



A journal for restless minds

### A LIFE INTERRUPTED

*Pondering the imponderable*

### TO KNOW THAT HE IS GOD

*Transfiguration not transformation*

### 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.

## A Life Interrupted

*Pondering the imponderable*

**L**ent is a perfect time for reflection: forty days to ponder the imponderable, to dive deep below the still waters of the soul and find peace and serenity in the silence of God's grace.

This year, as with so many years that have so quickly passed, I find myself pondering what might have been — oh, not for myself — but for a life interrupted many years ago. He would be nearing forty-eight years of age now, and no doubt, like his sisters, would have made his parents proud of all he had achieved and of the man he had become. But, God had something else in mind for our only son, and I cannot help but believe His was the better mention.

Sandwiched between two beautiful girls, Charles Joseph was born too soon

and he died too soon. These days, medical advances would have granted him a strong probability for survival, to “live long as prosper,” as Spock would say. But that was not to be. For back then, the life of those born before their time—six weeks premature—were left but in the hands of God. And I'm ok with that, if not a bit envious, in that my only son has spent almost a half-century with His only Son.



And yet, I cannot help but wonder what he would be as a man, what he would have become, how different our lives would have been with him in the world.

**U**seless musings, I suppose, but then perhaps, not so much as one might propose. I know the wonders and the joys of fatherhood, of being present to all the precious moments of our daughters' lives, from conception, birth, infancy, school, marriage, and the births of their own children. Yet, while Charlie Joe's life was but a brief

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## To Know That He Is God

### *Transfiguration not transformation*

**T**ime too soon does swiftly pass, and life too short of time for living. Yet, St. Paul implores us to not lose heart, for as he writes: *"Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal"* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

It does not seem possible that all of six years have flown since my open-heart surgery, but six years it has been. And I thank God for all that he has done for me. I know it has been six years because six years ago I spoke before this community for the first time after surgery. Here is what I spoke of then:

It is so good to be back, serving at the table of our Lord. This past month has been a wonderful journey of recovery for me and I have to give thanks to God for watching over me. I am absolutely convinced, however, that He had little choice in the matter because He was inundated with so many prayers from so many people including all of you. So from the very bottom to the tippy-top of my repaired heart, thank you so much for all your prayers, support, and words of encouragement.

I must also tell you that the care I received from all of the doctors and

nurses was exceptional. I cannot say enough about their professionalism and commitment to providing me with the best of care. But I have to admit that for all the care and support and prayers that I received, I undoubtedly would not have recovered as quickly nor as easily without the constant and loving care I received from the absolutely best nurse in the world, Janet, my partner, companion, best friend, and wife of forty-four years. (A brief aside: Another reason I know it has been six years—it will be fifty years together this April 27th) What a wondrous gift God has given me; I certainly have done little to deserve her steadfast love and support for so long but I am and always will be eternally grateful.



**T**he Gospel for this second Sunday of Lent speaks of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. Jesus invites three of his closest friends to hike with him up a mountain where he is transfigured before them. It is clear from the reading that the apostles did not have a clue as to what was happening and I suspect

many of us might fall into that very same category.

**T**ransfiguration is not an easy word to grasp. Outside of the Bible the only recent use that I can recall is in the Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling, where the young wizards attend a *"Transfiguration"* class. But the class really isn't about transfiguration but rather transformation which is defined as changing from one thing into another; such as from a human into a dog or a cat. Jesus was not transformed, he was transfigured and in this case, transfiguration is seeing reality, seeing Jesus for who he really is, the Son of God. Jesus does not change form; he remains himself, it is only his divinity that is revealed.

Transfiguration is defined as a marked change in form or appearance; a metamorphosis. In school, long ago, I remember being taught that you cannot define a word using the word itself. For example, you cannot define *"transfiguration as the act of being transfigured."* That makes perfect sense to me. But I believe that you should also never use equally obscure, equally unknown words within a definition, words such as *metamorphosis*. The definition of *metamorphosis* is a change of physical form, structure, or substance especially by supernatural means. And *supernatural* is defined as departing from what is usual or normal especially so as to appear to transcend the laws of nature. So, if we really think about it, transfiguration simply means to change one's physical appearance in some unknown or abnormal way.

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At the beginning of his masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings* J.R.R. Tolkien introduces one of his main characters, the wizard, Gandalf the Grey. Later, after battling the Balrog for many days, Gandalf dies, only to be reborn, to be transfigured as Gandalf the White.

Mark does not describe the transfiguration of Jesus other than to say *"He was transfigured before them and his clothes became dazzling white..."* We can only imagine to what extent his physical appearance was changed.

We are reminded at various times throughout Sacred Scripture that no one can see the face of God and live. God is often described as a light so bright as to overwhelm our human senses. This causes us to pause and try to find some means of comprehending, of imagining the glory of God. Like the three blind men who are confronted with an elephant, a thing that they have never experienced, we grope blindly in order to come to conclusions beyond reason or fact.

How many of us have stood on the shores of a lake, such as our own beautiful Lake Tahoe, or a great sea or an ocean, watching the waves, admiring the beauty and vastness of the waters, and observed how wonderful a sight it was to behold. Yet, beneath the surface is a world, far more beautiful, more wondrous, more enchanting than one could ever imagine.

As a scuba diver, I have had the opportunity to dive in many places around the world, and yet I am always amazed at the hidden treasures that lie

just beneath the surface, the abundance and variety of sea life, the vivid colors, the quiet stillness, the ever changing dynamics of a world unknown and unseen by those who have never looked below the surface. I believe that, in a small way, when we consider the hidden beauty that surrounds us, we can begin to understand the awesome power, the glory, and the beauty that is God.

St. Ephraim, a 4th century Syrian was an ordained deacon in Mesopotamia (now Turkey.) He is considered a Doctor of the Church and was renowned as the lyre—or harp—of the Holy Spirit. He explained the Transfiguration of Jesus quite clearly and with great understanding.

He taught that to discover why Jesus was transfigured we must first see Jesus through the eyes of his apostles; to the apostles, Jesus was just a man, the son of Mary and Joseph. They saw Jesus as a normal human being, eating and drinking, working and sweating, growing tired and falling asleep. They did not know, they had no idea that Jesus was God.

In order for the apostles to comprehend his true nature Jesus took them up the mountain and was transfigured before their eyes. They heard the voice of God; they saw and believed that Jesus was truly divine, that he was truly the Son of God.

But why did Jesus feel it necessary to reveal his divinity? St. Ephraim further explains that He revealed his divinity, his mighty power, his divine glory to prepare the apostles for what was yet to come, to

help them understand the true nature of his impending passion, death, and resurrection. Jesus revealed his divine nature so that the apostles, as well as ourselves, could understand that it was not for any lack of power on his part that he allowed himself to be crucified by his enemies, but rather because he had freely chosen to suffer in that way for our salvation.

Looking out across the sea, above the surface, we cannot hope to grasp the richness of what lies beneath the waves. We are blind to the fullness of life that exists beyond our senses. Jesus was transfigured before his friends so that they could, and we can, if only for a moment, see beyond the surface, to see the beauty of his reality, to know that he was more than just a man, to know that he is God.

Amen.

Homily for the  
The Second Sunday of Lent (B)  
Genesis 22:1-2, 9A, 10-13, 15-18  
Romans 8:31B-34  
Mark 9:2-10

I apologize for repeating myself this week but I am writing this issue of *Colloqui* two weeks in advance of when it will be available.

As you read this, I am taking some much needed time off. My wife and I are currently on a cruise, sailing from Panama City, Panama, through the Panama Canal, toward our final destination, San Jose, Costa Rica. As I will be out of country and out of communication for much of the time, please forgive my transgression. God bless, Deacon Chuck.

few moments, he has and will always be, our angel, watching over us, loving us, touching our hearts as only angels are capable of doing. He has given us a lifetime of love and for that we are so very proud; thank God for little ones, for they are the pure of heart, theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and they shall surely see God.

**R**eflecting on the life interrupted of my only son, moves me to thoughts of other lives interrupted, especially those lives interrupted deliberately and cruelly before they can ever taste their first breath. I must admit to a certain bias, given that I firmly believe all life, no matter how brief, is infinitely precious; that every life is a gift, a unique and beautiful creation, molded and formed by the hands of God, worthy of our love and respect.

One of the most famous of Grecian statues is one known as the Venus de Milo, thought to be the work of Alexandros of Antioch. It is a stunningly beautiful work of art, admired by all those fortunate to have gazed upon it. Yet, the woman is without arms, clearly damaged goods. So why is she so admired? Shouldn't such hideous deformities demand complete dismemberment, utter destruction?

What difference does it make, the destruction of an inanimate, damaged work of art, a statue made of stone, and the callous, tortured killing of a defenseless human being? Where is the outrage over the wanton murder of so many infinitely valuable human lives. Have we become so heartless, so uncaring of our humanity that nothing

is sacred, nothing is sacrosanct, nothing is holy?

My heart cries out in grief for the loss of my only son, born too soon, alive outside his mother's womb for three brief days. How can I, how can anyone not grieve for all those who have been denied their inalienable right to live and breathe and grow and enjoy life? I weep for we the living, for what we have lost, for the price we must pay at the cost of their freedom to choose to live.

Recently, I came across a letter, printed in the National Catholic, from Russ Rooney of Rogers, Minnesota. It was profoundly moving and expressed so well:

*"Life is precious, and seeing or learning about the loss of human life can be heartrending.*

*One night while driving, I came across a burning car that had smashed into the bottom of an overpass bridge. The image, which could have been a scene from an action movie, seared into my memory.*

*While the car was blazing and the nearby grass burning, I observed emergency vehicles with sirens on their way to the surreal scene.*

*On a following day, I drove past the crash site and noticed burned grass and smoke stained concrete.*

*Not long after that, I drove past the bridge abutment and saw a cross with a young man's name on it, and then I knew someone had died as a result of the car crash.*

*I had a flashback of the fiery car, and*

*my heart filled with sadness.*

*Seeing the site where a young man lost his life made his departure personal for me, even though I had never known him, other than what I read on the internet. All I could do was pray and reflect on the loss.*

*There is another site that makes me think of tragedy. This place is not where one human loses a life, but literally thousands of nascent children every year. The death of each young human is euphemistically called a 'termination.'*

*When I pray in front of Planned Parenthood, I think of the woman who was told by a staff member that if a child survives an abortion, then someone there would likely 'break the baby's neck.'*

*Unlike the crash scene, the surroundings at Planned Parenthood are pleasant, and there is no indication from the outside, unless protesters are present, that death and terror loom inside.*

*Near the entrance of the building, there is a beautiful sculpture of flowers.*

*A much better image representing its grisly business would be a statue of the most horrific, blood-thirsty, evil creature imaginable.*

*If only people who walk past Planned Parenthood could penetrate the walls with their eyes and see the brutality of abortions.*

*Getting a close look at this slaughterhouse would forever change the views of the vast majority of people who are apathetic.*

*Seeing an abortion performed or the*

aftermath would make the death of nascent children personal.

**T**he evil act of abortion would be exposed — and the humanity of both the mother and child revealed.

Now, at the site of that deadly, fiery car crash, there is new sod where the grass was burned and new paint over the concrete that was smoke-stained. The different outside appearance of this site doesn't diminish the death of the young man.

And no matter how beautiful it may look on the outside of Planned Parenthood, that façade will never diminish the deaths of nascent children and the scars left with their mothers by the killers called abortionists.

It doesn't matter if it is the loss of one life or thousands of lives — the loss of innocent human life is always a tragedy."

In the same issue, Sister Mary Rose Reddy of Rochester, New Hampshire wrote a letter which noted the most compelling act of racist genocide in our time is the mass murders (abortions) of black American babies.

"Since the infamous Jan. 22, 1973, *Roe v. Wade* U.S. Supreme Court decision, which made abortion legal throughout the 50 states, more than 19 million black babies have died by abortion.

That is more than quadruple the number of enslaved blacks (3,953,760) recorded in the 1860 census.

As of Jan. 1, 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the black American population to be 74,500,000. This means that

the equivalent of more than 25% of the current black population in the United States has died by abortion since 1973. Roughly 900 black babies die by abortion in the United States every day!

Margaret Sanger, who founded Planned Parenthood (the largest abortion provider in the United States), once wrote, 'We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population' (letter to Dr. Clarence Gamble on Dec. 10, 1939). In fact, Sanger's organization targets minority populations.

A 2012 study by Protecting Black Life found that 79% of surgical abortion centers in the United States are within walking distance of minority neighborhoods.

Black children in the United States are five times more likely to be aborted than white children are. African-American women make up on 13% of the U.S. female population, but they account for more than 36% of the abortions (Mark Crutcher, *Life Dynamics*).

If you were alive in the 1860s, would you have stood with the abolitionists against slavery? Where will you stand today?"

And excellent question, sister. Where are the voices of those who speak for our African-American brothers and sisters? Why are there no angry voices demanding an end to this racial genocide? Isn't it time to stand up and shout with one voice, "We will not stand for this!"?

My heart breaks, my soul grieves, my whole being mourns for each angel created by God, killed by man. May God have mercy on us.

## 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.

### Society and Sanity

**Frank Sheed**

Sheed & Ward, New York

1953, 270 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.

[www.touchstonemag.com](http://www.touchstonemag.com)

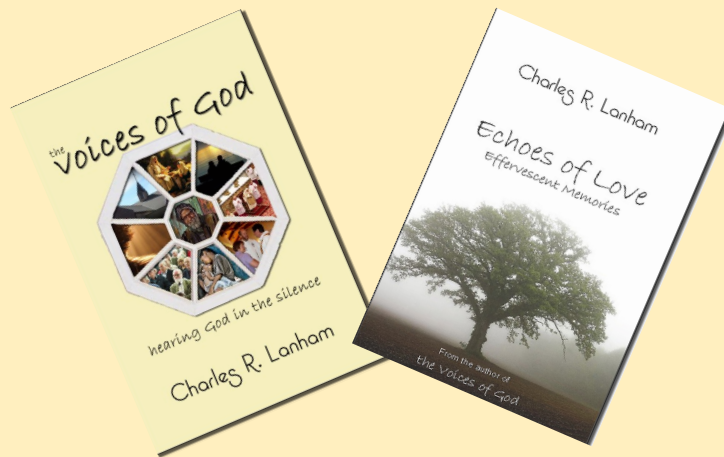
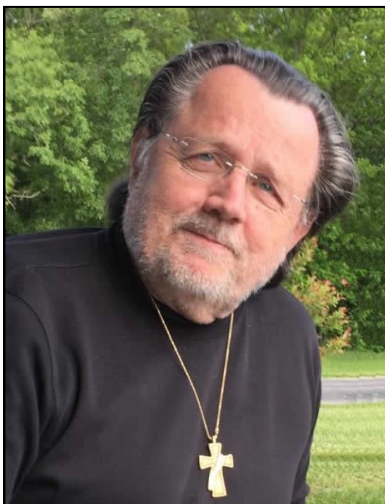
### Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith

Editor: Tim Ryland

Bi-Monthly.

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