheepskin (sounds painfully awful when you think of it.) Such emphasis on higher education has proved counterproductive and the results tragic. Too often a college degree is nothing more than a certificate of attendance and the acquisition of a lifetime burden of debt; learning how to think rationally, to argue persuasively and to actively engage the mind in the pursuit of truth and meaning are subjects for another time and another place. The product of our academic utopian dreams now live among us:

generations of third-graders with sixteen or more years of "education."

What has been taught is group-think not independent thought, instinct rather than reason, feelings rather than knowledge; any dissent or opposition are anathema, dissenters ostracized, labeled unclean, immediately tossed into the fires of Gehenna—of which no one knows or dares admit to knowing, for the Word of God was banned and burned long ago in the college square. Those who would call for silence from voices with whom they disagree will soon hear nothing but the wind.

Labels are the fool's preferred weapon of choice for there is no law, no statute or executive order to prevent a fool from wrapping a profanely false, illicit label—it used to be called a noose—around someone's neck in order to inflict pain, exact revenge or destroy their good name or their character. In the hands of fools labels serve as lethal weapons for there is little or nothing by which one can offer a defense or the impossible: to erase the stain and stink of it from the minds of others.

**L**abels come in many forms yet seldom do they change their stripes; they may purr like a tabby or growl menacingly like their large striped cousin; some are like an itch you can't reach, others a rash you can but know better; there are tame ones and wild ones, benign ones as well as labels that incite violence, elevate distaste to the level of hatred; there well may be labels so convincing as to persuade foolish lemmings to flap their limbs in a vain attempt to fly.

There is no reason to their insanity, no rhyme to their dirge; all that is needed is a target to hate, to blame, to denigrate, to label. There is no purpose, no truth to be defended, no wrong to right, no evil to forgive. One could argue 'til the cows come home to no avail for their minds are set in concrete, long cured of any corrective thought.

**T**he pity is we play the game of fools with our complacency and our silent deference to such mindless play. We have taken much too much to heart "let not your heart be troubled" yet our hearts are troubled to the breaking point.

Much is and has been said recently of America being a nation of immigrants which, if you were to ask, seems a rather odd label for those who call America their country, their homeland, and their home. What bothers most is the total absence of civil discourse or rational debate on what is from all appearances a troubling issue. There is an overabundance of rhetoric, heated debate and irrational argument and a serious dearth of reality, truth and common sense.

It does not take a genius to recognize the obvious; even fools know a stopped clock is right twice a day. But fools know only how to shout hateful labels, mindless slogans and loathsome epithets. They demand the broken clock be fixed without caring to know what, if anything, is broken. Fools know nothing of the clock; they have no need of time nor would they ever take the time to look at one were it not for being told that it was broken.

Only someone blind and deaf could possibly not have heard or read that sad refrain: "The Immigration system is broken" twinned with "The system must be fixed." This song has no melody, no lyrics, it is an empty mantra as meaningful as "Om" without the benefit of whatever it is one gets by endlessly chanting it.

Apparently no one has ever bothered to ask for details. If it is broken, what is it that doesn't work. Has anyone ever bothered to check whether it is indeed broken or if it is simply not working as some would like? A recent op-ed by a local city councilman is a perfect example of the mindless mantra repeated often by foolish minds. After reading his 550ish word essay (??) what struck me was the number of times he wrote the above mantra (10 words): best guess, at least 50 times. Never a word on what was broken; not a hint as to whether he had called the repair shop asking that whatever needed to be fixed (he obviously didn't know) be fixed. Apparently, he didn't know who to call.

This is a heartstring issue for many and it is all too easy to manipulate and play sad songs from the heart. There are very few who will not look with compassion upon those who are suffering. Yet compassion for those who are suffering does not mandate placing the monkey on your shoulders. Sometimes, more often than not, the easy solution is not the best solution nor is it the right solution.

The meme on this page is neither uncommon nor rare on social media. It

represents the view of many but it is very one-sided. It is as emotionally charged as any holding an opposing view. The sentiment expressed is divisive and serves no purpose other than to elevate the level of anger and hate.

Those who have a different view see the issue from compassion's lens. They are wont to quote: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). They play the heartstrings. But this too is one-sided and equally as emotionally charged.



**HERE'S A THOUGHT:  
If you don't want to get  
separated from your  
family when you cross  
the border illegally . . .  
DON'T CROSS THE  
BORDER ILLEGALLY!**

It is that irresistible force meeting that immovable object conundrum and there is no meeting of the minds because the minds are filled with concrete, set in stone and hardened steel.

I recently commented on this issue. Here is what I wrote:

My dear friend, what you say is so absolutely true. We must see Jesus in

every single person no matter what, and we are called to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. All absolutely true, no question. But—and there always seems to be a but, doesn't there—how?

There are an estimated 7.6 Billion people in the world and roughly 40% or 3 Billion people are living on a daily income of less than \$2 a day. 3 Billion! And each year another 80 million are added to that number. If you include those around the world whose average income is less than Mexico, our poor neighbor to the South, the number of people living in poverty increases to 5.6 Billion or a whopping 74% of the world's population, all God's children living in unbelievable, agonizing poverty, absolute squalor, under brutal dehumanizing conditions.

The U.S. population is currently around 326 Million, roughly 4.3% of the world population. The Bureau of Labor estimates that 65% are of working age or some 212 Million. Some quick but simple math and it seems that in order for each of us to do our part to eliminate world poverty, every employment age (16-64) person in the U.S. must be responsible for feeding and clothing 36 people now living in poverty throughout the world. So a solution might be to require the employable (whether employed, looking for employment, or of the age but no longer seeking employment) to double the incomes of their allotted 36 people living in poverty. After all, that is a mere \$2 a day (or \$72 for all 36) but that probably wouldn't go over well now, would it?

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**T**he U.S. currently allows approximately 1 Million people to immigrate each and every year and that number places and has placed an enormous strain on infrastructure, social services, employment, housing, and just about everything else you can think of. 1 million immigrants set against 5.6 Billion (increasing annually by 80 Million) want-to-be immigrants accomplishes nothing—its like throwing pebbles into the ocean in a vain attempt to fill it up—to reduce worldwide poverty, in fact the evidence would suggest that it only makes it worse.

Those which we take in through legal immigration processes are typically the more employable, better educated in their home countries. Granted, some are seeking asylum from oppression and fear but the vast majority of those legally immigrating are seeking better opportunities, opportunities which are not available in their home countries but are in the U.S. Their leaving results in a serious "brain drain" from their home countries and can only lead to worsening destitution for those left behind. Wouldn't it be more compassionate to stop all immigration and help the want-to-be immigrant help elevate his or her own country out of poverty? Of course it would, but that would not serve our self-serving servants as well as the current system.

Of course, the Wizards of Washington and their pet media mutts who bark upon command find it far more convenient to ignore the obvious; they mumble meaningless incantations, wave their phony wands, and conjure up solutions that are guaranteed to fail miserably and completely to address

the enormous fire-breathing dragon that threatens to consume us all. It is easy, far too easy, to admit there is a problem without wasting a single breath to explicate its precise nature and its root cause or causes, yet our vaunted wizards and their pets would have it no other way. To think, to reason, to gather objective and meaningful facts and to critically analyze them are beneath their self-ascribed dignity I suppose. Their compassion is only for themselves; they wear their hearts on their sleeves; they are like the Pharisee who stood and prayed with himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men" and yet, they are not only guilty of vanity and pride, but are precisely like other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and most definitely, tax collectors. .

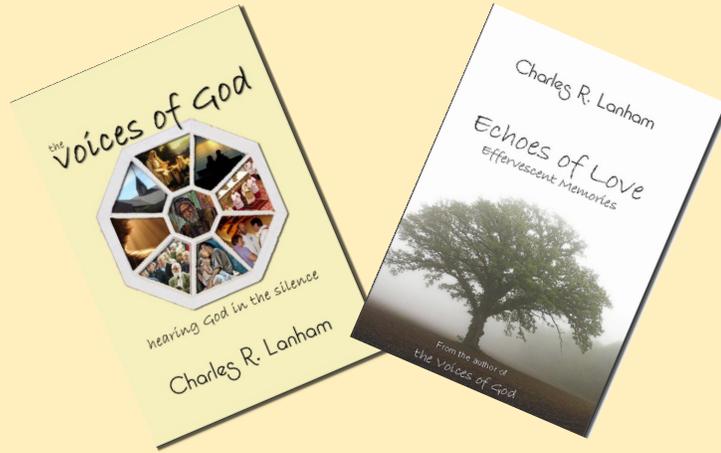
Of course, the Wizards of Washington and their pet media mutts who bark upon command find it far more convenient to ignore the obvious; they mumble strange incantations, wave their magic wands, and conjure up solutions guaranteed to fail miserably and to completely address the enormous fire-breathing dragon that threatens to consume us all. It is easy, far too easy, to admit there is a problem without wasting breath on explicating its precise nature and the root cause or causes, yet our vaunted wizards and their pets would have it no other way. To think, to reason, to gather objective and meaningful facts and to critically analyze them are beneath their self-ascribed dignity, no doubt.

**W**hat is missing in all the debate are those little things called facts and solutions. Read all the op-eds and letters to the editors, listen to all the moaning and gnashing of teeth from

all those who can do little more than spew hatred and vitriol at anyone who holds a different point-of-view and you will find nothing, absolutely nothing of substance, nothing but raw emotion and false argument. Everyone claims that our immigration system is broken but what and how it is broken is never explained. Everyone demands that our broken immigration system be fixed but they offer no ideas on how to fix what they refuse to define, It's broken so fix it. That is the sum and substance of their argument.

**I** firmly believe in all that Jesus asks of us, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. But Jesus never said we must do the impossible. Jesus never commanded us to do more than we are capable of doing. As for the poor, Jesus rightly tells us that the poor will always be with us and that "whenever you will, you can do good to them." Where does our Lord command us to eliminate poverty? Where does he call us to raise everyone from the depths of destitution? My heart breaks for all those in need and I will do what I can to help as many as my finite resources allow, but I and all the millions of others who have the means can never hope to eliminate poverty.

I try my best to follow God's commandments and to help those in need to the utmost of my ability to do so. I also know that I am not God and have no such lofty aspirations; I can only pretend to be who I am meant to be. I am but a poor creature of the One who made me and as Jesus said: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." We can only do so much, the rest is in God's hands.



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

**deaconscorner.org**

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