



A journal for restless minds

## AN UNREMEMBERED LIFE

*A life not worth living*

## CATHOLICISM À LA CARTE

*Choosing what to believe (Continued)*

## ET QUOD HOC ...

*This and that ...*

## 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.

## An Unremembered Life

*A life not worth living*

Sad the thought: living without hope; desperation so profound one satisfies the darkness of the soul with fifteen minutes of *infamy* over Warhol's fifteen minutes of fame. So many empty lives now searching for a jot of meaning to their poor existence; lacking hope, they obtain some brief respite lashing out at innocence.

It is all too easy, this game we play with such unreasoned abandon, to stand among the riotous throng and lay claim to self-righteous indignation derived from self-inflicted ignorance. Why, the reasonable person is wont to ask, is it no longer permissible to discriminate, to hold differing points of view, to simply agree to disagree, to give as well as take?

Dissent is no longer permissible, freedom to speak one's mind restricted

to agreement with the absurd. Tribal warfare has turned normalcy on its head; either you are with me—except, you cannot be since you dare challenge my opinion—or you must be consequently dismissed, denigrated and summarily categorized as racist, bigoted, hateful, phobic, maniacal, misogynistic, or perhaps all of the above or a thing yet unspoken.



Reason usurped by madness; all rational thought supplanted by raw emotion and vagrant feelings; culture corrupted, language babbled, and God denied. Life disenfranchised from all meaning, devoid of purpose; morality and conscience set aside on

capricious whims, with neither rhyme nor reason, yet stridently demanded by unruly mobs.

The sound of silence overwhelmed, resounded by angry voices spewing vitriol and hatred for any incongruent thought not their own. Voices crying out in anger, for

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justice where no injustice has been served, for defending the indefensible, for righting where no wrongdoing has been done, for undeserved compassion, for understanding the incomprehensible.

**T**here is a slippery slope upon which we have been sliding; with ever increasing velocity we descend into obliviousness, no longer wanting or caring to know what lies before us, enjoying nothing more than the thrill of now. Like giddy schoolchildren on recess we rejoice in our release from the stultifying limits which unduly bind us. Granted an inch, we take a mile and laugh at the ease with which we take it, never mindful of the cost.

Small steps compound, inexorably growing into larger ones, each increment insignificant in itself, each too easily deemed justified, each rationalized by “caring” and “compassionate” hearts.

Early advocate for birth control, Marie Stopes, wrote in her book, “*A New Gospel to All Peoples*,” published in 1922, that God had told her sexual union was not for procreation but for pleasure, that couples should use the best means of birth control “*placed at man’s service by Science*.” Along with her counterpart in the U.S., Margaret Sanger, she spent much of her life promoting birth control, although she never condoned abortion as Sanger did.

But the first small step was instilling in the minds of many the idea that sexual union was for pleasure, not pro-

creation. Controversial nearly a century ago, today, sexual union—in today’s parlance, what are crassly termed a hookup—is now considered little more than a compatibility test to determine whether someone is worth liking. Procreative sexual congress has become an odd archaic misnomer, an unfortunate byproduct of a pleasurable experience, easily avoided through contraceptive means or should procreation result, various abortifacients (including surgical abortion) are readily available.

Small steps, small steps.

Changing the tune from classical to popular has corrupted far more than the melody. It has warped and twisted the mind, hardened the heart, and sullied the soul; it has damaged senses and the nature of our humanity. Pleasure is but a fleeting passion, lasting only for a moment, such passion quickly fades to wanting; pleasure demands nothing, wants nothing, loves nothing, for it is its own reward. Commitment, obligation, responsibility, love, devotion, selflessness inevitably give way to pleasure.

**W**ithout purpose beyond pleasure, marriage fades into bleak oblivion, procreation becomes dully productive, gender becomes self-definable and meaningless, sexuality turns pornographic, humanity devolves to unthinking animal, and inevitably, life loses purpose, value, and meaning.

Small steps. Small steps.

Here now, let us once again pause and take up again the aside begun a few issues ago.

## Catholicism À La Carte

### *Choosing what to believe*

(The paragraph below is reprinted from last week for continuity and to better understand what follows. It is the final paragraph in a longer article written for Catholic Answers under the subject of Birth Control and can be read in its entirety at <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/birth-control>.)

*There is no way to deny the fact that the Church has always and everywhere condemned artificial contraception. The matter has already been infallibly decided. The so-called “individual conscience” argument amounts to “individual disobedience.”*

**I**would redirect the reader to the final paragraph above. Please take careful note of what it states: “*The Catholic Church has always and everywhere condemned artificial contraception.*” There is nothing ambiguous with that statement; contraception is condemned. Even more damning is the fact that “*The matter has already been infallibly decided.*” It cannot be altered, modified, changed, deleted, or ignored. For Catholics this means that dissenting opinions are without merit.

As for the statements that follow concerning the opinions held by many Catholics: “*And many Catholics, especially women disagree with you. Many of them are in church with you on Sundays. It would be wise on the part of our church to respect their voice on the subject since it can be morally justified much easier than yours. Arguments against contraception are fine with many people even if they do not make sense because they can be justifiably ignored,*” we now find ourselves back to my opening statements. Here I would argue the writer has proved my case concerning the current state of the Catholic mind.

I will admit to complete agreement with the first sentence, with one exception. Yes—*sadly* many Catholics and almost certainly a large proportion of Catholic women disagree with—here is my one exception—the *doctrine of the Catholic Church* on birth control and contraception. I can only respond by asking, “*So what is your point?*” Far too many Catholics hold the mistaken notion that the Catholic Church is a social society whose members are free to decide what they believe and what they might choose to ignore. How many ways can I say “WRONG?”

While many may agree with “*Arguments against contraception are fine with many people even if they do not make sense because they can be justifiably ignored,*” their agreement does not change the facts. If the “*Arguments against contraception*” don’t make sense to them, Catholics cannot simply agree to disagree and ignore doctrine, especially doctrine declared infallible. To do so constitutes a deliberate and willful act of disobedience and a mortal sin.

God gave us the Ten Commandments and his only Son added to them. These are obligations placed upon each of us. They are not up for debate. They are required standards of moral behavior given by God to man and must be obeyed without amendment or equivocation. This should be a no brainer. They are God’s laws not man’s.

So, what part of “*commandment*” do you not understand? God didn’t say, “*Thou shalt not kill unless you really*

*feel like it.*” God didn’t say, “*Keep holy the Sabbath unless you are too hung over or tired or whatever.*” God didn’t say, “*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife unless she is just too hot to handle.*” The last time I looked God was very clear on the ‘*shalls*’ and ‘*shall nots*’; I cannot recall a single ‘*unless*’. Please let me know when you find one.

The next few sentences in the dissenting email I choose to leave for another discussion as they are not directly germane to the issue of contraception and they read much too much like a diatribe or rant of personal opinion rather than a reasoned point of discussion. “*What cannot be ignored is an argument that equates contraception with the extinction of species. Given that fact that every living thing on this planet is a gift from God, it is dangerous to imply that it is ok to over populate the planet to the point of extinction of any living creature. Wars are fought and ecosystems destroyed because of selfishness and competition for natural resources directly related to over population. Contraception could be considered an effective tool against that kind of greed.*”

I have already provided a response to the next sentence so I will skip to the remaining sentences of the email: “*There is no law, natural or otherwise that says an expression of love should lead to unintended pregnancies. And there is nothing paradoxical about your argument. It is simply misguided.*” What shall I say here that I haven’t already said before? Allow me to reiterate: conflating sexual intercourse with “*an expression of love*” is “*simply misguided*” and wrong.

Most of us who have lived more than say forty or fifty years can recall our mother asking, “*If your friend told you to jump off a building would you do it?*” A rhetorical question for sure but the message was clear: just because everyone else is doing something doesn’t mean it is the right thing to do.

We have, as a society, forgotten or ignored that message when it comes to sex. We have turned it into a recreational sport. We have conveniently forgotten its holy purpose, its only purpose: procreation. The deep and abiding love engendered by a man and a woman united in the bonds of holy matrimony and faithfully expressed by their mutual giving of self to the other in the intimacy of the conjugal act has been lost or deemed irrelevant. Love has been divorced from sex, leaving those who would engage in fornication performing nothing more than private porn.

No one, including Jesus, has ever promised that the road to heaven would be easy. Quite to the contrary, for Jesus said that we must first pick up our cross and follow him. And that will always be a heavy burden but shouldn’t heaven be worth any burden?

As Catholics we have a clear choice: we can choose to accept and live as God desires or we can choose to delude ourselves into believing that what God has ordained man can justifiably ignore. Catholics, who choose to delude themselves, who act with deliberate ignorance and willful disobedience in contravention to the doctrine

of the church and the natural law of God, place themselves in a state of moral sin, thereby dramatically increasing the risk of losing any opportunity to spend an eternity with God in heaven.

At the very least, anyone so inclined should seriously consider the cost and then ask whether it is truly worth the risk.



## Et Quod Hoc ...

*This and that ...*

Given the rather quaint notion many hold of the sanctity of sacramental marriage these days, I find myself in a rather odd position, having been marvelously joined in holy wedlock for precisely fifty years to my partner, my soulmate, my one-and-only spouse, and the love of my life, Janet. Given also, the brevity upon which far too many marriages last in the current day, the longevity of our marriage only goes to punctuate the point made earlier: our secular, hedonistic culture holds little or no value for human life, for long-term, life-long commitments, or to living as our God, who created us, intended. It is to God we should be offering our thanks and praise not ourselves, and yet, we have made pleasure our chief pursuit, our sole purpose and lost our humanity and our souls in doing so.

A recent Sunday cartoon (Doonesbury, April 22, 2018) appeared to capture the current trend toward lowering the bar on Christian values to accommodate those who are uncomfortable with the “unduly” restrictive and proscriptive nature of Christian doctrine. A minister behind the pulpit makes this announcement to his congregation:

*“There has been some confusion among evangelicals as to what currently constitutes sin in the eyes of the church. So to clarify, we now condone the following conduct: lewdness, vulgarity, profanity, adultery and sexual assault. Exemptions to Christian values also include greed, bullying, conspiring, boasting, lying, cheating, sloth, envy, wrath, gluttony and pride. Others TBA. Lastly, we’re willing to overlook biblical illiteracy, church non-attendance and no credible sign of faith.”*

In the final frame congregants show their appreciation, with one stating “Lovin’ the lower bar, pastor!” while another says, “Me, too. I feel like a freak-in’ saint now!” to which the pastor simply says, “Enjoy.”

Father Hugh Barbour writes in a thought provoking article (Contraception and Spiritual Struggle, Catholic Answers Magazine, May-June 2018, pp. 20-24) that “Human procreation has everything to do with the immense struggle between God and the Evil One over the destiny of the human race.” He points out that man’s rational nature requires a proper bodily complexion and a refined reason, that the two go together, and that because of this deep union all activities that flow from

our nature are necessarily meant to be both bodily and rational. This further means that the most fundamental activity of human nature is procreation.

As a reminder, he goes on to write that according to God’s original design, human procreation was meant to be **both a bodily and a rational activity**. Man was not meant to simply imitate animal instinct in procreative activities but to use personal, rational judgment in seeking out the action and union of procreation.

All that beautiful design flew out the window with the fall. As Father Barbour explains:

*“The envy of the fallen angels sought to disrupt this order by successfully tempting our first parents as depicted in Genesis, not only in the first chapters but also throughout the whole book, introduced irrationality and disorder in the procreation of the human race. The demons were pleased to make the very means of procreating the beautiful bodily and rational nature of man, made male and female in God’s image, into an occasion of the loss of reason and the misuse of human freedom and right feeling. Let us keep in mind that, in the traditional patristic teaching, the increase of the human race was precisely to replace and even exceed the number of the angels who fell from grace. This provides a motive for the demons’ intense spiritual envy and hatred of human procreation.”*

*All the Fathers without exception, and St. Thomas with the greatest precision and insight, teach that before the fall—or if there had been no fall of man at all—human sexual intercourse would have been without irrational passion and completely*

*within the control of reason. Now, St. Thomas makes it clear that this means that intercourse in that unfallen state would have been more pleasurable than it is now, because it would have been compatible with the use of our higher powers.*

*It is supremely irrational to exclude procreation deliberately, the very end of marital intercourse, from the act of marital union. Yes, the union of man and woman in sexual relations is meant to be pleasurable, but according to reason—that is, according to the essence of the human nature—they exist to bring about through procreation.”*

There is much more to be gleaned from Father Barbour’s insightful article. I encourage everyone to take the time to read and absorb all that he has to say.

**E**. Christian Brugger in a blog for the *National Catholic Register* (April 26, 2018) discusses the moral implications and civil overreach that have been the central focal points in *The Agonizing Case of Alfie Evans*. His post can be read in its entirety at <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/christianbrugger/the-agonizing-case-of-alfie-evans>.

For those who may be unaware of this particular case: Alfie Evans is a terminally ill infant suffering from a degenerative neurological disorder that has left him in a semi-vegetative state. He is currently a patient at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool, England where doctors have decided that it is in Alfie’s “best interests” to remove him from life support and fur-

ther feeding—in other words, to allow him to die. The Italian government has granted Alfie citizenship in order for him to obtain further medical treatment in Italy which Alfie’s parents wish to do. Neither the hospital nor the British government would incur any expenses as a result of such a move. The doctors and the hospital have denied the parents their right to take Alfie to Italy, the British Court of Appeal has upheld a ruling preventing Alfie’s parents from taking their son for treatment to Italy, thus overruling the moral duty of Alfie’s parents.

Answering whether taking Alfie off of life support was in his “best interests” Brugger writes, “*I think referring to the category of best interests to justify the hospital’s decision is misplaced. Since it is never better for a person to die than to remain alive—since bodily life... is always good, and death is the absence of that good—it is never in someone’s interests to cease to exist in this world. Therefore, use of that term indicates the decision-makers are operating from an ideologically influenced “quality-of-life” scale for determining the value of Alfie’s life.*”

Was the hospital justified in refusing to allow Alfie’s transport to Rome, given all expenses would be covered by private funds? “*No. ... The hospital’s obstinacy, therefore, and the repeated denials of redress by the courts have been, in my opinion, immoral.*”

What this case elicits is the ever eroding value of human life, the odious idea of a “*life not worth living,*” and the growing disdain for weakness and disability.

Small steps. Small steps.

## 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

**The Closing of the American Mind**  
*Allan Bloom*  
Simon & Schuster  
1987, 402 pages.

**The Demon in Democracy**  
*Ryszard Legutko*  
Encounter Books  
2016, 182 pages.

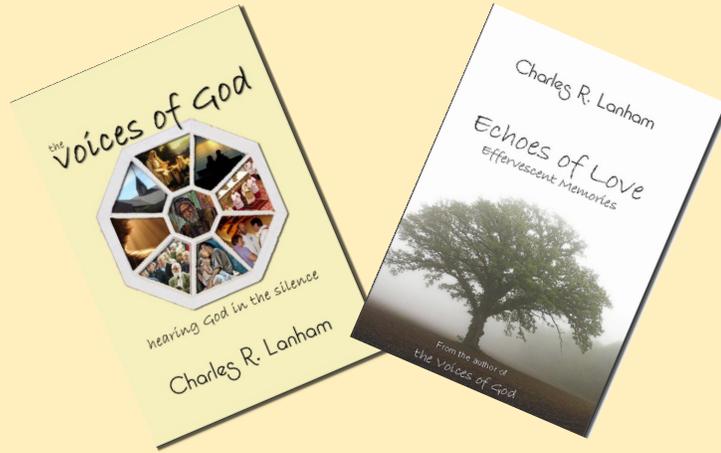
**Strangers in a Strange Land**  
*Charles J. Chaput*  
Henry Holt and Co.  
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

### PERIODICALS

**First Things**  
Institute on Religion and Public Life  
Editor: R. R. Reno  
Ten Issues per year.  
[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

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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>**.

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