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A journal for restless minds

# Colloquī *: to discuss*

## **The Dogdays of Dogma**

*The winter of discontent*

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## **A Catholic Moment**

*Irreligion, Agnosticism and Atheism*

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## **Deacon's Diner**

*Food for a restless mind*

# The Dogdays Of Dogma

*The winter of discontent*

**A**NY PERSON WHO WOULD CLAIM NO adherence to dogmata is either a fool, a liar, or both for in doing so they declare their allegiance to the most rigid of dogma; derived from the Greek *dogma* (δόγμα) the word literally means "that which one thinks is true" which, should one bother to *think* but for an instant, proves rather dogmatically the foolishness of their position. The Latin word for dogma is also, oddly enough, *dogma*, meaning a philosophical tenet or principle, but that is perhaps too deep a meaning for anyone who has a severe allergy toward wisdom.

Mark Twain dubbed it the "awful German language," but it does have its uses, and one of them is to teach us that "history" has two dimensions: there is *Historie* (what happened) and there is *Geschichte* (what the things that happened mean). The latter helps get the former into focus. The former grounds the latter in reality. Facts are important, but history is never just a question of "the facts," for "the facts" are always read through an interpretive framework.<sup>1</sup>

So George Weigel begins in his latest effort to refocus the history of the Catholic Church over the last 250 years. As he suggests, "Think of what follows as akin to *emblemata*: those framed mosaic arrangements, often telling a story from history or mythology, ..." rather than another *complete* recounting of Church history in the minutiae as so many have done before.

History or *Historie* in every sense of the word is wedded inseparably with dogma; it is in how truthfully what happened is interpreted, *Geschichte*, and in how religiously objective truth, *dogma*, is accepted and adhered that will always determine the strength of their bond to reality. This is not new stuff, unfortunately, every age is and has been replete with those who would deny the facts, deny reality, deny the truth to their own advantage. Prophetic voices who have warned of such historical and dogmatic

marital fractures throughout the centuries are too often without honor in their own country, and among their own kin, and in their own homes (Mark 6:4), most often they are vilified, then crucified for speaking truth counter to prevailing ideologies. To illustrate one such prophet, Weigel writes of perhaps the most outstanding Italian Catholic thinker of the nineteenth century, Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797-1855).

An intellectual polymath with an intense spiritual life, as well as a priest determined to engage modernity in order to convert it, Rosmini challenged both the reactionaries who denied any development in the life or self-understanding of the Church and the secular liberals who saw no value in the past. His philosophical work aimed to demonstrate that every branch of human knowledge developed from within, by growing "out" from fundamental, unchanging principles.<sup>2</sup>

"A new philosophy generally means in practice the praise of some old vice."

~G. K. Chesterton

**T**o understand why Rosmini's views were so vilified, one must look to the history of the eighteenth century. This was the age of "the historical tsunami of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the struggle to remake Europe after 1815." What few today outside of honest historians understand is that for more

than a millennia the throne and the Church had been inseparably linked—the Papal States, which consisted of much of the modern Italian regions of Lazio, Marche, Umbria and Romagna and portions of Emilia, were under the temporal power of the pope, in addition to his ecclesiastical primacy. Throughout much of Europe, the Catholic Church was tightly woven into the monarchical governments of the numerous kingdoms, states and principalities.

Europe in the nineteenth century also experienced the beginning of a secularization process that would eventually overwhelm most of the western portion of the continent in the twentieth century and early twenty-first. The nineteen-century process involved a kaleidoscope of social and intellectual changes and their effects, ranging from the dismantling of the old political regimes to the emergence of an urban proletariat to the conceptual revolutions underway in history, and philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

Rosmini rejected the French Revolution and the rationalist Enlightenment, but “he also sought to rescue what he took to be their deepest and truest aspirations for public life, detaching the ideals from the destructive political and intellectual forms they often took and putting those aspirations on a firmer foundation.” In his mind the Church required a rescue operation, one that would allow the Church to be free to be itself. “In Rosmini’s view, a Church freed from State patronage would fulfill that evangelical mission better than one tied to the apron strings of public authority.” This view was clearly contra to both the public and ecclesiastical temperaments of the mid-nineteenth century.

Rosmini’s most enduring work (and his most daring, given the ecclesiastical temper of the times) was *Le cinque piaghe della Chiesa* (The Five Wounds of the Church), written in 1832 but only published in 1848—after which it was, without explanation, put on the Vatican’s Index of Forbidden Books. In it, Rosmini analyzed the defects of the Italian Catholicism of his day by analogy to the five wounds of Christ on the cross. **The first wound was the gap between clergy and laity in the Church’s worship, which he believed to be caused by poor catechesis of the people, who too often worshiped out of habit rather than conviction.** [emphasis added]

Strange how history so often repeats itself, as Santayana once observed “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” That sentiment aspires to common sense and is difficult to argue against but Mark Twain, always the contrarian shared a different opinion when, dripping with sarcasm, he wrote “history doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” Nearly two-centuries have passed since Rosmini wrote of the dismal failure of clergy to catechize the laity, more than one-hundred eighty years since he noted that Mass attendance had too often become just a dry repetitive habit, faith without understanding, without knowing who to worship and why, without true conversion or conviction. They did so to meet social expectations or simply because they had always done so, in a word they were simply going through the motions, never in it for God. God had become a diminutive imaginary elf easily ignored, a fairy tale told by an idiot signifying nothing. Fast forward to today, is it not the same poor catechesis of a people who worship out of habit rather than conviction?

The second wound was closely related to the first: **the sorry state of the priesthood, which he attributed to an inadequate seminary education and formation that produced men unfamiliar with the Scriptures, uninterested in evangelism, and too susceptible to the temptations of a worldly lifestyle.** [emphasis added]

Once again, the similarities between then and now are too striking to ignore. The scandals that have plagued the Church in recent memory can be directly attributed to the poverty of seminary education and priestly formation. Rosmini saw it then much as it is seen today.

The third wound, which Rosmini compared to the wound in the heart of Christ, involved the Church’s bishops: **their lack of effective communion with each other, their distance from their priests and people, and their lack of a sense of responsibility for the unity of the body of Christ.** [emphasis added] The fourth and fifth wounds were the bishop-as-political-leader and the bishop-as-property-manager, roles Rosmini thought incompatible with the bishop’s consecration as a spiritual shepherd.

It should be obvious by now why *The Five Wounds of the Church* was immediately upon publication placed on the Index of Forbidden Books. Rosmini struck too close to the heart of many in powerful positions within the Church’s ecclesial hierarchy. In a sense he was ahead of his time, even though what he wrote was largely accurate; the Church was simply unprepared and unwilling to accept his indictments and make the necessary changes.

Despite decades of vilification, primarily by Jesuits, his reputation for holiness was such that he would eventually be beatified under Pope Benedict XVI in 2007. Nine years earlier, in the 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), Pope John Paul II saluted Rosmini as an important teacher of the Church, a prophet ahead of his time who had helped build a bridge between philosophy and scriptural revelation.<sup>4</sup>

Much as nature cycles through her seasons so has humanity cycled through periodic, often spasmodic, fluctuations in temperament and temperature. George Carlin made perhaps one of the most accurate weather forecasts of all time when he quipped, “The weather will continue to change on and off for a long, long time.” Mark Twain is often attributed with saying that “If you don’t like the weather now, just wait a minute and it will change.”

Minds and memories are much like the wind, just wait a minute and they will change direction. Thus, the importance and absolute necessity for an accurate recording of *historie* and with its *geschichte*; even more so with Church *dogma* and the divine truths which they teach us. Short memories and unrestrained appetites have led and continue to lead many Catholics astray; all too easily ignored and quickly forgotten is the immutable Divine Law and the unchangeable dogma defined and taught through the apostolic and magisterial offices of the Catholic Church for two millennia.

The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these (CCC §88).

There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith (CCC §89). Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ. In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith (CCC §90).

By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (Magisterium), ... receives ... the faith, once for all delivered to the saints.... The People, unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life (*Lumen Gentium* §12, CCC §93).

Modern minds are easily discomfited, living in a winter of discontent, never satisfied with material possessions and disordered appetites. As J. D. Flynn, editor-in-chief of the Catholic News Agency, recently wrote:

Contemporary confusion ... today stems from conflating appetite with identity. We are more than the sum of

our appetites. And our appetites—however strongly we feel them, however much they have shaped us, however much we have suffered for them—are not often ordered, absent grace, to our flourishing. That confusion extends beyond sexuality; it is the cause of insatiable consumerism, of technology addictions, and even of our nakedly dysfunctional political arena.

The Church believes that knowledge of our true identity as children of God can free us from the slavery of defining ourselves by our appetites, from confusion about who we are and about what will bring us happiness. That is why the Church says that Catholic colleges ought to teach that students are made in the image of God, and that by the grace of God they can live in the freedom of their creation and flourish in this life and the next. That message defies biological or psychological determinism; it defies postmodern inclinations to define reality according to experience; it defies a technocratic culture that says we are what we do.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), in his book *Dogma and Preaching* bluntly admitted that for numerous reasons, Vatican II augured the collapse of a theology built in conformity with the latest encyclicals.

And so today, in an unexpected yet understandable change of sentiments, an unvarnished skepticism about all Magisterial statements has broken out, which deprives the voice of the Magisterium of any effectiveness or perverts it into precisely the opposite. Many people seem hardly capable nowadays of reading statements that come from Rome with a halfway open mind; the mere fact that they originate from the Magisterium is held against them, and in this climate they certainly are not able to create uncontested clarity.

Written more than twenty-five years ago, Ratzinger then rhetorically asked "What is to be done?" given the increasing prejudice against the Magisterium. In a very contrary sense, he wrote, "The obfuscation of Scripture and of dogma and the cutting off of the Magisterium have led to the rediscovery of the faith of the Christian communities as an authority." The prevailing winds of faith were blowing away from Rome and the Magisterium and toward a faith of the community.

Since it is no longer possible to establish and grasp anything common and objective, they say, faith in each case must be what the community in question thinks, what its members discover in dialogue to be their common conviction. "Community" replaces Church, and its religious experience is consulted instead of the Church's

tradition. Such an attitude abandons, not only faith in the strict sense, but also and logically real preaching as well as the Church herself; the remaining “dialogue” is not proclamation at all but, rather, a form of talking to oneself amidst the echoes of old traditions.<sup>6</sup>

**A**ugust Adam wrote “The rise of a people is primarily conditioned by its morality and the conservation of its inner strength” at the very beginning of his programmatic, popular book *The Primacy of Love* (1932) which tackled the problems in Catholic catechesis about sexuality. He renounced the often rigorist Catholics who identified the “filth of sin” always with sexuality, as if the other six deadly sins would not also be filthy, and the purely negative view of the human body as well as conjugal love. In the same chapter, *Fundamental Questions*, he made an important and fortunated observation.

Practicing Catholics have the good fortune to possess the unquestionable truth which is made available to them in divine revelation transmitted through the teachings of the Church. They are therefore quite secure from dangerous errors that may creep in through doubts on fundamental questions of belief and morality. They do not need to cast sheep’s eyes in the direction of ancient and modern philosophers for guidance and wisdom which is worldly wise, therefore quite unstable, the only dependable thing about it being its liability to change from age to age. Maybe there are some people who throw away this great good fortune, some who consider it historically more proper to search for truth in preference to recognizing that the thing they are looking for is already in their possession. There will always be some with an urge to fight, people who would rather strain themselves in a vain struggle than accept truth gracefully, secure in the knowledge that it is theirs without the need of conquest. But of course, we must not forget two factors which are easily overlooked. **In the first place it requires, on the whole, more heroism to accept truth than to cast doubt on it. Truth can be hard and bitter, which is why people have at all times preferred crucifying it to worshipping it. And secondly—a thing we Catholics are also often inclined to lose sight of—truth is not only a free gift, but also a sacred trust. ... The blessed heritage of faith, which has come down, to us in a living stream from the apostles century after century, must be discovered and accepted anew by every individual before it can be taken up as a personal possession.** (*emphasis added*) The poet’s words, “That which you have inherited from your forefathers, win it, in order that you may enjoy it,” applies more to the heritage of faith than to any other heirloom. The true believer is the

receiving instrument of eternal truth ... but he must be “tuned in”; and he must also transmit.<sup>7</sup>

**L**iving in this our winter of discontent, truth feels like a biting winter blow: terrible, hard and bitter; so harsh few have courage enough or the willingness to step outside into the darkness of despairing cold to be illumined by the eternal Light of Truth. It is easier to sit close in the comfort and warmth of the fire, “talking to oneself amidst the echoes of old traditions.” Thus, in our distress and discontent we brood and grumble against winter’s breath while blaming anyone and everyone but ourselves for that cold empty feeling now numbing our souls. Where is spring or summer or early autumn? Why does no one do anything, something? “What can I do?” is a question we dare not ask lest we find the answer more demanding than we are prepared to accept. A recent letter from a friend raised a number of points which it seems to me are at the core of this our winter of discontent.

The first is a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be Christian and the role or function of the Catholic Church. A common refrain heard from many “Christians” who hold some disagreement with dogma or doctrine or magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church is that what they find disagreeable simply does not represent the Gospel of Jesus Christ or the Catholic Church—note the contradiction, they disagree with the Catholic Church because what they find disagreeable is demanded by the Catholic Church—which is found on Unconditional Love not judgment. Another way this is often stated is that Jesus taught of love and forgiveness, not condemnation and judgment. Both of these are flawed by selectively parsing Scripture—picking and choosing what fits their narrative from the public ministry of Jesus Christ, while ignoring the apostolic commission given by Jesus to go and teach all nations ALL that he commanded them.

It is at the very least casuistry<sup>8</sup> and more often sophistry<sup>9</sup> at its worst. What is noticeably missing are mentions by Christ of obedience to the commandments, of his many admonitions to “go and *sin* no more,” of his righteous anger at the den of thieves in the temple area, his calling the Pharisees and Scribes hypocrites and condemning them, of his temptations in the desert by the devil. The list goes on and on. There is no doubt, nor should there be, that

God is a God of Love and Mercy, but he is also a God of judgment, and, should one choose to repent, of forgiveness. But, repentance and forgiveness for what, if not for that thing of which one should not speak: sin.

Jesus, the Son of God and therefore God Incarnate, spoke out against immorality, against fornication, licentiousness, adultery, lust, disordered relations, against divorce stating unequivocally of the indissolubility of marriage, against gluttony, pride, anger, dishonesty, theft, idolatry, revenge, hatred, murder, arrogance and covetousness. It is hard to find a sin that Jesus did not speak out against. To contend that Jesus only spoke of love is to make Jesus a one-dimensional god-like marionette, a poseur, a weak human imitation of the one true God. It is an excuse, an absurd excuse by sinners who refuse to admit their guilt by denying their sin and the authority of Christ's Church to call a sin what it is, a wrongful act or thought contra to the will of God.

Those who wail against the Magisterium, against Church doctrine and, in particular, dogma, should be reminded that dogma spelled backwards is AM GOD not am man. As noted earlier, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" John 8:31-32). Jesus also said,

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:17-19).

Jesus Christ gave Peter (and the apostles and their successors) the *sole authority* to bind all the Church to Him—the Way, the Truth, and the Life—, to determine doctrine and dogma, to preach the Gospel, to bring all nations and all peoples into the one Church, the one fold of Jesus Christ. To be Christian is to believe *all* that Jesus commanded his disciples, nothing less.

Anyone who says and believes "it is no longer possible to establish and grasp anything common and objective," anyone who says, "faith in each case must be what

the community in question thinks, what its members discover in dialogue to be their common conviction" is, in effect, calling the Catholic Church and the Magisterium a perversion of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church and the successors to the apostles, the pope and bishops act *in persona Christi* in matters of faith and morals; as noted earlier from the Catechism of the Catholic Church,

88 The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

The Church is not now, never has been, neither will it nor should it ever be a servant to mankind. The Church is now, always has been, and always will be an instrument and servant of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Again, the Catechism points to the truth: the Magisterium, through its sacred teaching authority, *guides* the faithful with the Word of God. To believe otherwise is heresy bordering on apostacy and places one's soul in grave peril. This is not my opinion, this is no one's opinion, this is not opinion; this is the Gospel Truth according to Jesus Christ.

My friend further wrote my writing "marginalizes people our church should be welcoming" and further that if something bothers or needs clarification to respond with civility and respect. This I trust I always do and I sincerely hope my response is kindly received.

I simply cannot, however, comprehend how or why my writing marginalizes people. Nowhere in the letter are there specific instances or examples of persons I have so dreadfully mistreated with my words; I make it a strict policy never to call anyone names or to disparage any individual for being of a particular group (old white men seems to be a favorite these days, even by old white men such as myself!) If I disparage or disapprove it is never the individual but the behavior, the action, always the sin for which my words target with deadly intent. When my friend claims "my belief that people's sexual preference or gender has to do with individual freedom not my religious freedom" I can only respond with civility and

respectfully, not with my opinion but with objective truth, God's truth which despite my friend's assertion that no one can know God's truth, we can and do know His Truth because He has revealed it to us through his Son Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

In the past, as with this current letter, one area of major disagreement has been how I (supposedly) dismiss "valid, proven scientific research." This begs the question whether that is true or whether its make any sense? In the introduction to Joseph Ratzinger's small book *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, Marcello Pera writes:

The rationality of the Enlightenment bore prodigious and precious fruit. Without this, the great scientific, technological, economic, civil and constitutional advances that have irrevocably changed the face of Europe and of all the West are inexplicable. The chain is long, but there is no break in it: after the scientific revolution came the technological revolution, the industrial revolution, and then the revolutions in politics, in the life of society, and in the rights of the individual.

Are these advances universal? *Yes*, at least to a large extent, because they represent important fundamental, and precious gains. Their inherent vigor won them acceptance; they are capable of further development; and they remain very attractive.

And are these advances also sufficient in themselves? *No*, because ultimately, as Benedict XVI says in this book, they carry a price that we are paying today above all: marginalization, the triumph of subjectivity, and the imprisonment of the divine, of the sacred, of God in the ghetto. In European culture, the price we pay is the banishment of Christianity, not only from the life of states, but also from the life of civic society. In the European Constitution, the price is the refusal even to recall that our continent was the Christian continent. In the life of Europe, the price is the confusion of people's consciences. As the Pope writes here, "Europe has developed a culture that, in a manner hitherto unknown to humanity, excludes God from public awareness."

Often, free action in one sphere interacts negatively with free action in another. If God is expelled from the scientific sphere, religion is expelled from the life of man. If morality is expelled from law, our laws are deprived of all values. If science and technology enjoy an unlimited guarantee, progress can become blind and destructive.

It is impossible to resolve these problems by endeavoring to return to the old pre-Galilean alliance of one sin-

gle form of knowledge that would embrace everything harmoniously. Here, too, original sin has its effects: once one has eaten from the tree of knowledge, paradise is lost. Nevertheless, it remains possible and necessary to recall the limits of science and to set boundaries to what the law can do. We are paying the price of the gap between the speed with which science and technology offer us instruments to satisfy our desires and the slowness with which we succeed in understanding these instruments and mastering them; between wisdom and knowledge; between the rationality of the Enlightenment and our salvation.<sup>10</sup>

There is an alarming thread—one could readily make use of the rather overused alarmist phrase, an existential threat—used in an effort to stitch dissenting voices shut, to silence those who dare to speak the Truth of man's utter dependence on Almighty God. What I have written I have written always with an honest desire to speak the truth, to teach what the Church teaches, what Jesus Christ taught and commanded for the salvation of our immortal souls. My friend wrote "Your use of terms like CINO or Moral Relativist as put downs is troublesome coming from a Deacon in our Faith." To that, I unapologetically will, can and must say this: while it may be troublesome to some, if the shoe fits wear it.

For my friend and for anyone who struggles to understand and accept all that the Church professes and teaches, in faith and love I offer this: read *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*. It is 116 small pages and an easy read, easier than reading one of my essays. It speaks the truth.

1. George Weigel, *The Irony of Modern Catholic History*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019), p. 1.
2. George Weigel, *The Irony of Modern Catholic History*, p. 55.
3. George Weigel, *The Irony of Modern Catholic History*, p. 20.
4. George Weigel, *The Irony of Modern Catholic History*, pp. 56-57.
5. J. D. Flynn, *More Than Our Appetites*, First Things, 2/18/2020.
6. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Dogma and Preaching*, First Unabridged Edition, from the fourth edition of the German original: *Dogma und Verkündigung*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2011), pp. 31-32.
7. August Adam, *The Primacy of Love*, (Providence, RI: Cluny Media LLC, 2019), pp. 1-2. "The Primacy of Love was a key reading of my youth." — Pope Benedict XVI.
8. **Casuistry**: the use of clever but unsound reasoning, especially in relation to moral questions; see **sophistry**.
9. **Sophistry**: the use of fallacious arguments, especially with the intention of deceiving.
10. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), pp. 13-14, 17-18.

# A Catholic Moment

## *Irreligion, Agnosticism and Atheism*

The First Commandment is first because everything in the moral and spiritual life depends on it; it is the foundation and the explication of human life and our personal relationship with our Creator. This commandment—and all the ones that follow—is not a mere rule or universal principle, it is not just there like a law of physics. It is above all else, personal, it is God speaking to every human person.

God's first commandment condemns the main sins of irreligion: tempting God, in words or deeds, sacrilege, and simony (CCC §2118).

*Tempting God* consists in putting his goodness and almighty power to the test by word or deed. Thus Satan tried to induce Jesus to throw himself down from the Temple and, by this gesture, force God to act. Jesus opposed Satan with the word of God: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deut 6:16). The challenge contained in such tempting of God wounds the respect and trust we owe our Creator and Lord. It always harbors doubt about his love, his providence, and his power (1 Cor 10:9; Ex 17:2-7; Ps 95:9, CCC §2119).

*Sacrilege* consists in profaning or treating unworthily the sacraments and other liturgical actions, as well as persons, things, or places consecrated to God. Sacrilege is a grave sin especially when committed against the Eucharist, for in this sacrament the true Body of Christ is made substantially present for us (CIC, canon 1367; 1376, CCC §2120).

Simony is defined as the buying or selling of spiritual things.... It is impossible to appropriate to oneself spiritual goods and behave toward them as their owner or master, for they have their source in God. One can receive them only from him, without payment (CCC §2121).

Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) in *The God of Jesus Christ* offers this helpful definition of a "god." "A god means that from which we are to expect every good and to which we are to take refuge in every distress, so that to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe

in him from the heart." Sadly, there are those who have no god, who reject all thoughts of a higher power than their own.

Many...of our contemporaries either do not at all perceive, or explicitly reject, this intimate and vital bond of man to God. Atheism must therefore be regarded as one of the most serious problems of our time (GS 19 §1, CCC §2123).

*Atheism* covers many very different phenomena. One common form is the practical materialism which restricts its needs and aspirations to space and time. Atheistic humanism falsely considers man to be "an end to himself, and the sole maker, with supreme control, of his own history. Another form of contemporary atheism looks for the liberation of man through economic and social liberation. "It holds that religion, of its very nature, thwarts such emancipation by raising man's hopes in a future life, thus both deceiving him and discouraging him from working for a better form of life on earth (GS 20 §1-2, CCC §2124).

Since it rejects or denies the existence of God, atheism is a sin against the virtue of religion.... Believers can have more than a little to do with the rise of atheism. To the extent that they are careless about their instruction

in the faith, or present its teaching falsely, or even fail in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than to reveal the true nature of God and of religion (GS 9 §3, CCC §2125).

*Agnosticism* assumes a number of forms. In certain cases the agnostic refrains from denying God; instead he postulates the existence of a transcendent being which is incapable of revealing itself, and about which nothing can be said. In other cases the agnostic makes no judgment about God's existence, declaring it impossible to prove, or even affirm or deny (CCC §2127).

*Agnosticism* can sometimes include a certain search for God, but it can equally express indifferentism, a flight from the ultimate question of existence, and a sluggish moral conscience. Agnosticism is all too often equivalent to practical atheism (CCC §2128).

Next week, the Second Commandment.



**A Catholic Moment** is a regular feature of Colloqui. The intention is to catechize Catholics on authentic Church teaching, rubrics and ritual. If you have a question, never hesitate to send it to Deacon Chuck.

## 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

**Salvation: What Every Catholic Should Know**

*Michael Patrick Barber*

Ignatius Press

2019, 189 pages.

**Faith and Politics**

*Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)*

Ignatius Press

2018, 269 pages.

**Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures**

*Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)*

Ignatius Press

2005, 116 pages.

**The Day Is Now Far Spent**

*Robert Cardinal Sarah*

Ignatius Press

2019, 350 pages.

**Socrates' Children, Volume I: Ancient Philosophers**

*Peter Kreeft*

St. Augustine's Press

2019, 169 pages.

**G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume XXXVI**

*The Illustrated London News 1932-1934*

Ignatius Press

2011, 613 pages.

**Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism and the future of the West**

*R. R. Reno*

Regnery Gateway

2019, 182 pages.

**The Irony of Modern Catholic History:**

How the Church rediscovered itself & challenged the modern world to reform

*George Weigel*

Basic Books

2019, 322 pages.

### PERIODICALS

**First Things**

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

**Touchstone**

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

**Catholic Answers Magazine**

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

**Catholic Herald**

[www.catholicherald.co.uk](http://www.catholicherald.co.uk)

**Chronicles**

[www.chroniclesmagazine.org](http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org)

**Gilbert!**

[www.chesterton.org](http://www.chesterton.org)

**The National Catholic Register**

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

**Our Sunday Visitor**

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

### ONLINE

**Crisis Magazine**

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

**The Imaginative Conservative**

[www.theimaginativeconservative.org](http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org)

**Catholic Exchange**

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

**Intellectual Takeout**

[www.intellectualtakeout.org](http://www.intellectualtakeout.org)

**Life News**

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

**Life Site News**

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

**OnePeterFive**

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

**Catholic Vote**

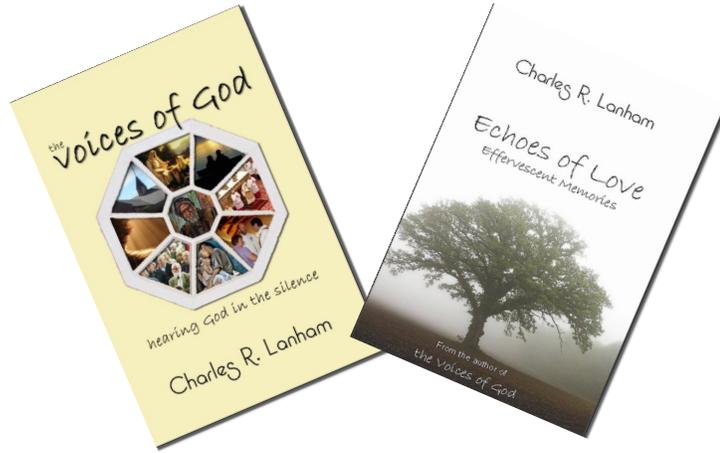
[www.catholicvote.org](http://www.catholicvote.org)

**The Catholic Thing**

[www.thecatholicthing.org](http://www.thecatholicthing.org)

**PragerU**

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



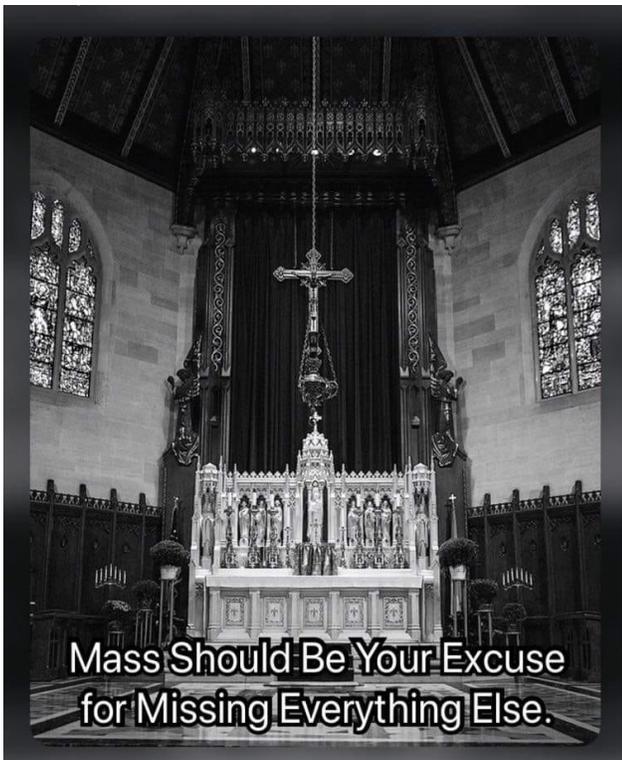
Books are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or from the author's web site at:

[deaconscorner.org](https://deaconscorner.org)

**Deacon Chuck Lanham** is a Catholic author, columnist, speaker, theologian and philosopher, a jack-of-all-trades like his father (though far from a master of anything) 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 has written over 400 essays on religion, faith, morality, theology, and philosophy.

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**A GRANDFATHER WAS WALKING THROUGH HIS YARD WHEN HE HEARD HIS GRANDDAUGHTER REPEATING THE ALPHABET IN A TONE OF VOICE THAT SOUNDED LIKE PRAYER. HE ASKED HER WHAT SHE WAS DOING. THE LITTLE GIRL EXPLAINED: 'I'M PRAYING, BUT I CAN'T THINK OF EXACTLY THE RIGHT WORDS, SO I'M JUST SAYING ALL THE LETTERS, AND GOD WILL PUT THEM TOGETHER FOR ME BECAUSE HE KNOWS WHAT I'M THINKING.'**

So, what is your excuse for not praying? Try saying all the letters and let God put them together. After all he **does** know what you are thinking!

**Colloquī**, the present infinitive of *colloquor* (Latin: *to talk, to discuss or to converse*) 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! Essays may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the expressed intent to seek the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, so help us God.

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