



A journal for restless minds

ON BECOMING FERAL

The retrogression of modern man

RESPONDING TO HIS CALL

Répondez s'il vous plaît

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.

Call Of The Wild

The devolution of man

We humans, according to Judeo-Christian beliefs, are creatures, created by God in his image and likeness. While, as a species, we are often classified as animal—as opposed to vegetable or mineral—we are unique among the animal kingdom, owing to our ability to reason, to conceptualize, and to perceive abstractions. No other animal species has such cognitive abilities.

Evolutionists hold to the theory of human evolution, that is of modern man evolving from a lower form of animal, such as apes, which may or may not be the case. The Catholic Church considers the matter of our origins open for continued scientific study and debate because: whether we evolved from apes or not does nothing to deny God's creative genius.

Incapable of survival by his poor physical abilities, lacking the necessary survival instincts, man was seemingly assured of a short existence. But God had endowed man with something more, something more powerful, more deadly. God had given man a mind far beyond all other living creatures, with the ability to reason and rationalize, to plan and strategize, to think and conceptualize.

And then, God breathed into man his Spirit, gifting man a share in the divine life and immortality. Man alone has been created with an immortal soul, the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, that by which he is most es-

pecially in God's image; the soul signifies the spiritual principle in man.

The Catechism teaches: "*Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of*



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Responding To His Call

Répondez s'il vous plaît

Most of us have received at least one formal invitation in our lives; most likely to some significant event such as a wedding, ordination, banquet, or graduation. Generally these invitations have four letters written on them—RSVP—which stands for "*répondez s'il vous plaît*" or "*please respond.*"

Common courtesy dictates that when we receive such an invitation we should respond as soon as possible, indicating our acceptance or refusal, so that the host can ascertain how many will be attending. God calls each of us by name and invites us to do His will, but I wonder just how many of us ever RSVP to His invitation.

Many of us never hear His call because we surround ourselves with too much noise; too many voices—including our own—drown out any chance that we might have to hear God's voice. And like Elijah, we all too often expect God to call us in a loud voice like a strong and heavy wind or an earthquake or fire such as we have experienced most recently. But as you recall, God's voice was in a tiny whispering sound (1 Kgs 19:11-12) and that requires us to open our hearts and minds, to turn up our hearing aids, and to put ourselves in a place where we can hear His voice. But above all else we must listen, because when we listen we will hear His voice calling us to follow Him.

Sometimes we hear His call but

feel unworthy, not up to the task that He asks us to do. But, and this is very important, when God calls you should always answer. Remember when Jonah refused God's call the first time he ended up tossed overboard and into the belly of a whale. When God called him a second time, he never hesitated but answered the call immediately and both his life and those of Nineveh were transformed, changed forever (John 1:1-15).



Jesus called the apostles when He said "*Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.*"¹ Who were those who He called, were they the pillars of the community, the wealthy or powerful? No, they were ordinary people, without wealth or position, with no special education, no social or political standing; they were ordinary fishermen, who immediately accepted His call, dropped everything, and followed Him.

When we are called by God to serve we need to understand that He will never ask us to do more than what we are capable of doing nor should we believe that we have nothing to offer. If we place our trust in God He will guide us through the darkest times and show us the way.

When God calls it can be traumatic, it almost certainly will be life-changing. Often you may not be prepared or you may be reluctant to respond. You always have a choice; you may either ignore His call or open yourself to His will. The difficulty lies in realizing that if you say yes your life will be changed forever, you will be a new person, and the future is always unknown.

For me, I heard that tiny whispering sound for over thirty years but stubbornly refused to listen. It was always there but I was too busy with life to acknowledge God's call. What I did not realize then was that like Jonah, I had been tossed overboard into the belly of the beast; but unlike Jonah, rather than three days, it took thirty years before I found freedom and God's mercy. When God called a second time it was as if he took a baseball bat to the back of my head; and like Jonah, I did not refuse to hear His call the second time.

We must understand that God is outside of time, or as Peter wrote "*With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.*"² What to us is a very long time is no time at all to God. He is infinitely patient, willing to give us all the time in the world to respond to Him. What we must do, all that we are required to do is to place our trust in God, know that He loves us, and that He will give us all the gifts and grace we need to do His will.

Accepting God's call is seldom

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Easy; there will always be obstacles and difficulties placed before us. But as long as we place ourselves in His hands, we can be assured that He will be there to see us through the rough spots.

After ordination six years ago, I became a new person. I truly no longer recognize who I was before. I cannot explain it, except to say that I was transformed by the Holy Spirit into this new me. I often feel guilty in all the joy I receive in serving Him in such a poor way. I only regret that I did not listen when He first began to call me so long ago. All the joy that I have missed simply because I refused to listen; I failed to place my trust in Him, believing that I was in control, that I was the master of my own destiny.

We have this natural inclination to believe that when things are going well it is of our own choosing; but when difficult times arise we look to God and ask why? We are quick to believe that God has deliberately and intentionally placed obstacles in our path and we want Him to remove them so that we can continue blissfully on our way. What we fail to understand is that God's path is the easy one; that it is we who create the difficulties along the path by not putting our faith in God and giving control of our lives over to Him.

Not long after ordination, I was diagnosed with a serious health issue which required open-heart surgery. While I was assured that I had a good heart, some of the plumbing was in need of major repair. This would re-

quire splitting me open, stopping my heart, replacing a portion of my aorta with a piece of garden hose, and then attempting to restart my engine with an ignition system that has only been used once, some seventy-odd years ago.

To say that I was a wee bit nervous would be an understatement. After weeks of restless and sleepless nights filled with bouts of panic attacks, I served at a communion service. It was difficult for me to focus on the service until, at the responsorial psalm, we proclaimed "*In God I trust...*" Upon saying those words all my anxiety and fears left me. I knew that God had a plan for me; that I was not in control, He was. I realized then that He had waited patiently for me to listen to His call and to "*répondez s'il vous plaît*" and that what would be was for him alone to know. Amen.

Homily for the
The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
1 Cor 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

1. Mark 1:17.
2. 2 Peter 3:8.

The Deacon writes:

The homily this week has been adapted from a homily given six years ago, on January 22, 2012, just one week before open-heart surgery. Amazingly, I have done a communion service each year when that response has appeared in the liturgy.

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

For 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

Touchstone

A Journal of Mere Christianity

Editor: James M. Kushiner

Bi-Monthly.

www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith

Editor: Tim Ryland

Bi-Monthly.

www.catholic.com

material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day" (CCC §364).

It is of and in his nature to question, to yearn to know, to seek understanding; of all living creatures, man alone asks "*Who am I?*" and "*Who made me?*"; only man searches for the meaning and purpose of his own existence; only man dares to fathom how he came to be; only man is capable of acknowledging his existence as not his own but by and through the infinite power of a Creator, God.

Throughout the ages since man came to be, man's awareness of his dependent nature, his creaturehood has waxed and waned. In a sense, his willingness to acknowledge and accept his absolute dependence on a Creator God has followed an irregular but cyclical arc; from steadfast devotion to obstinate antagonism, from reverent awe to irreverent rejection.

Sociological cycle theory argues that history and societies generally follow a repetitive pattern of behavior and beliefs, oscillating between extremes over varying spans of time. The Bible is replete with such periods of vacillation; some lasting for short periods of time—the fall of our first parents being such an example—others spanning hundreds, even thousands of years. It is as if man's evolution suffers recurring devolution; gains in

knowledge and understanding result not in humble gratitude for the gifts we have received but in hubris—arrogance and conceit. God has been found wanting and unnecessary, for man has evolved beyond the necessity for God.

What is lost when God is tossed is any consideration for the immeasurable value of the human person—that unity of spirit and matter, soul and body which together define the human. Without the spirit—the soul—the body is but an empty vessel whose value is nothing more than the sum of its constituent parts. Without God, man devolves, of no more value than any other living thing; subject to forces he cannot control, mere grist to be ground and used, then discarded without regard or notice.

This, then, is the nadir fast approaching—for this we pray—the pivot point upon which man will once again acknowledge and accept his existential dependence on his Creator God. The devolution of man continues, for how long, no human creature can yet determine, but that it will come to an end is certain, just as sure as God exists.

Over seventy years ago, J.R.R. Tolkien created a fantasy world known as Middle-earth filled with marvelous creatures, great beauty, and magnificent heroes; as with all great novels, the good and beautiful were threatened by encroaching darkness, death, and evil forces bent on dominating all of Middle-earth. The Lord of the Rings is an epic saga, written in three volumes, and is one of the best-selling novels

ever written, with over 150-million copies sold.

Beyond mere novelty, it is a carefully crafted allegorical tale of the world and times in which we now live and the ever-changing cycle of life. It reminds the reader that what is good will always overcome the bad; this is not a measure of power and might but a recognition and understanding of their natures.

Goodness exists because God exists and God is the quintessence of all goodness. There is but one God and he is Goodness; there is no other god or gods, no god who is evil exists, therefore, evil cannot and does not exist.

That there is evil in the world is easily discerned. So, if evil does not exist, what is it that we know to be evil? Evil does not exist, it is but the absence of good. Just as cold does not exist, but is the absence of heat, or darkness, the absence of light, so it is with evil. What we call "*evil*" has no ontological meaning; ontology is the study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality. That which does not exist can hold no claim on being or reality.

If this is so, then it follows that evil, the absence of good, is not God, who is Good. When God is denied or dismissed as a mythological figment of one's imagination, goodness is denied, leaving in its absence, evil.

Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*"¹

The Nicene Creed, further emphasizes and explains what Jesus said to the Pharisees: *"God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, ..."* If God is Light, the dark is not God.

The light which allows us to see the world around us is produced by the generation of photons: the more photons created, the brighter the light; fewer photons, the dimmer the light. Our ability to "see" at night is due to the presence of some small number of photons, relative to daylight. There are no "dark" photons; total darkness is therefore, the total absence of photons.

Just as the intensity of light can be changed by changing the number of photons generated, the level of goodness can be altered by our devotion to and our relationship with God. The closer our relationship with our Creator God, who is Good, the more our souls are saturated with goodness. Whenever we move away from the Source of all Goodness, whenever we place our self above and beyond God, goodness necessarily fades, leaving the emptiness of evil behind.

We believe sin to be an offense against God. It is that, but perhaps, there is more to it than that. One way of better understanding the effect of sin might be to imagine sin as a dimmer switch on the soul. The more frequent and graver our sins, the lower we turn the dimmer, reducing the amount of goodness we can generate. At some point, sin can become so grave, the dimmer shuts off all goodness, leaving only evil behind.

We are witnesses to the reality of

the consequences of sin; all are sinners: some have their dimmer switches set to maximum, allowing Goodness to shine with the Light that comes from God and is God; some have turned their dimmers so low no Goodness can be found; most have theirs set somewhere in between.

All contribute to the level of Goodness in the world, some more or less than others, but all are accountable for the measure of it. All sin diminishes the whole of mankind; it is cumulative. Sin tarnishes and stains the soul, dimming the Light by denying all that is Go(o)d.

The effects of sin are so painfully obvious; we can neither escape nor hide from them, and yet we can and must do our part to increase the intensity of Goodness that surrounds us.

First and foremost, we must understand the nature of evil. Unless, and until, we are willing to recognize and accept evil for what it is—the absence of good—and how each owns a share in the continuing decline of goodness, the pivot point will never be reached.

It takes not a genius to know where Goodness has been denied:

The mass murders of innocent unborn human lives exemplifies the devolution of man and the denial of man's existential dependency on his Creator God.

Those who advocate for a "woman's right to choose" have replaced God with themselves, making of themselves, graven images, to whom they idolize and worship, thus profaning God and sinning against the first commandment, *"I am the Lord your God; you*

shall have not strange gods before me," and for those who chose to have an abortion, the fifth commandment: *"Thou shalt not kill."*

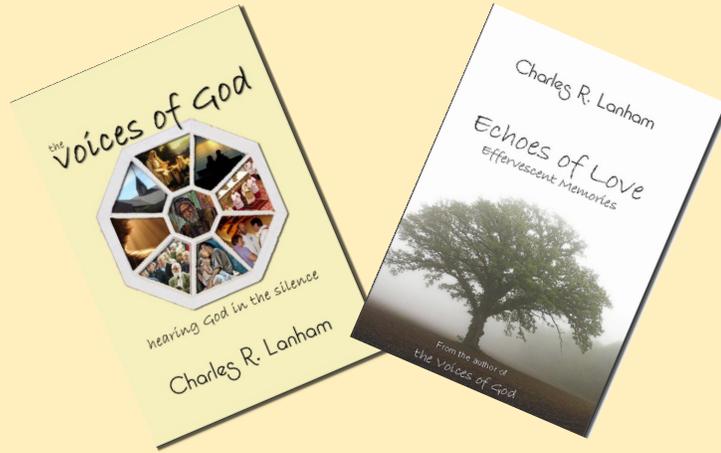
Fundamentally, pro-choice is a crafty euphemism, a not-so-subtle means used to deny the undeniable authority and existence of God and the immeasurable value of the human person, which God has created.

Any act or action which denies or profanes the dignity of the human person is wrong and contributes to the devolution of man and the diminishing of the value of God's highest creation. When we fail to speak out in objection to those who deny our humanity and our God, we are complicit in their sin, we contribute to the dimming of Goodness. To placidly and silently allow the evil that is before us to persist is to grant it meaning, to give it power which it neither deserves nor holds claim.

All sin can be distilled into some form and fashion of idolatry. Either we love God with all our being or we idolize ourselves by making ourselves to be like God. The first sin has served as a template for all other sins. *"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" (Genesis 3:4-5).*

The greater our love of God and the closer our relationship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the greater the Goodness will overshadow and deny its absence, which is evil.

1. John 8:12.



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

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

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

<http://deaconscorner.org>.

Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at

deacon.chuck@deaconscorner.org

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4742 Cougar Creek Trail

Reno, Nevada 89519