

Shalom

APRIL/MAY 2014

# tidings

GOD  
WANTS TO  
SET YOUR  
HEART

ON  
FIRE

*Beyond the  
Upper Room*

NOTHING BUT YES TO JESUS

From Near Death  
to New Life





*O* Mother, as you  
were with the first  
disciples in presence and  
prayer, continue to pray  
for Jesus' disciples today  
and always.

# Come out of your comfort zones!

This incident happened in the pre-washing machine era. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, when she was in the convent, had to do all the washing manually. On one such occasion, when she was engaged in the laundry, dirty water kept splashing on to her body from another sister who was rinsing clothes nearby. Naturally this irritated Saint Thérèse, but she overcame the impulse to point out the fault of her fellow sister. Instead she chose to accept the discomfort patiently out of love. She tried to let the love flow from her towards the fellow sister with whom she was upset. Little Therese used such shortcut techniques to reach the summit of saintliness. Today many people may see such shortcuts as foolishness. The reason is that they look at suffering as something that needs to be avoided. This has resulted in the loss of ability of humans to forgive, adjust, and tolerate sufferings.

Many marital relationships fail due to the lack of willingness to tolerate sufferings. The same can be said of the decision not to have children, because of the difficulties involved in giving birth and raising children. People who choose to remain single because they do not want to consider the intricacies of married life also fall into this category. Even those who take their Christian faith seriously and live a pious life in the Church sometimes expect a comfortable life. Those who practice the Christian faith without coming out of their comfort zones forget one thing—that God came down from the comfort zone of heaven, and He suffered and died to save humanity. So it is only if we come out of our own comfort zones that we can hope to save others and proclaim the salvation of Christ to a world perishing in sins.

In the Old Testament, we read about Moses that, “He preferred to share ill-treatment with the people of God, rather than enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. He considered the humiliation suffered for Christ a greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt and he looked ahead for his reward” (Hebrews 11:25-26). Israel was freed from slavery as Moses renounced the luxurious life of Pharaoh’s palace in Egypt. Churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America were established as thousands of missionaries decided to relinquish their comfort zones. It is not possible to live an effective Christian life without taking up hardships and sufferings. We can bring changes in our family, parish, and community only if we are ready to suffer alongside Christ who suffered for us. The Pentecost experience which provides the ability to proclaim the risen Christ will remain out of reach for the faithful who look forward to celebrations and the joy of Easter without remembering the painful Good Friday and sorrow-filled Good Saturday.

Christ descended from heaven because of His love towards humanity, but we often find it difficult to take pain for another’s sake because we have not grown in this love. When we are filled with love, it will become impossible for us to watch the Church being persecuted, souls being lost, and the world becoming filled with evil. Hearts filled with love accommodate fellow family members even with their faults. It is not impossible for those who have grown in love to transform circumstances and people through their sacrifice.

There is something which provokes my thoughts and excites me whenever I visit the Shalom Media USA office in Texas. In that office, there is a group of young people who have forfeited their comfort zones. This lay group of individuals work day and night forgoing better jobs and living environments. This magazine in your hand is the result of their dedication and commitment. SHALOM WORLD television is also the result of the dedication of small groups of people, who may fall short of wealth and ability in a worldly sense. Love towards Christ and love towards His Church—that is what has prompted these people to take up hardships and forgo their own personal comforts. The entire Church is reaping the fruits of their work.

The love of Christ is calling you too—to give up your comfort zone and live for the Kingdom of God. Listen to His voice so it may change the destiny of your life and that of the whole world.



**BENNY PUNNATHARA**

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# Beyond The Upper Room

By Cardinal Donald Wuerl



**A**t some time in your life, you could probably relate to the feelings that the apostles were experiencing in the upper room on the day of the first Pentecost: feelings of being alone and afraid, feelings of doubt and worry.

And then came the Holy Spirit. As we hear in the first reading at Mass on Pentecost Sunday, “Suddenly, there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim” (Acts of the Apostles 2:1-4).

Before, the Apostles were huddled together—timid, frightened, unsure of themselves. All that changed with Pentecost. All that changed when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they became bold, confident, assured witnesses of all that Jesus had taught them.

This is the power of the Holy Spirit at work. Poured out into the heart of each believer in Baptism and Confirmation, the Spirit comes to make us a new

creation. What is purely natural, tied to this earth and limited to the confines of the flesh, gives way to a new fullness and richness that can only be described as a new life, the life of God welling up within us. If it is nurtured and cared for, that new life will know no end.

Just like the Apostles, today individual believers—you and I—come alive through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and so does the whole Church.

Empowered by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we, like the Apostles, can put aside our timidity and boldly proclaim and manifest God’s kingdom in our world today. Just as the Apostles did on the first Pentecost, the Catholic Church, in its unity and universality, preaches the Gospel of Jesus to the world.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in section 688 offers insight into ways that the Holy Spirit provides us with an experience of God’s presence, through the Catholic Church: by praying and reading Scripture, by studying the lives of the saints, by following Church teaching, by participating in Mass and the sacraments, by praying, by supporting the missionary and apostolic works of the Church, and by recognizing the charisms and ministries of the Church. The U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults adds, “When we dwell on the great tradition of the Church, its marvelous history and its host of saintly witnesses, we sense the Holy Spirit’s sustaining power through it all.”

It has been said that today we face the opportunity for a new Pentecost in our Church and in our world. That is why we in the Church, as the body of Christ in today’s world, are all called to carry out the new evangelization, to deepen and share our faith, and to take up the challenge and the mission of building up Christ’s kingdom and manifesting His saving love, here and now. We know that, as at the first Pentecost, we in this new Pentecost can call on the power of the Holy Spirit, to kindle the fire of faith in our hearts, and renew the face of the earth.

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# THE CHRIST SIDE OF HISTORY

By Father Paul Scalia

Over at the Freedom to Marry website, they have a boastful slogan: “The right side of history.” It is really a threat—you had better not be on the wrong side of history. You had better be like them and get on the right side of history ... or else you will be left out. Apparently, being on the wrong side of history is just not cool. In effect, this phrase is a pseudo-sophisticated version of the adolescent “Everyone else is doing it.”

The phrase is remarkable for its arrogance and its ignorance. Arrogance, because it means not that I agree with history but that history agrees with me—that all of humanity has been evolving to this idea that I have. Ignorance, because so many have tried to predict the current of history and get on its “right side,” only to find they have tragically miscalculated (e.g., Robespierre, Napoleon, Lenin). On the other hand, some figures that once seemed condemned by history later emerged as



enormously important (e.g., Ulysses S. Grant, Winston Churchill, the 2004 Red Sox).

Nevertheless, the presumption persists that history is always moving in the right direction, to a better world for everyone. Science and technology have improved dramatically. Certainly other developments parallel this improvement, right? Never mind that we use that same science and technology for wicked purposes. Yes, we have great means of communication. But what good is it if what we communicate is evil? Yes, we have extraordinary science. But in the hands of Kermit Gosnell, is that progress? Material progress does not mean moral progress. The man that uses new technology has the same fallen nature as Cain.

The Church sees history quite differently. First, she knows the One who guides history—not some vague force called the “right side,” but God Himself. “We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history” (CCC 314). But the Church does not for this reason think that she will always encounter an ever-improving world, one more hospitable to her Gospel. Quite the contrary. She sees history moving toward a definitive confrontation between good and evil that will culminate in the return of our Lord.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) puts it this way:

“Before Christ’s second coming, the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the ‘mystery of iniquity’ in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh” (CCC 675).

Now, if that does not shake us of the “right side of history” delusion, the next paragraph should do the trick: “The Antichrist’s deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment” (CCC 676). When we conform ourselves to the “right side of history” rather than to Jesus Christ, we set up history itself as a god. We become idolaters.

Because the Church rejects the “‘intrinsically perverse’” political form of a secular messianism” (CCC 676), she will increasingly be seen as on the wrong side of history. But not to worry, this has been happening to her since our Lord’s Ascension. From Nero to Napoleon, from Julian the Apostate to Stalin, the Church always seems to be opposed to the “right-siders.” Certainly the Church has had her moments of greatness

THE CHURCH SEES HISTORY QUITE DIFFERENTLY. FIRST, SHE KNOWS THE ONE WHO GUIDES HISTORY—NOT SOME VAGUE FORCE CALLED THE “RIGHT SIDE,” BUT GOD HIMSELF. “WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT GOD IS MASTER OF THE WORLD AND OF ITS HISTORY” (CCC 314).

in history. But those are not our consolation. We hope, neither in some chimerical historical evolution nor in our own historical triumphs, but in Christ the Lord of history. “The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God’s victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven” (CCC 677).

So the petulant threat of getting on history’s bad side should not frighten us. We should be concerned about, but joyfully detached from, the warp and woof of history. In Chesterton’s words, “The Catholic Church is the only thing that frees a man from the degrading slavery of being a child of his age.” This freedom from the threats of history should also create in us a boldness—even a carelessness—in our fight for the truth, because the victory does not depend on us. Yes, we must do our part—and increasingly at a great price. But having done all that we can, we rest content in His Lordship. History will not be mad at us. He has history well in hand because the victory is already His. So even should we lose every battle—even should we lose continuously and know nothing but loss, ever being on the wrong side of history—even then, we would go on losing ... all the way to victory!

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# WE DON'T LIVE A GOSPEL OF SIN MANAGEMENT

By Matthew P. Schneider, LC

There were once two evil brothers. They were rich and used their money to keep their evil ways from the public eye. They even attended church and appeared to be perfect Christians.

Then a new pastor came. Not only could the new pastor see right through the brothers' deception, but he also spoke well and true, and the parish grew. A fundraising campaign began to build a new extension on the church.

All of a sudden, one of the brothers died. The remaining brother sought out the new pastor the day before the funeral and handed him a check for the amount needed to finish paying for the extension. "I have only one condition," he said. "At the funeral, you must say my brother was a saint." The pastor gave his word and deposited the check.

The next day, at the funeral, the pastor did not hold back. "He was an evil man," he said. "He cheated and stole." "He wasn't faithful to his wife and abused his family." After going on like this, he finally concluded, "But, compared to his brother, he was a SAINT."

We all want to be called saints but not THAT way. Saint Paul talks about the struggle to become a saint: "For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want ... So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand."

How often are we like St Paul—we fail to do good and

instead do evil?

Evil seems to overwhelm us; yet if the devil appeared as he really is, I doubt any of us would fall for his tricks. I think we can begin by asking two very simple questions: First, what makes something a sin? Second, what is our goal as Christians?

So often we confuse these two questions. We think that the goal of every Christian is simply to be free from sin. I think such an attitude is absolutely destructive of Christianity; philosopher Dallas Willard criticizes both conservative and liberal Christians for falling into what he calls the "Gospel of sin management." We need to understand the differences between the true Gospel and that of sin management. I propose that we first examine what the Gospel of sin management consists of, then compare it to the real Gospel and conclude with some ways we can escape from sin management into the true Gospel.

## THE GOSPEL OF SIN MANAGEMENT

There are two essential doctrines of the false Gospel of sin management: the



empty alliance that lets you in and the focus on sin.

The idea of an “empty alliance” may not be clear. Imagine a basketball team that let you play even if you weighed 400 pounds and could not shoot. Or imagine a teacher who gave you a perfect grade just for showing up, even if you chatted all through class. Those would be empty alliances. They have no real value because they do not demand anything of you.

How many of you have heard one of the Protestant groups that, after a one-hour sermon, asks you to come forward and accept faith in Jesus to be saved? This is an empty alliance because nothing is expected of you. We can fall into the same empty alliance by simply focusing on who says “Catholic” on a parish survey or sends their children to a Catholic school. Nothing is demanded of them so the Gospel is irrelevant in their lives.

The other dogma of the Gospel of sin management is like the name suggests: SIN management. According to this Gospel, the goal of all we do as Christians is about sin, either avoiding it or managing it by good works and confession or explaining it away. This reduces Christianity to a series of don'ts—don't steal, don't hit your brother, don't do drugs and don't forget your

homework. Who wants to follow something that just says “don't?”

In reality we usually say “no” because we have already said “yes.” You might say “no” to tickets to your favorite team because you already said “yes” to an anniversary dinner with your wife. You might say “no” to a girl who wants to do something you know you should not because you have already said “yes” to your family's and Jesus' love. Or you might say “no” to weed because you have said “yes” to being on the basketball team. It is a lot harder to say “no” without previously saying “yes” to something opposed to it. Michael Manhardt, Founder of the One Strong Family movement, teaches about FAMILY (Forget About Me, I Love You); I can only forget about me after I love you.

The Gospel of sin management focuses on the noes, not the yeses.

## THE TWO GOSPELS COMPARED

Let us compare this Gospel of sin management with the true Gospel. We will focus on key differences, the biggest of which are the ideal and the heart.

The result of the Gospel of sin management is minimalism. Its model is abstract, not Christ. When you go to Rome, you can see the Pietà: in my opinion, possibly the most beautiful statue ever carved. People comment on how Michelangelo worked his chisel, how he positioned the figures or how he polished the statue—nobody says, “This is great because it isn’t made of silly putty.”

Or take a saint and examine his life. For example, Blessed John Paul II preached man’s dignity when communists denied it by force, he taught theology of the body against the sexual revolution, and he brought millions of young people together for the biggest festivals in history. Nobody says that he is a saint because he did not lie or steal.

Since it is minimalist, the Gospel of sin management does not affect the rest of our life. We can sit comfortably in a pew for 53 minutes on Sunday and think that we are good Christians. Instead of this minimalism, the true Gospel is demanding. Jesus says things like “Go, sell what you have and follow me”; “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me”; or “There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive ... (among other things) persecutions.” Is that a Gospel of sin management?

Instead of minimalism, the Gospel asks us to “be perfect as the heavenly father is perfect.”

The Gospel of sin management only asks content but the true Gospel asks our heart. The Pharisees knew the Scriptures inside and out, they practiced every single commandment, yet Jesus saves His harshest condemnation for them. Why? They had the content but their heart was far from the Lord; they had hardened their hearts.

Saint Paul says, “The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not.” That is not ideal but he is on the right path. Jesus asks for your heart. Jesus is not satisfied if you fulfill a bunch of rules; He wants you to desire good. That means desiring Him, and seeking Him out, with your heart. A priest who used to be in the army explained the difference to me: when he was in the army, he could wish the commander burn in hell so long as he obeyed, but when he became a religious brother he had

to love his superior.

This is a radical difference. You may not realize how radical it is; it is the heart, not just actions.

## ESCAPING THE GOSPEL OF SIN MANAGEMENT

The Gospel of sin management is common yet preventable. Let me offer two escapes from it: awareness of sin’s nature and a return to Jesus.

Sin is not sin because there is a “don’t” in the Bible, but because it goes against the ideal Jesus presents us. We sin: we are not like Jesus. Christ is the only measure of a Christian. Our sin is not measured against the Ten Commandments or the laws of Canada; our sin is measured against Jesus’ example. This is about doing good and not just avoiding sin. We are called to be apostles, not just nice dudes. That’s tough!

But we can never live up to the ideal. That is why we have the second way



**Evil seems to overwhelm us; yet if the devil appeared as he really is, I doubt any of us would fall for his tricks. I think we can begin by asking two very simple questions: First, what makes something a sin? Second, what is our goal as Christians?**

to escape: return to Jesus.

Only Jesus can give us the strength. We become like Him when He lives in us. The psalm teaches us this trust in the Lord: “You are good and bountiful, teach me your statutes. Let your kindness comfort me according to your promise to your servants.” Our strength is in you, O Lord.

## CONCLUSION

If you forget the rest, remember these two things: sin is not breaking a rule, sin is going against our ideal Jesus Christ, and we can only live up to that ideal with Jesus.

In the Gospel we hear Jesus tell the Pharisees: “You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” Today this might be reworded: “You hypocrites! You know how to interpret iPhones, football games, and car engine noises; why do you not know how to interpret the words of Jesus?”

Jesus is not a minimalist, He does not preach a Gospel of sin management. Jesus presents us an ideal and then says, “Come, follow me!”

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# AFFECTING CULTURE THROUGH TELEVISION

By Gigi Cherian

**A**s a young elementary school-aged girl, I remember coming home and sitting for hours before the TV watching soap operas like “General Hospital.” The soap opera had been on air since 1963 and since then the American—and eventually worldwide—public has been exposed to characters who have not only experienced births and deaths, but the full range of emotions and experiences in between: from rape, miscarriage, guilty accusations, to adoptions, terminal illnesses, marriages, divorces, and so much more. For the past fifty years, soap operas like this one has had an effect—positive or negative, subconscious or profound—on the lives of several generations of television viewers. And joining

“General Hospital” are dozens of other daytime soap operas, prime time soap operas, comedies, dramas, reality shows, talks shows, and much, much more.

Like my own home, each of these shows were welcomed into the living room, placed before the wide eyes of children, and used as accompaniment during dinnertime and play time. Families get caught up in the lives of characters, sympathizing with them or maybe becoming angry at them. In this social media age, Tweets and Facebook posts fly across the Internet in quick succession during every scene of the more popular shows.

In the United States prior to the 1980s, same-sex attraction (SSA) was often a hushed secret in affected families. Prior to that decade, films that addressed it on a large scale often showed the many negative effects of trying to live a life with SSA. But the 1980s ushered in a very public focus on those with SSA. The HIV/AIDS epidemic which exploded in the 1980s and still continues today, exposed the cases of thousands of SSA individuals who were affected by the HIV or AIDS. During the early days of the epidemic, too many of our brothers—and sisters too—in Christ died from this deadly disease.

Soon, films began to emerge on the small and big screen with SSA characters, showing both their

humanity and how they were abused by those who were not like them. Innumerable articles and books began being published about the normalcy of the lives of SSA individuals. And then came the first openly SSA character within a television show. I can remember being in high school, and the show was highlighted in all the newspapers, magazines and TV programs. Not too long after that, there followed a string of television shows with SSA characters. If we look at the three major networks in the United States today, each one features shows that have SSA characters with major roles—even those who are lead characters—with show titles that call the families



**The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)  
Family Guide for Using Media**

The USCCB website offers a variety of documents and links to help families better understand how to utilize media to promote the teachings of the Church within their homes. Many resources are available online or information is provided for ordering pamphlets or brochures to share with your family.

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**NOISE: How Our Media-Saturated Culture Dominates Lives and Dismantles Families, BY TERESA TOMEO**

The most dominant force in the lives of almost all Americans is the media, the Internet, TV, radio, blackberries, iPods. The list goes on and on. Although incredibly intoxicating, the media all too often distracts us from that which is most important, and in many instances, actually fights against our good and noble goals in life.

As parents, educators, and consumers of the media, we have to get our media usage and that of our families under control. Otherwise, the media will control us, if it is not doing so already. Author Teresa Tomeo, a veteran broadcast journalist in both the Catholic and secular markets, makes a compelling and irrefutable case about the dangers of our dominant media culture and the adjoining liberalism and immorality that comes with it. Tomeo gives a sobering analysis of each of the nine dominant forms of media, and she reveals how they are rapidly dismantling families and destroying lives.

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**Plugged In: [www.pluggedin.com](http://www.pluggedin.com)**

This website, maintained by Focus on the Family, is designed to shine a light on the world of popular entertainment (movies, videos, TV episodes, songs, games) while giving families the essential tools they need to understand, navigate, and impact the culture in which they live. Through reviews, articles, and discussions, they hope to spark intellectual thought, spiritual growth, and a desire to follow the command of Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

showcased "normal" or "modern."

Today, every major network broadcasts shows with teenagers engaging in underage drinking, unchaste exposure of their body, mutilation of their body through piercings or tattoos, and the pursuit of sexual adventure with individuals of both sexes. Many shows have a divorced character, or a character engaging in an affair. Many shows offer inept parents and mature children. Many highlight manipulation as acceptable and secrecy as necessary. More and more shows offer abortion as a justifiable option in pregnancies. And many feature Christian characters as unknowledgeable, uncool, and unmodern.

I have come to understand that the effects of these 'teachings' of secular media have had an extended effect on individuals and on society at-large, most clearly evidenced with the shift in the definition of marriage in the past few years. More and more states are allowing for the "right" of SSA individuals to marry. Each state that edits its definition of marriage does so because the public believes what secular media has professed through television or the press for the past several decades.

But as much as television shows offer viewers, there is one thing each fails to showcase: God and His teachings. If sin is highlighted and applauded through the shows which we watch with our families and are shown to be a justifiable path, then this can only be done if God is either removed from our path, or our understanding of God is adjusted to fit the path of sin.

As Catholics, we have been given the Commandments, the pathways to life in the Old and New Testaments, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the many divinely-inspired texts of Saints, religious, and lay Catholics. As Catholics, in every moment of our being, in every breath we take, God is before us, behind us, and beside us. His Word does not cease to exist because sin is enacted by a lovable character.

Christianity has always proclaimed the humanity of each individual but has always condoned the acts of sin, because sin begets sin. If "marriage" between SSA individuals is acceptable, then it can and has opened the doors for polygamous couples to seek "marriage." If abortion is justifiable for a woman who chooses it because pregnancy is incompatible with her lifestyle, then our voices becomes mute when a woman chooses it to kill a girl child. A life of sin is a life that makes no room for God.

So when you turn on the television in your home, sit and watch carefully, and see where God is. If He is not on the screen in front of you, then maybe it is time to switch the channel.

# COME HOLY SPIRIT, GIVE US CHASTITY

By Colleen Smith

In our fallen world, no virtue is more detested than chastity. The secular world often praises the virtues of generosity, kindness, and patience—people who possess these virtues are “good people.” Chastity, however, is completely overlooked as a virtue, and is often simply mocked as something old-fashioned and fuddy-duddy during our “enlightened” age. The incredibly popular pastimes of pornography, contraception, premarital sex, crude television shows—all of these

are diametrically opposed to the virtue of chastity. These have led to greater evils in the world, such as abortion, human trafficking, and the AIDS epidemic. Our modern culture’s message of “Have fun and do what you want!” has had dire consequences. But in her wisdom, the Church continues to present to us the virtue of chastity: not as an outdated ideal, but as a loving, positive command to protect us from harm.

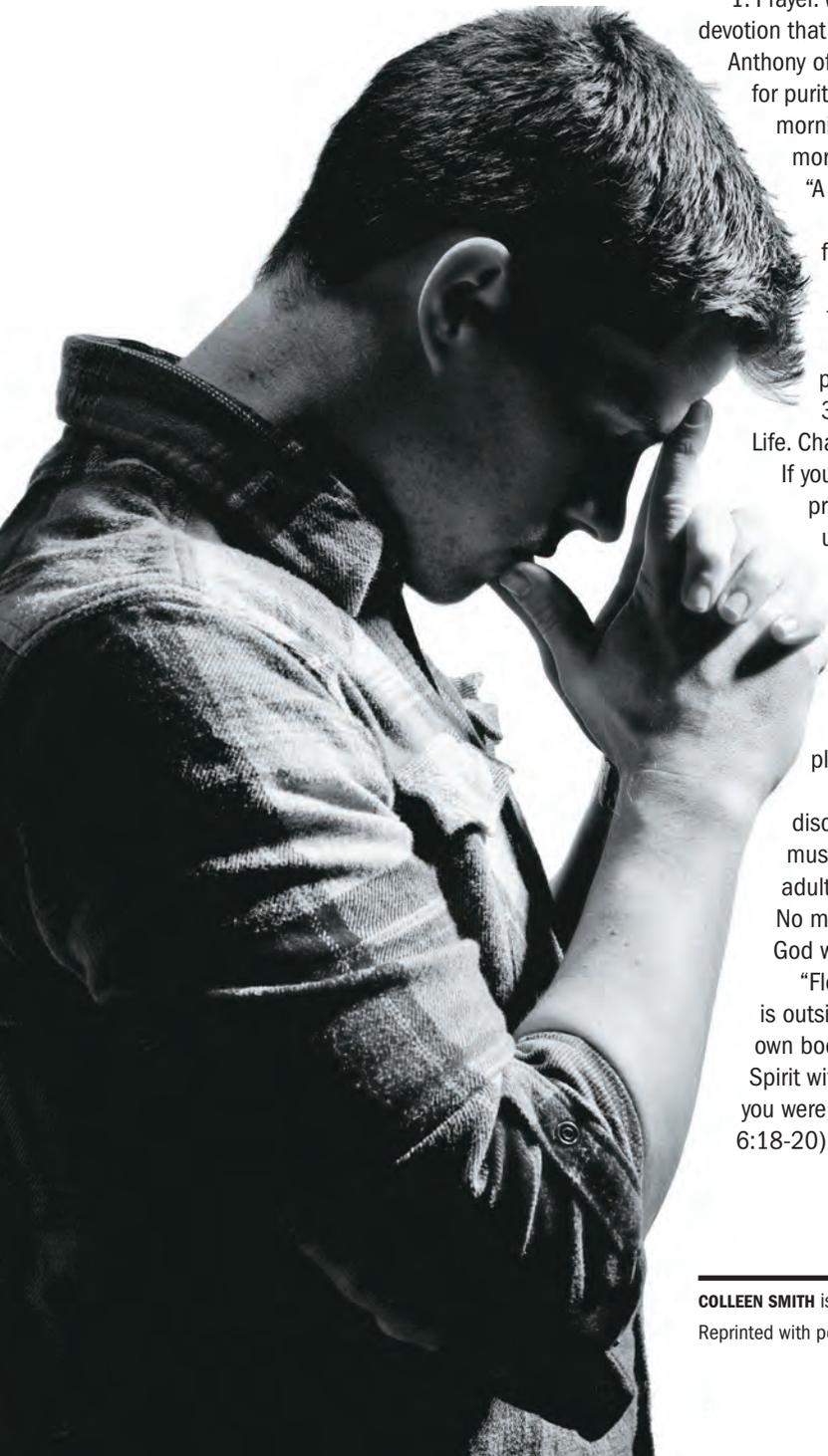
Chastity is the “virtue that moderates

the desire for sexual pleasure according to the principles of faith and right reason.” Note that chastity is NOT synonymous with abstinence. Abstinence is refraining from partaking in sexual pleasure altogether; while it can be virtuous, depending on our state in life, it is not a virtue in itself. One who is practicing abstinence is not necessarily growing in chastity; chastity is purity in thought, word, and deed, and abstinence only concerns itself with the “deed” portion of that.



**“Deep within yourself, listen to your conscience which calls you to be pure... a home is not warmed by the fire of pleasure which burns quickly like a pile of withered grass. Passing encounters are only a caricature of love; they injure hearts and mock God’s plan.”**

**POPE JOHN PAUL II**



Our Lady of Fatima said that more souls go to hell for sins of the flesh (sins of impurity) than any other sins. Yet our culture is saturated in them! One cannot go to the mall without seeing a provocative poster, watch a football game that does not have a racy commercial, or listen to a radio program without crudity. The HHS mandate is purely an issue of whether or not Christian taxpayers should have to pay for the consequences of others’ unchaste behavior. Pornography revenues in the United States each year are more than the combined salaries of ALL professional football, soccer, and baseball players. The vice of impurity abounds, and so we should cultivate the virtue of chastity in our lives.

#### **HOW CAN WE GROW IN THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY?**

1. Prayer. We cannot resist temptation without God’s help. A popular devotion that has been promoted by numerous saints, including Saint Anthony of Padua and Saint Alphonsus, is the devotion of 3 Hail Marys for purity. The devotion is incredibly simple—pray 3 Hail Marys each morning and night, followed by “O my Mother, preserve me from mortal sin during this day/night.” In the words of Saint Alphonsus, “A devout servant of Mary shall never perish.”

2. Avoid Occasions of Sin. If we frequently find ourselves falling after spending time with certain friends, watching certain movies, or visiting certain websites, then we have a moral duty to avoid them. When we pray the Act of Contrition, we firmly resolve to “avoid the near occasion of sin,” because willingly putting ourselves in a bad situation can be sinful in itself.

3. Observe the Principles of Chastity Based On Your State in Life. Chastity looks slightly different for singles, married, and religious. If you are single and have a vocation to marriage, consider following principles of courtship. If a couple finds themselves being unchaste, they should discuss it honestly and set some specific ground rules. If you are called to marriage, you are called to help each other get to heaven, and the best time to start is before the marriage begins.

For married couples, the main focus of chastity is being open to life and not using each other purely for pleasure (no contraception or sterilization), as well as not seeking sexual pleasure outside the marriage act.

4. Persevere. If you find yourself falling frequently, do not get discouraged. Like any virtue, it takes time to build up our “spiritual muscles.” Beg Christ to heal you as He healed the woman caught in adultery and Saint Mary Magdalene; go to confession, start again. No matter what your sins, you will receive forgiveness if you ask, and God will pour into your soul the grace to resist temptation.

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

“**Arise** cry out in the night  
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your **heart** like water before  
the presence of the  
**LORD,**”  
(Lamentations 2:19)



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# GOD TAPS YOU ON THE SHOULDER

By Dr. Mark Nimo

## INTRODUCTION:

God taps you on the shoulder. This phrase is attributed to Reverend Peter Marshall, who served as a Chaplain to the United States Congress. God does not only touch us as individuals, but our household too. In Acts 16:31 we read, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” God has a greater vision for our lives than we could possibly imagine. Twenty-nine years ago, God tapped me on the shoulder and I turned around and followed Him. I had no idea that responding to the “tap on the shoulder” would send me to 38 countries preaching the Gospel.

Saint Paul says in Ephesians 3:14, “I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all

the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with the fullness of God.” In Baptism, the life of God was poured into us. The Eucharist sustains this life of God (Divine Life): the life of the Trinity—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are filled with the fullness of God.

I know it does not feel like that for many of us most of the time. This is a truth that is not based on how one feels. It is a gift! Our task is to grow in understanding and appropriating it. How many of us can contain God? None of us! But God has found it His pleasure to dwell in us, so that through us, this life of God can be revealed in the world. In the Prologue of John, we read that “the word became flesh and dwelt (pitched his tent—tabernacle) amongst us.” All the other Sacraments, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick, open up opportunities for us to be filled with the fullness of life in God.

When God comes to dwell in you, do you know what happens? God disturbs you! God troubles you! When we yield to God and surrender to God’s will, this is what happens. “Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 6:20). Saint Irenaeus says, “The glory of God is man fully alive.” This is our purpose as human beings, to manifest the glory of God.

## “BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED...”

These words were said by Paul to the jailer who had been assigned to keep watch over Paul and Silas. We have to set the context of this scripture in order to gain a better understanding. Paul and Silas went about preaching the Gospel and came under attack. The reason for the attack was that they delivered a slave girl of her demonic possession in the name of Jesus.

When her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas.



Let me submit to you that we get into trouble when we start preaching the Gospel. Do not think that a life of discipleship (with Jesus Christ) is a problem-free life. We read that, “the crowd joined attacking Paul and Silas, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

### **PRAISE GOD EVEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

“About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened” (Acts 16:25-26). When the jailer saw that the prison doors were open, he tried to kill himself thinking that the prisoners had escaped. Paul shouted, stopping him “we are all here.” Trembling and falling down on his knees in front of them he asks, ‘what must I do to be saved?’ The jailer witnessed the manifestation of God’s power and glory. He was disturbed! This was God tapping him on the shoulder. In answer to his question, Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

The story continues: “The jailer washed their wounds, then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them into the house and set food before them. And he and his entire household rejoiced.” I get excited when I hear stories like these from the Bible. When God shows up, things begin to shake up and be re-arranged.

Paul and Silas got into trouble because they preached the Gospel and demonstrated the power of God. They were caught and beaten up and put in jail. I read on a Church billboard once, “set backs are always set ups for God to show up.” WOW! When you go through trials and troubles on account of the Gospel, just take up position and know that these are opportunities for God to show up.

I do not know what you are going through now as you read this. You might be in a tough place in life right now. Remember, it is not about you. It is about God’s greater purposes. Through the trials of Paul and Silas, the jailer and his household came to faith in Jesus.

### **MARY AS OUR MODEL**

We all love our Blessed Mother Mary. A study of her life reveals that she experienced a lot of “setbacks.” She was a young girl of about fifteen years, engaged to be married to Joseph. She is visited by the angel Gabriel



with a disturbing news: “you shall conceive and bear a son, who will be the Son of the Most High God.” She did not jump up and shout Hallelujah! She was greatly disturbed and asked how can this be? Being an unwed mother meant she could be stoned to death according to the Law of Moses. But she trusted God in the midst of all the tension. After having the baby, a crazy king tries to kill the child. That too was a setback! The Holy Family had to flee to Egypt as refugees. On each of these occasions God was setting them up to demonstrate His power.

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose,” we are told in Romans 8:28. Note: all things, not some things. Paul and Silas understood this and were singing hymns and praying in jail, having been beaten up for preaching the Gospel.

Maybe life has beaten you up. Be ready to praise God even in your trials. People complain and curse in their trials. But that does nothing to change the situation. In the midst of your setbacks, praise God anyway. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, we read, “In all circumstances give thanks to God. This is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” You may have seen this acronym: PUSH (Pray Until Something Happens). As you begin to pray, things will shake up and situations will change. There will be changes in your life and the lives of those you love.

### **WHERE ARE YOU?**

The jailer noticed that the prison doors were open and thinking that the prisoners had escaped, he decided to kill himself. Many people go through difficulties and choose to give up and end their life. God taps you on the shoulder in moments like this. God loves you even in your mess and sin. God always sees what you can become.

God can use any circumstance or anybody to call you. Saint Teresa of Avila says, "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing trouble you because everything passes away. Only God remains."

Have you ever asked this all important question in life: "What must I do to be saved?" It is a typical style used by the author of Acts of the Apostles, Saint Luke. The preaching of the Gospel has to evoke a response from the hearers. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) Peter preached the Gospel and those who heard him were cut to the heart and asked, "Brothers, what must we do to be saved?" Peter said, "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Francis Thompson describes God in his famous poem, The Hound of Heaven, as a God who pursues us as a passionate lover. We have heard of a GPS (Global Position System). When you are going in the wrong direction, it warns you: "Turn around when possible—recalculating." God often taps us on the shoulder and says, "Turn around when possible." God pursues us because we are created to be in relationship with God. Only God can meet our deepest needs and fulfill all our desires. This is not some feel good spiritual thought. Nothing else will satisfy us—no amount of drugs, promiscuous relationships, money, pleasure or power can satisfy us. God alone suffices. Only God can bring meaning and purpose to our life. Only God can satisfy us!

### HAVE YOU FELT GOD'S TAP ON YOUR SHOULDER?

Peter Marshall says, "If you are walking down the street and someone taps you on your shoulder, what would you do? You will turn around. This exactly what happens in the spiritual world. A man or woman walks the way of life with the eternal call ringing in his/her ears but unaware of it. Suddenly, the Spirit of the Lord taps on the shoulder. The word repentance means turn around. This is a call that cannot be ignored, resisted or rejected. We have many worldly calls and numerous voices bidding our attention, some louder and others soft. But the

supreme call, the one that penetrates down beneath the physical and material, to our innermost being, to our soul is the spiritual call from Christ.

When God taps you on the shoulder, you must make a decision, you can never be neutral. You must turn around and follow. The other possibility is that you walk deliberately away from Him and that costs you much. Going away from Jesus, we walk into unhappiness and despair. But one thing is sure, we would never be the same after he taps us on the shoulder." I know that I am not the same Mark Nimo of 29 years ago. This tap on the shoulder does not happen only once. Sometimes the tap is stronger, other times it is gentle and soft. God decides the strength of the tap.

The jailer accepted the call and decided to be baptized. His household also came to faith and rejoiced. Any genuine encounter with Jesus Christ produces this joy, which comes from the Holy Spirit. We have to be people intoxicated with the Spirit of the Lord. Pope Francis says of this in his new encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel): "there is something new about the Good News. If you come to believe in Jesus, you have to be joyful. We cannot be like people coming from a funeral." The smile on our faces must prompt people to ask—"where have you been?" We must say—"I have been with Jesus."

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The background of the entire page is a collage of vintage photographs and documents scattered on a weathered wooden surface. The photos are of various sizes and orientations, some showing people, some showing buildings, and some with handwritten text. The wood grain is prominent, adding a sense of history and texture to the layout.

# SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOTS

By Joe Philip

**M**y job teaching in a Catholic high school is awesome because when teaching theology, it is not just a matter of recounting facts in history, but rather more like creating space for students to meet God. And even on those days when I may not feel at my best, the Holy Spirit refuses to let me be boring. Teaching theology is not just about creatively presenting content; it is about the Creator who makes content—and even high school seniors—come alive.

Teaching offers opportunities for encounters, and by God's grace, I am getting better at recognizing those moments. The best moments that I have had are those where the curriculum of Old Testament Salvation History rushes into the real lives of students and they become aware that God is not just in a story from the past, but that He is here in the present. He is now. We learn about the God who is back there so that we can understand His pedagogy, His method of teaching, and so that we can be disposed to that same God

who wants to meet us where each of us are now in the present. He gradually reveals Himself through words, deeds, and events that affect the lives of the people back then in the Bible. What He reveals to them, He desires to reveal to us: His goodness, truth, beauty and the plans that He has for us.

As my students approach the end of their high school years, it is a joy when I see them at this crucial stage of their lives making real connections with the Scripture that the Church has been entrusted with proclaiming. It is in those moments that they realize that just as God has revealed Himself thousands of years ago to people like Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac, and that He continues to reveal Himself to us today.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that He is still speaking to us today? Do you believe that the Bible is not just about how God prepared people for the savior in the past but a way to meet this very Savior, here and now in the present? Every word of Scripture can reveal Him: the Word that became flesh. This is why it is so important for all of us dive into the Bible because, as Saint Jerome says, “Ignorance of Scripture, is ignorance of Christ.”

This is also why it is important not to take characters and stories in Scripture out of their historical context (and away from our common experience of being human) by either turning them into over-the-top comic book characters or overly simplified (and therefore boring) one-dimensional cartoons characters. When reading Scripture, we need to reclaim and restore a sense of the reality that the Bible narrates. This does not mean that epic events never occurred or that some characters are not kind of dull, but it does mean that we must resist the tendency to read the Bible with false

## **Photo albums are filled with snapshots, but our lives are more than just birthday parties and birthday cake. There are all those days in-between days, which may never be captured on film, but are where most of life happens.**

assumptions that keep us from receiving the truth of God’s Word here and now.

A helpful analogy is to think of the Scriptures as a family photo album that reveals key moments of a larger story. A photo album is great because it preserves those key moments. However, we know that those key moments are not all that was experienced.

Most likely many of us have photo albums that our parents made. You know the ones—you loathe them as much as your parents love them because they are filled with funny and embarrassing pictures of you as a kid. Mine—now buried in my backyard—begins with a picture of chubby baby, half-clothed, devouring a cake; and with each subsequent page there seems to be more and more frosting and less and less clothing. Viewed as a whole, although these photos reveal much (too much at times), they only give the viewer certain (albeit, important) highlights. Photo albums are filled with snapshots, but our lives are more than just birthday parties and (delicious blue frosting covered) birthday cake. There are all those days in-between days, which may never be captured on film, but are where most of life happens.

The pictures in the photo album and the stories in the Scripture tell us vital things, but we should not forget that each of us, and the real people in the Bible, are more than any one moment. This can help us understand how real and relatable, complicated and interesting, the patriarchs, prophets, sinners, and saints (and even high school seniors) really are.

As God revealed Himself to real people in the Church’s photo album—the

Bible—He continues to reveal Himself to us today! That is good news. God encountered real people in the past. He met, inspired, admonished, sustained, and saved real people. Consider what comes to mind when you think about Moses. Do you describe him just as a Prince of Egypt? A leader? A liberator? Maybe you just see Charlton Heston breaking the Ten Commandments as he descends from Mout Sinai?

The more that we are willing to read, reflect, and pray with Scripture, the more our ability to relate with a character deepens. We can appreciate that Moses, like us, was a real person who really experienced things like fear and frustration. He really felt overwhelmed in the desert the same way (but for dramatically different reasons) that my seniors feel overwhelmed at school. As we know our own hearts better, we meditate on Moses, whose interior life was, like ours, filled with memories, voices, struggles, desires, dreams, joys, and the yearning for God that at times was vibrant and at other times silent.

In so many ways, we can learn how the Story of Salvation is a story of individuals as real as you and I. If God engaged the whole person in the past, then when He encounters people today, He will not reduce us to any

snapshot of our success, weakness, occupation, talents, or Tweets. No matter how accurate we feel that labels which we give ourselves or are given by others, are, the Bible affirms that we

are more. God meets people, whether in the past or in this moment, and it is this meeting that produces a relationship that is the greatest revelation of who we are: we are His.

The snapshots of the Bible, when we allow it, will speak to us and reveal that what God did for those in the past, He wants to do for us in all those big memorable, picture-worthy moments. Snapshots of the Bible, when we allow it, can just as importantly reveal that God wants to do so much more for us in all those small, everyday moments that go unrecorded but make up most of our lives—today, right now. The same God who invited Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, invites my students, myself, and you through the words, deeds, and events of life to step out in faith and journey with Hm into a future full of hope.

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# Offerings — not offered!

By Benny Punnathara

“Give everything to God,” “Offer everything to God”—these words are used often in the field of spirituality. However, many people do not have an adequate idea about the things which are to be offered. One day when he was a layman, Saint Anthony of Egypt had gone to church and was powerfully moved by the Word of God that he heard:

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Matthew 19:21)

Saint Anthony of Egypt then practiced this Word of God. By giving away his wealth and cattle to the poor, he followed the path of asceticism, the way of complete dedication.

If all people followed in Saint Anthony’s footsteps, what would be the situation of the world? If everyone is ready to give up what they have, this world would be in disorder. We need agriculture; we need cattle; we need business, and all professions. All these are necessary for the existence of this world.

If all Christian teachers gave up their professions—as Saint Francis Xavier did when he left his job as

a university professor and dedicated his life to the proclamation of the Gospel—then what will be the fate of the coming generation? If all priests gave up their duties as administrators of their parish and various ministries of the Church, and instead became full-time preachers of the Word of God, it would cause great confusion and restlessness in society.

In Matthew 19:21, the Lord does not tell everyone to give up everything. Saint Anthony and Saint Francis Xavier’s dedication is part of the special divine call which is given to certain persons. But the Lord has very clearly said, “Every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

What does this mean? After I resigned from a good position at a bank, I still had a strong feeling that my dedication was not enough and that God wanted something more. The person who is completely dedicated will have a great inner freedom. He will get courage and strength. But I did not have that experience. It was during this time that the Lord allowed me to ponder his words in Luke 14:33.

But what was everything that I had? It was Saint Matthew who helped me to find the answer: “For where



Our heart is always where our treasure is kept.  
Wherever our hearts and minds are rushing to— there is  
our treasure box. What do you think about often?  
Where do your thoughts lead you when you want to relax?

your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Matthew 6:21).

Our heart is always where our treasure is kept. Wherever our hearts and minds are rushing to—there is our treasure box. What do you think about often? Where do your thoughts lead you when you want to relax?

If our thoughts are always on money, sex, and work, then these are the treasures to be renounced. If our thoughts are always with our children and spouse, then our treasures are not in God and in His Kingdom. If our thoughts are only with ourselves, then we have a strong dependence on ourselves. In short, the state of being dedicated is the state in which the mind always flees to God. ‘Everything that we are to renounce’ is something which occupies our mind, instead of God.

Likewise, those persons who think about and worry over their divine ministries more than about God are not dedicated. Above all, our mind should be in God. We should renounce everything which withdraws our mind from God. Then our life will have great joy and spiritual power. When God is always present in our minds and hearts, we will experience God holding our hands and leading us in all aspects of our lives.

Today, many people do not get the joy that one gets through the dedication in their lives, because even after having renounced many things externally, they keep them in their mind. A life which is dedicated to God appears to them as very monotonous and weak. In this condition, God will let everything which our mind focuses on, collapse. This may be one of the basic reasons for many of our sufferings. There is only one remedy for this: raise our hearts to God and long for the joy which His presence gives. Let us pray for this:

Keep me safe, O God;  
in you I take refuge.  
I say to the Lord,  
you are my Lord,  
you are my only good....  
You will show me the path of life,  
abounding joy in your presence,  
the delights at your right hand forever.  
(Psalms 16: 1-2, 11)



# WITNESS WITH JOY

## WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN!

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life— for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you, also, may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.

**1 JOHN 1-14**

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# SPIRITUAL WEAPONS TO BATTLE PORNOGRAPHY

I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST SEVEN SPIRITUAL WEAPONS THAT HAVE GREAT EFFECTS IN THE BATTLE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY. HERE THEY ARE, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER:

## 1. THE EUCHARIST

My bishop once told me of a conversation he had with a Protestant minister: “Do you really believe that the Eucharist is Jesus?” asked the minister, “and not simply a symbol?”

“That’s right,” said the Bishop, “what do you believe?”

“I think it’s just a symbol. But I’ll tell you one thing, if I did believe that, I’d crawl over broken glass daily to receive Him.”

That story has always stuck with me. I confess with my lips that the Eucharist is truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, but do I confess that truth with my actions? Do you? Fourth century Church Father Saint John Chrysostom once wrote that “the Eucharist is a fire that inflames us that, like lions breathing fire, we may retire from the altar being made



terrible to the devil.” Let us take advantage of that!

In addition to receiving the Eucharist at Mass, begin to spend time before our Blessed Lord in Eucharistic adoration. Instead of staring upon the flesh of pornography, begin staring upon the flesh of God that was crucified to redeem you. I have said elsewhere that lack of time is a poor excuse. Let us be honest, we always find time for that which we love. You probably found time to waste on social media today. I certainly found it to line up at my favorite coffee shop (three times—don’t judge!). Blessed Mother Teresa once wrote, “Jesus has made Himself the Bread of Life to give us life. Night and day, He is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration.”

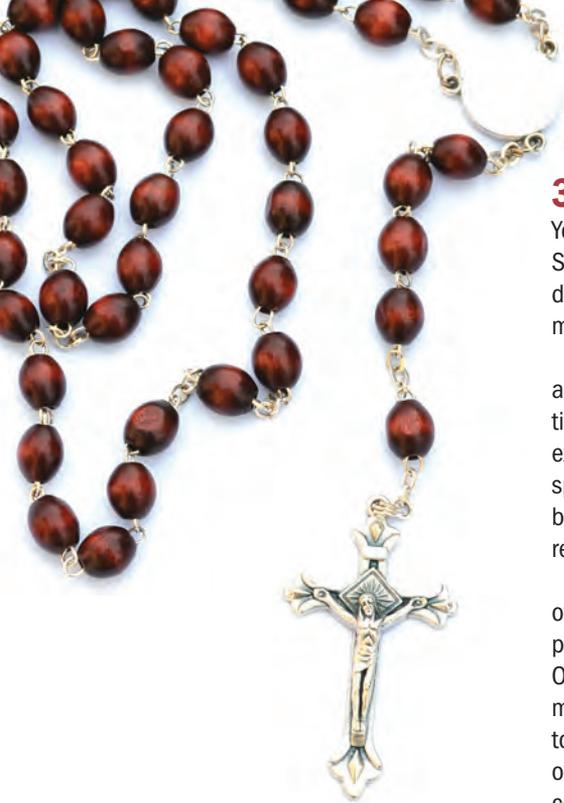


## 2. CONFESSION

Our blessed Lord gave His apostles—the first priests and Bishops of the Catholic Church—the ability to forgive sins (John 20:21-23). That charism still resides with our priests today. In the sacrament of confession, not only are we cleansed of our sins, but we are given the grace to resist those sins in the future.

Saint Faustina Kowalska had this to say about this powerful sacrament: “Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated ... were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. Oh, how miserable are those who do not take advantage of the miracle of God’s mercy! You will call out in vain, but it will be too late (Diary 1448).”

Though the Church only requires us to receive this sacrament once a year, many Popes and saints have advised us to go more often. The purpose of frequenting this sacrament is not to become scrupulous and guild-ridden (scrupulosity is not a cross the Lord calls us to carry but a scourge of Satan that He commands us to renounce!), but to turn our eyes away from ourselves and toward Him. In doing so, we begin to live in the freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21).



### 3. THE ROSARY

You would be hard pressed to find a devotion which, after adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, has been so frequently and persistently advocated by the saints: "Among all the devotions approved by the Church," wrote Pope Pius IX, "none has been so favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the most holy rosary."

Sister Lucia dos Santos (one of three children at Fatima who claimed to have witnessed and conversed with the Virgin Mary), for example, wrote, "The Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the rosary to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us [or] of our families ... that cannot be solved by the rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the holy rosary."

What is the rosary? Simply put, and in the words of Blessed John Paul II, it "is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ." To commit to praying the rosary, perhaps even daily, is to commit to spending 15 to 20 minutes in quiet contemplation. Often those who use pornography habitually say they experience an inner disquiet that can make contemplation seem almost impossible. The rosary is a practical and beautiful way to reverse that problem, to begin quieting our minds and our passions. The famous words of the late Bishop Hugh Doyle are appropriate here: "No one can live continually in sin and continue to say the rosary: either they will give up sin or they will give up the rosary."

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### 4. FASTING

In my book, *Delivered*, I wrote: "In the battle of the flesh, fasting can also be a powerful way to pray. You could say that prayer without fasting is like boxing with one hand tied behind your back, and that fasting without prayer is, well, dieting." To achieve purity both are needed. "If you are able to fast," writes Saint Francis de Sales, "you will do well to observe some days beyond what are ordered by the Church, for besides the ordinary effect of fasting in raising the mind, subduing the flesh, confirming goodness and obtaining a heavenly reward, it is also a great matter to be able to control greediness and to keep the sensual appetites and the whole body subject to the law of the Spirit."

The vice that often leads to sexual sin is a lack of self-mastery. Fasting from legitimate pleasures, even small ones, builds up that virtue within us. When I get a plate of hot fries I may choose to deny myself salt. When I pour myself a cup of coffee I may choose to deny myself cream or sugar. The regular habit of denying ourselves good things gives us the inner strength to avoid bad ones. Put it this way: If we cannot say no to a cookie or another slice of pizza, how will we ever say no to the temptation to look at pornography? You might consider joining E5 men, an online community of thousands of men who fast once a month for their wives (or their future wives). Another idea might be to fast for the men and women we have objectified by using pornography



## 5. SAINT JOSEPH CORD

The Saint Joseph cord (or cincture), like the one priests wear at Holy Mass, is a sign of chastity and has been since before the Church's beginning. Old Testament priests wore cinctures, consecrated virgins and religious wear cinctures, and the wearing

of cinctures in honor of a particular saint is ancient, first spoken of in the life of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine. The Cord itself is simply a white cord of thread or cotton, knotted in seven places—one knot for each of the seven sorrows of Saint Joseph and their related joys, being:

Each day one is to recite seven Gloria's (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.) while meditating upon the seven sorrows and joys of Saint Joseph and then offer this prayer:

*Guardian of virgins, and holy father Joseph, to whose faithful custody Christ Jesus, Innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed; I pray and beseech thee, by these dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, that, being preserved from all uncleanness, I may with spotless mind, pure heart and chaste body, ever serve Jesus and Mary most chastely all the days of my life. Amen.*



## 6. HOLY WATER

Another spiritual weapon you might use in the fight against pornography is holy water. First let me reiterate my great joy in being Catholic. I love how the Church's sacramentals validate and reinforce the goodness of the material world. What a comfort it is to do something as simple as dip your finger into holy water and trace the cross of Christ across your body. How is this not something that our Protestant brothers and sisters have adopted (or reinstated)?

In her autobiography Saint Teresa of Avila writes of how holy water is great weapon against satan and his devils: "From long experience I have learned that there is nothing like holy water to put devils to flight and prevent them from coming back again. They also flee from the Cross, but return; so holy water must have great virtue ... One night ... I thought the devils were stifling me; and when the nuns had sprinkled a great deal of holy water about I saw a huge crowd of them running away as quickly as though they were about to fling themselves down a steep place. Let's be honest; if it is good enough for Saint Teresa of Avila ...

## 7. SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Word of God, as Hebrews 4:12 tells us, is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."

Memorizing scripture verses that pertain to purity can be of great help in moments of temptation. Here are more than 20 scripture verses for you to look up, reflect upon and memorize:

Purity	Temptation	Sexual Sin	Mercy	Spiritual Warfare
Matt 5:8	Jas 1:14-15	Sir 23:18	Mk 2:17	1 Pet 5:8-9
Tim 4:12	1 Cor 10:13	1 Thes 4:3-8	Ps 51:1-2	Eph 6:10-17
Phil 4:8	2 Tim 2:22	Mk 9:47	Heb 8:12	Jn 10:10
Ps 24:3-4	Ps 101:3-4	Ps 51:1-2	Ps 103:12	Rom 12:2
	Sir 7:36			Ps 119:9



In addition to taking advantage of the Church's sacraments and sacramentals, it is vital that we educate ourselves about the destructive nature of pornography. One way pornography affects us is neurologically. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THE FREE E-BOOK, **YOUR BRAIN ON PORN, BY LUKE GILKERSON.**

**MATT FRADD** ([www.mattfradd.com](http://www.mattfradd.com)) serves with Covenant Eyes and is author of *Delivered: True Stories of Men and Women Who Turned from Porn to Purity*. He is also the founder of *The Porn Effect* ([www.theporneffect.com](http://www.theporneffect.com)), a site dedicated to exposing the reality behind the fantasy of porn and offering help to those seeking sexual freedom.

# From Near-Death To New Life

By Christine Watkins



Christine Watkins

I had been given approximately six weeks to live. My hair was falling out; I was bleeding internally and vomiting often. With no energy, I often collapsed with fatigue. Worst of all, I felt sick inside my soul.

I was raised in an anti-religious home, and I did not like Christians. I was never going to be one—of that much I was sure. In my youth, I perfected the fine art of worrying and suffered from low self-esteem and mild depression. I did find joy, though, in ballet and practiced it diligently for years with such commitment and passion that I ended up dancing professionally with the San Francisco Ballet Company. At the age of seven, I had decided that I was going to be a professional ballet dancer. I was going to dance until about age 40. Ballet was my destiny! Nothing else even remotely satisfied me.

Not having been raised in a religion, I did not know that there was a God; so, for me, ballet quickly became my personal god. At the height of my dancing abilities and fully in love with my chosen profession, I suffered from foot injuries and eventually had three foot operations. This effectively ended my career and took away the only god I ever knew. Devastated, I grew depressed, lost my identity and my hope.

In my sadness, I looked for comfort in intimate relationships and sank ever deeper into a mire of sin. I felt temporarily filled with life when I was in a relationship, but when things failed—as they inevitably did—I was left with an even larger, empty, dark, and lonely hole within me. Always searching outside of myself for something to make me happy, I never truly felt a sense of inner peace. I did not think of changing my behavior, and one fateful summer, I was diagnosed with cervical cancer. I had been given approximately six weeks to live. My hair was falling out; I was bleeding internally and vomiting often. With no energy, I often collapsed with fatigue. Worst of all, I felt sick inside my soul. At times, I called out in a guttural despair. At times, I could not stop crying.

My tears were cathartic. I was searching desperately through New Age spirituality for answers and wanted nothing to do with Jesus or Mary. For years I had wanted nothing to do with them. I remember seeing a picture of the Madonna and Child which made me so angry that I wanted it taken down. I also remember reading a self-help book that I enjoyed except for its fleeting references to Jesus. I knew that Jesus and Mary were fanciful figures for the hopeless and misguided. For me, their names and

images evoked ire.

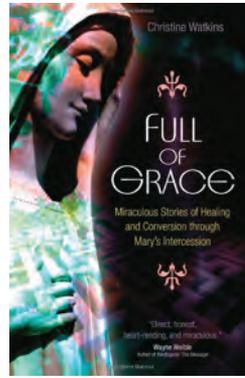
But Jesus decided to save me, a sinner. I will never know why He chose me, and I do not have words to express my gratitude. I would not be alive were it not for Divine Grace, unmerited and unasked for. While I was staying at a friend's house one day in the summer of 1993, when I was 27, I lay down to rest in his room and felt the presence of God within and around me. I then heard a loud "pop" sound inside my body. It turned out later that the cancer was gone.

My friend then told me that Mary, the Mother of God, spoke to him, telling him that she saw me stumbling through life like a fish that could not find water. She said that she took great pity on me and asked her Son to save me. Later, Jesus spoke to my friend and told him that I should sin no more, join the Catholic Church, and help bring to it "compassion, love, kindness, and generosity." I had never before set foot in a Catholic church, but I quickly learned how I could "sign up."

I should not be here on earth: Jesus and Mary saved my life. Even though I had hated them, they had always loved me.

After I was cured, I remember hearing a symphony. I was in my friend's room and thought perhaps the

radio was on. I checked everywhere—in the hall, out the window, under the bed, even in his desk drawers—to see where the music might be playing; but I soon realized that the beautiful music was coming from within me. I realized then that heaven was rejoicing because one sinner had been saved, and the heavenly hosts were letting me join in the celebration.



My life is not mine anymore. It is fully God's. I was God's all along. And being a Roman Catholic Christian means everything to me. It means the difference between life and death.

**CHRISTINE WATKINS** ([www.ChristineWatkins.com](http://www.ChristineWatkins.com)) is a national Catholic author and speaker, featured on radio and television. In her book *Full of Grace: Miraculous Stories of Healing and Conversion through Mary's Intercession*, she has shared a full account of her story and other remarkable true stories of conversion.

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# SHATTERED AND REBORN: POSITIVE SUFFERING

By Melanie Jean Juneau

**“The Son of God made man has not taken away from human disease and suffering, but, taking them upon himself, has transformed and reduced them so they no longer have the last word, which now belongs to the new life in fullness; transformed, because in union with Christ positive can come from negative ... Belief in our good God becomes goodness, faith in the Crucified Christ becomes strength to love till the end and even our enemies. Evidence of authentic faith in Christ is the gift of self to spread the love for one’s neighbor, especially for those who do not deserve it, for those who suffer, for those who are marginalized.”**

—POPE FRANCIS

once asked a priest what my life would have been like if I had not experienced suffering, if I had married a well-off dentist, had 2.5 kids and lived in an efficient, modern house. He put on a phony, pious face, put his hands together in prayer and said in a high, mocking voice, “Oh, you would be a nice Christian lady, praising the Lord.” What he meant by that amusing bit of acting was that I would be shallow, without depth and strength.

If this is the situation, I say bring on suffering, because I want—no, I need—to live in reality. I can think of no greater tragedy than to die and discover that I had deluded myself, simply living happily on the surface—eating, drinking, doing chores, sleeping—and yet missing out on the core reality of what it means to be fully alive, fully human, in relationship to other people and to God.

I was just thinking that I have not really written about my pain, the struggle to raise nine kids with little money on a hobby farm. I only really write about the joy of mothering. A friend also pointed out to me the other day that I never really talk about the long, dark periods in my life. I guess it is because in my life, joy always triumphs in the end. I tend to forget about the painful years, the years of suffering. The love of little people, strong tea, laughter and the presence of God in the midst of chaos seems to crack anxiety and stress, but yes, I have been shattered by the demands of mothering.

Yet God always manages to use those moments when I am shattered to crack my heart and soul open to more of His presence and healing. It is like childbirth; the pain is forgotten when I hold my newborn. If there is no pain, no suffering, there is no baby or new growth in the Spirit.

For me, God speaks through books, as well as my spiritual director and the written word. He has often changed my life through these “tools,” flipped an inner switch by bringing insight and clarity. I then realize that each difficult stage in mothering is normal, not a big deal, because all mothers go through similar experiences. So I am not going through a dramatic or unusual crisis. I can see each difficult stage as a call from God to change and grow by going deeper, accessing the strength of the Holy Spirit within my own heart.

I want to live in Christ, healed, fully alive and strong enough to serve. I cannot tolerate the idea that my life was spent playing games, pretending to live, unable to love, whether as a mother, wife, daughter or friend. If that means I must experience suffering then so be it.

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© MELANIE JEAN JUNEAU ([www.melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com](http://www.melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com)) is a joyful wife, writer and mother who raised nine children on a small family farm. Her writing is humorous and heartwarming, thoughtful and thought provoking. Part of her call and her witness is to write the truth about children, family, marriage and the sacredness of life, especially a life lived in God. Melanie is the administrator of Association of Catholic Women Bloggers and is a columnist at Catholic Lane, Catholic Stand, CatholicMom and Catholic Attachment Parenting Corner.

Shalom

# tidings

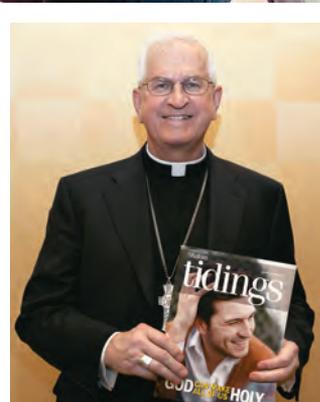
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# The Mundane Miracle

By Joan Minardi Harniman

**W**hen I was 12, I attended Mass with my Catholic school girlfriends. They were assigned to 8 am Mass on Sundays with their classes. Since the classes were so huge, I felt that one lone public school student would not be noticed by the supervising Sisters of Notre Dame. (Later, as a teacher, I realized how wrong I was about that!)

One Sunday, in the midst of Mass, I felt great doubt about what was taking place on the altar. All of a sudden, my faith, which was always just a part of me, started to ebb away. I felt a great sense of loss. To this day, I remember the place in my white Sunday missal (which I still have) where it says, “My foot stands on level ground.” I knew it did not for me. I was leaning, but toward what? Since I felt I could tell no one (wrong again), I spoke to

God. I prayed that my faith be restored. How could I live without God? He was all good, merciful and faithful to me. I do not know how long the period of doubt lasted. Each week I went back to Mass. Suddenly, both “feet were on level ground.” Praise be to God!

Faith came back and life went on. Throughout high school and college, I missed Holy Mass only when I was sick. (And according to Mom if you were sick for Mass, you were sick all day—no miraculous recovery after Mass was completed). Marriage, moves, and children followed. I continued to go to Mass.

When I retired I was able to easily attend daily Mass. It was then that I finally recognized my treasure. Drawn at first by the Word of God, I was lead to the awesomeness of the Eucharist. I am now so moved by the mystery and majesty the Mass offers.



I have made up my own oxymoron—a Catholic contradiction in terms, namely the “Mundane Miracle.” Where would Catholics encounter the “Mundane Miracle?” I think Catholics take part in one at every Mass they attend.

**H**ow can a miracle be “mundane” or ordinary? Well, we have the freedom to attend Mass at churches in our neighborhoods at various times each day. Because it is so ordinary, many have a cavalier attitude of attending, even though we are commanded to honor each and every Lord’s Day.

Maybe we should think then about “miracle.” The dictionary tells us that it is “an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.” What happens during the Mass that could constitute a miracle? We are much more familiar and accepting of miracles in Jesus’ day. We remember the hungry crowds who came to listen and learn from Jesus. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) says, “The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through the disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of His Eucharist” (1335, 158). The sign of the water turned into wine at Cana “already announces the Hour of Jesus’ glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father’s Kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ” (1335, 159). The Catechism further states that “to receive in faith the gift of the Eucharist is to receive the Lord Himself” (1336).

In our secular, consumer society, can I buy that? Well, not many could accept it, even in Jesus’ day. Many followers simply walked away, back to their former lives and activities. It was too hard to understand and embrace just as the Cross which soon followed would be. In fact, the gift of the Eucharist was instituted on the day before Jesus was crucified. “The Eucharist is a sacrament, an efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit” (CCC glossary).

Wait, remember the definition of miracle—“divine intervention?” Well, here it is again. In the Eucharist “divine life “is given to us. But there is more. The Catechism says that “the Eucharist celebrated and shared at Mass is a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of

charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (1323). Do we Catholics know this and really understand it? A pledge of future glory, eternal life, is being offered as well!

I can only understand it as love—God’s love. In love beyond understanding, God the Father sent His only Son to redeem us. Jesus, Son of God, gave up heaven to become small at Bethlehem to grow like us in human form to die for us. Conquering sin and death by the Cross to allow us into eternal life was not the end of Jesus’

love for us. Beyond His broken body, He became broken bread, again making Himself small, offered to His Father as the perfect sacrifice and given out to us over and over. The Eucharist, Christ Himself, freely offered and received to make us like Himself and to unite the whole community in Him.

I should float out of Mass, totally amazed that I am the bearer of a miracle and that all of us have received the same Jesus Christ—true God and



**I can only understand it as love, God’s love... Beyond His broken body, He became broken bread, again making Himself small, offered to His Father as the perfect sacrifice and given out to us over and over.**

true Man. Do I teach my children this awesome truth? What do I, what do we, do with this Christ that we have received? Do we take Him into our little worlds to transform ourselves and those we live with? As we spill out into our small towns or big cities, do we know the Christ comes with us?

Yes, Mass contains a miracle, nothing mundane about that. With all my heart I give thanks for it. May I always find myself “standing on level ground.”

Oh, Precious Blood, so holy, please cover me.

Miracle, oh Miracle, change me into Thee.

All praise and all thanksgiving, for this Eucharist, I sing.

Miracle, oh Miracle, all Grace to me you bring.

---

**JOAN MINARDI HARNIMAN** is a retired teacher. She has co-authored two books of Biblical plays, skits, and songs, and has published articles in Catechist and teacher magazines, as well as Celebrate Life magazine. Her most recent publication is her pro-life picture book, “Where Was I When You Were a Little Girl, Huh, Mommy?” She lives in New York with her husband, children, and five grandchildren.

# THE WORTH OF INADEQUACY

By Megan Baum

I never thought that one little plus sign would change my life. But on December 28, when I saw a blue plus sign forming on the pregnancy test I had just taken, I knew that my life would never be the same. I knew that my life was somehow more whole than it had ever been. After a few minutes of freaking out and staring into the mirror thinking, “am I ready for this?”, I sat down with my husband, Paul, tears welling up in my eyes, completely in awe of the gift that we had received in this child.

Over these many weeks, I cannot believe how much the Lord has changed me and drawn me closer to Himself through this little life inside of me. Though I have been learning about sacrificial love and offering up suffering, the most significant of all lessons has been about our worth and dignity as humans.

What has pregnancy looked like for me? I have been so exhausted that naps are no longer a random luxury, but a daily necessity. Nausea has been the constant in my life. The dirty dishes sitting in my normally clean sink speak of the toll sickness has taken on me. Suddenly my favorite foods have become repugnant to me. On those days, if I could open the refrigerator without wanting to throw up all over the floor, I would certainly make my husband some dinner. For now, it is cereal or grilled cheese....again.

In these few weeks, I have experienced deep feelings of inadequacy. As someone who prides myself in my work ethic, my high energy level, my optimism, my ability to do as many things as I can in the shortest amount of time, my healthiness, and my service to my husband, my own self-worth has been questioned. What do the people at work think about me when I leave for a bit to go take a nap? Do people notice that my pants fit just a little bit tighter than usual? Does my husband feel neglected? Do people think I am a wimp? Do they know that I am really trying to do as much as I used to do? And if I do not, will they still appreciate me?

As someone who has worked in youth ministry for years, telling young people that they have worth simply because they are sons and daughters of God, created specifically by Him, I have been humbled as this pregnancy has challenged me to actually believe this for myself.

So when I approached the Lord in prayer one day and kept hearing the words of Psalm 139:14, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made,” it took me a few days to realize that these words were not just for the child living inside of me. Those words were for me....and they are for YOU.

This pregnancy has challenged me to not just profess, but to truly believe, that the worth of my life cannot be measured by the amount of work that I can accomplish in one day, how put together I look, how many people affirm or look up to me, how many Masses I can attend each week, or even how extravagantly I can love my husband. My life is worthwhile and has dignity because I exist, because I am a daughter, because I have been created and am infinitely loved by my Father.

Last summer Pope Francis said, “Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in His own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.” Let us extend that quote to say that each of us is a masterpiece. We have worth precisely because of the fact that we are, that we exist, that we are creations of God almighty. We have worth because we are made in His likeness, that we resemble God Himself. We have worth because our lives are not just held in esteem for this life, but are cherished and desired by God for all of eternity.

Today, I challenge you to ask the question: where do you find your worth? Is it in your career? How much money you make or what you can provide for your family? How successful, smart, or funny you are? How many accolades you receive from others? Or is it that you ARE—created, known, cherished and immeasurably loved by the Father. Today, may you believe and be filled with joy that you are truly fearfully and wonderfully made.

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# THE BLESSING OF RECONCILIATION— IT'S NEVER TOO LATE!

By Carol Osburn

**O**n Dec. 28, 2007, I received a phone call from my brother, Tom. He was distraught and told me Mom was very, very sick, that she had lung cancer and blood in her brain and that she was near death.

I quickly called my sister, Joan, and together we were on a plane to Nevada to be near Mom and Tom. I was leaving behind a full house: my husband, Mark, my son, Kevin, my daughter-in-law, Hyeryung, Hyeryung's mother and grandmother who were visiting from Korea, my granddaughter, Teresa, who was only one week old, and my youngest son, Craig, who was on Christmas break from seminary. My daughter Julie and her husband, Nate, lived nearby. As you will discover, my family worked together to care for each other during this most difficult time.

When I arrived at the hospital, I was shocked to see Mom. She was a woman who did not like to go to the doctor and here she was. She was in and out of consciousness, but happy to know her children were there

## WITH MOM'S HANDS IN HIS, AND THROUGH TEARS, DAD SAID THAT HE WAS SORRY. MOM COULD NOT SPEAK. BUT THE PEACE THAT I FELT IN THAT ROOM THAT DAY SPOKE LOUDER THAN WORDS.

with her. Mom even expressed interest in my Dad. They had divorced more than 25 years earlier. We found out that her cancer had advanced and metastasized in her brain. She was dying and, sadly, we had to put her into hospice that weekend.

Over the next few days, there were several times when Mom asked about Dad. This was exciting to me because, even though they had been married for 28 years, she never really contacted him after they divorced. I sensed God was at work. Then the unthinkable happened—on Jan. 2, 2008, I got a call from Craig telling me that my husband Mark suffered a heart attack! Mom was dying; was Mark also going to die? What a burden for my children to carry as young adults! I was in shock and planning to return home to Illinois.

A few hours later, Craig called and told me that Mark had angioplasty and was doing much better. Needless to say, I wanted to be home with him, but Mark was adamant that I stay with my dying mother, which, after much prayer, I did.

My Dad called us one day and said that he was coming to help us. He understood that we were overwhelmed with decision making and paperwork. I was so glad that he was coming to the rescue. This was a very generous offer and I thanked God for my Dad. This was the first time that we had been together as a family in many years. But when Dad arrived, he insisted on seeing Mom. My sister, brother and I were very protective of Mom and unsure if the visit was best for her. Joan worried the most and I reassured her that this was God at work, allowing an opportunity for the animosity between them to finally be address. After much prayer and with Mom's approval, they finally met again after all those years.

I walked into the hospital room with Dad and witnessed the most beautiful reconciliation between two people. With Mom's hands in his, and through tears, Dad said that he was sorry. Mom could not speak. But the peace I felt in that room that day spoke louder than words. After their 28 years of marriage, and another 25 years being divorced, I honestly never felt so much love as I did while I stood in their presence. It was a beautiful testimony to the power of the sacrament of marriage.

God was preparing Mom for death. She had made her reconciliation and received her Last Rites. Now, this beautiful reconciliation with Dad was not just for Mom's soul and not just for Dad's but for our family's healing. What a gift our entire family received! What a gift the

mercy and love of God is!

I felt my mission had come to an end. On Jan. 15, I packed up and went home to my husband. In the early morning of Jan. 16, 2008, I awoke with a start. In my heart, I knew Mom had died. About five minutes later, Joan called to say that Mom had died a few minutes earlier. I told her that I knew.

I thought that I might feel badly that I was not there when Mom died, but I believe I did what God had asked of me. My sister and brother were there with her, along with their families and our relatives. My children were home taking care of their dad in my absence, along with our relatives. God took care of each of us in a very personal way. Jesus is a person who longs for us to come to Him when we are weary. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

I had always prayed that my parents would reconcile. But, I could never have imagined the beauty of Dad and Mom's reconciliation and the profound impact it has had on my life. I keep telling this story—it seems to fill people with hope and God is glorified in the process!

The blessing of reconciliation ... It is never too late!



**CAROL OSBURN** serves in ministry at Saint Isidore Catholic Church in Bloomingdale, Illinois. She holds a certificate in Spiritual Direction from The Cenacle of Our Lady of Divine Providence School of Spirituality in affiliation with the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Carol also serves as a spiritual formator for the Diocese of Joliet Diaconate Formation Class. She resides in Carol Stream, Illinois, with her husband of 36 years. They have three adult children—two married and one in seminary—and five grandchildren.



# THE 8TH DAY

By Scott M. Anthony

**H**appy Easter! He is risen, alleluia! How was your Lent? Did you accomplish all you wanted to do? Did you keep all of your fasts? Did you abstain from meat on Fridays? Did you offer up all of your other sacrifices and grow in holiness the way you wanted to?

Or perhaps you feel short of your goals? Perhaps you found yourself at the end of Lent wishing you had tried harder, done more and been better. How great is it that while the Church observes forty days of Lent, she celebrates FIFTY days of Easter!! So maybe you did not succeed as much as you wanted this Lent. The good news is that there will be another Lent next year for you to try again. But the best news is that we are an Easter people and now is the time to celebrate!

The Church reminds us that Easter is the 8th Day—the day that the new creation begins! The reality is that because of Original Sin, all of us are going to fail at one time or another. All of us are going to fail. But the reality of Christ's death and resurrection allow us to rejoice in the fact that He wants to make us into a new creation! Death has been defeated and the work of our redemption has begun. In Christ we do not simply get covered by the grace of Christ, but the grace of Christ envelopes and penetrates into our lives and by cooperating with this power of God we can be made whole, we can become something new and the old will pass away!

It is time to stop wallowing in self-pity, misery, pain,

and anger. We need to allow God to heal us, love us, hold us, nurture us, sustain us, empower us, and CHANGE us!! Easter is NOT the time for hanging heads, dragging feet, or heavy hearts. It is the time for rejoicing and renewal. Our hearts should be light, there should be a spring in our step, and our heads should be held high with the joy of Christ's victory fresh and full on our faces, in our smiles and gleaming from our eyes!

Even if we are suffering from sickness, grief or pain, the resurrection points to a greater reality for us. We may even be scared or hurt, but the power of Jesus can reign in our hearts as we live in the hope of redemption. While there will still be suffering and persecution in this world, we know that this world and death are not the end! Our redeemer lives and when we are in Him, we live and we will live forever with Him!

So come celebrate with the Church for the next fifty days. Not because you were so good during Lent, but because Jesus was so good on Easter!! O death, where is your sting?

Dear Jesus, thank you for the 8th day, the day when the work of redemption in the world and in my heart was begun. Help me to live in the reality of your resurrection! Amen.

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© SCOTT M. ANTHONY ([www.ScottMAnthony.net](http://www.ScottMAnthony.net)) has been involved in youth ministry and evangelization for over twenty years. He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and eight children.



# MUSIC

By Anthony Smela

# FOR GOD

**M**usic has always been a significant part of my life. I remember the day I began piano lessons in first grade. I remember the day my parents brought home a trumpet for me in fifth grade. I remember the day I bought a bass guitar my sophomore year in high school. And I remember the first time I played my bass guitar in front of an audience.

It was this day that changed my life.

In middle school, I fell in love with rock music. I grew up listening to what my dad did, country music, but I couldn't identify with the music. I was not a cowboy, and I did not lose a girl because of a rodeo. Rock music was something I could identify with. It was the emotional release that I felt I needed. That night I first played in front of a crowd, I learned that the emotional release could be intensified. The adrenaline rush I experienced that evening could be felt days later. I wanted more.

In college, I joined a rock band that played gigs about once a month. The excitement I felt for each show began as soon as I woke up that morning. By the time we began setting up for the show that evening, I could barely keep my energy in check, and it was still hours before we started playing. However, all that build up would pay off once the show started, and my energy would pour through me. By the end of the show, I would be exhausted, but exhilarated. It was everything I thought I wanted.

But I still was not happy, I was not fulfilled.

This is when I began to think about seminary. In high school, I reasoned that it was possible that God was calling me to be a priest, but I was dating at the time, so I put the thoughts of the priesthood away. In college, seminary was not a part of my plan for my life, so I again put the thoughts of the priesthood away. Only after realizing that my plans were not making me happy did I begin to ask God if His plan for my life could make me happy. It was a difficult question because I knew that this meant giving up my band.

And giving my life to God was the best decision I have ever made.

I will be the first to admit it, I do miss my band. But God has opened the door for many opportunities for me to play bass guitar that I never thought I would have in seminary. In the process, I have learned a lot about myself and the impact music has on my life. The next difficult thing I had to do was to clean out my music library of all the raw, emotionally driven music I had and to replace it with positive, uplifting music. As Thomas Dubay writes in *The Evidential Power of Beauty*, "Handel's Messiah lifts the mind and heart to the glories of the Incarnation and Resurrection, while rock, not surprisingly, is often accompanied by drugs and sexual immorality—and at times is followed by a riot."

I may not experience the major emotional adrenaline rush when I play anymore, but I leave feeling much more happy and fulfilled, because I am doing God's will. My music has been consecrated to the service of God instead of the service of myself, and that makes all the difference in my life.

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**ANTHONY SMELA** was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. He is a lover of music, sports, and Jesus. He is currently studying Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit as a seminarian for the Diocese of Lansing.

# NOTHING BUT YES TO JESUS:

## An Interview With Bob Rice

By Mary Job



Certified Life Organizers tout a variety of methods for getting organized so that one can get done everything one needs to do: color-coded folders, printed labels, clear shoeboxes for storage and so much more. Husband, father of seven, Ph.D. student, professor, screen writer, musician, song writer, author and speaker Bob Rice has another method to help organize one's life: "Everything I do, I do for the glory of God. So, He allows me the opportunities to do everything I need to do for Him."

Hailing from a 100-percent Irish family outside of Chicago, Rice and his sister were raised by their Episcopalian father and Catholic mother. In the home, faith and spirituality were important and prayers were said before every meal.

In his youth, he encountered Young Life, a non-denominational group that helped to promote Christian teachings and had a heart for ecumenism, praying that all Christians would be one. In college, Rice majored in theater and was active playing music in the area. With a God-given intelligence for memorizing Scripture, Rice's presence in Young Life served to expose those in the group with a Catholic background, and Rice took every opportunity to show his faith to others.

1994 served as a pivotal year for Rice when he was hired by Franciscan University of Steubenville to speak at

its summer youth conferences. His first two conferences brought together 3,000 students each weekend and now, 25 years later, the Steubenville summer youth conferences reach the hearts of more than 40,000 young people in 15 locations throughout the United States and Canada.

He was not that impressed with his first conference experience. "I'm not moved by emotion," says Rice, "God doesn't work like that through me." But after that conference, Rice heard the Blessed Mother tell him to drop everything and return to Steubenville. And so he did, enrolling as an undergrad and graduating in 1997 with a Master's degree in Theology, with a specialization in Catechetics.

After graduation, he moved and worked for several years at a parish in Latham, N.Y. He had opportunities to work with Life Teen, while still continuing his association with Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Rice's collaborations with Steubenville, which began with speaking, expanded to writing the conference theme songs, helping plan the conferences and hosting. In 2004, the University invited him to be a professor. "I thought that was uncool—to be a college professor!" says Rice, "But it has been such a joy, a really beautiful experience."

And then came the other time-management challenging activities: the music ministry took off when requests came for his music. So far, he has released 12 CDs, with his latest being *The Gospel According to Bob Rice*; he has authored four books, the latest of which is a novel titled *Between the Savior and the Sea*; and the speaking engagements are now national and international. "It has truly been one blessing upon another," says Rice.

And did we mention the seven children? "Each one is a blessing. And we have a unique story with our son,

**WHEN IT IS TIME FOR EUCHARISTIC PROCESSION, I WITNESS THE CHAINS FALLING OFF THE HEARTS OF THE PARTICIPANTS. WEEKEND IN AND WEEKEND OUT FOR 25, THIS IS WHAT I HAVE SEEN—GOD CONTINUES TO WORK IN OUR HEARTS.**



Joseph," says Rice. The second time Rice heard Blessed Mother calling him to action was when Rice and his wife were called to adopt a child, after their fifth child was born, and after the couple had completed the St. Louis de Montfort consecration to Jesus through Mary. The Rices knew people in Haiti who worked with the Missionary of Charities who took care of children who could be adopted. The Haitian adoption process is notoriously long and difficult, but the Rices felt that it was what God wanted them to do. So, they prayed and completed all the paperwork and submitted it. Shortly after, a devastating earthquake hit Haiti. Two weeks after submitting the paperwork, they received a call—the government was fast-tracking adoptions, including theirs, which was one of the last to be received. Two months later, Rice and his wife, Jennifer, traveled to Miami, Fla., and picked up their son, two and a half year old Joseph.

Rice says, "My spiritual life is driven by two things: scripture, which has been the case since my high school days, and Marian devotion. The Bible and the rosary are always at the heart of my prayer. I want so badly to say 'yes' like Mary did in everything God calls me to. And a devotion to Mary has been a big part of our family's prayer life as well."

"I have been blessed," says Rice, "to get the best seat in the house during the Steubenville youth conferences. As part of the music ministry I get to look out at the faces of all the people. And when it is time for Eucharistic procession, I witness the chains falling off the hearts of the participants. Weekend in and weekend out for 25 years, this is what I have seen: God continues to work in our hearts." And what moves the young people at these conferences is the reflection of God they see in the adults at the conferences. "Faith formation is about inviting and not forcing," says Rice, "it is given freely and is not mandatory. When children see their parents or the adults around them truly excited about the faith, then the choices and decisions the young people make will be in line with what God wants for their lives."

Rice's work has been a continued progression to glorifying God. "How did I get here? By trying to do nothing more and nothing less than what God wants of me," says Rice. He continues, "If tomorrow He wants me to lead a more private life, I'll be sad, of course, but I will follow Him, because I know He always calls me to what is best." Using his talents for Christ, Rice serves as an example to others that when God calls, faithful people need only to respond.

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**MARY JOB** serves on the Editorial Council of *Shalom Tidings*. She resides with her husband and daughter in Edinburg, Texas.

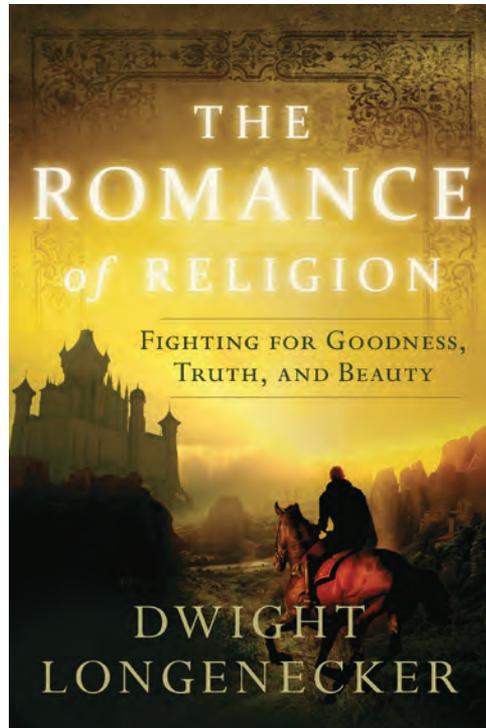
# BOOK REVIEW

By Mark Phillips

“If you like dull theology, you won’t like this book,” said Father Dwight Longenecker during our phone interview regarding his latest book, *The Romance of Religion*, and “If you like radical theology, you won’t like this book.” He went on to describe two common approaches to theology: “There is the orthodox view, which can often be very dull and unimaginative. Those who write with imagination often come to negative—incorrect—conclusions.” Father Longenecker, therefore, set out to write a book based on orthodox theology that showed that the Christian adventure was not about dull routine and religious dogmas, but is as exciting as an unexpected surprise. *The Romance of Religion* achieves that goal.

The book shares the same qualities Father Longenecker radiated in our brief interview. They are both inviting, intelligent and fun. Filled with profound insight into the true nature of our relationship with God, *The Romance of Religion* could not read less like a theological treatise. Instead of “churchy language and specialized terms,” he chose, in the pattern of his hero, C.S. Lewis, to use ordinary language to speak to ordinary people about the amazingly extraordinary adventure of following Christ. Instead of reading like a textbook, it feels more like a novel. In fact, Father Longenecker said that only after he realized he was writing a story about a story did the words come.

The story begins on a bus in the fifth grade, when a young Dwight decides he will not let his life become boring. It travels through the worlds of Don Quixote and the large-nosed Cyrano de Bergerac, describing their crusades in the name of love. It spends some time in Narnia and ancient Greece, before it finishes by riding off into the Western sunset. Along the way, religion is revealed as a romantic odyssey, akin to hero movies and Harlequin romances. After all, isn’t the goal of those stories also the finding of true love?



Who should read this book? The disillusioned churchgoer who feels fed up with the institution should read it. The avid churchgoer who thinks the institution is everything that matters should as well. Both will discover the true meaning and place of religion in their lives. A person who simply wants to learn more about this thing called “Being a Christian” would benefit from it. Someone who grapples with titles already on the shelf that are overflowing with long Latin words and painfully concrete structures will love it.

Father Longenecker’s explanations are clear; his ideas are not childish. They are designed to enhance the way we view our journey to find God. He suggests that anyone reading the book comes to it with a totally open mind. The ideas are not revolutionary,

but they are challenging. As Father Longenecker said, “Jesus was, after all, a radical subversive, and He can be disturbing.” The book is not designed to bolster our comfort zone, but to challenge it.

In my opinion, this book would be most rewarding if it were read among a group of friends—not within a Bible study! The free-flowing story arc and playful prose would grate against the framework of such a structured lesson. Instead, a group of friends should drink coffee, eat donuts and discuss it. Marvel at his use of language, argue about his conclusions, and enjoy the freedom to be excited about religion that Father Longenecker inspires and advocates.

Then, each member of the group should contemplate how he or she will face the gauntlet this book throws down. The mission is clear. The horse is saddled and the shield and sword are ready. The end of *The Romance of Religion* should be the beginning of our own quest.

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**MARK PHILLIPS** is a stay-at-home-dad, homeschool teacher, and freelance writer. He is part of the leadership corps of a family prayer group, where he leads prayer meetings and teaches Bible-study. He is the author of *The Enemy in Your Cupboard*, a book designed to help sufferers of Celiac Disease, and has recently written *A Donkey Named Flea*, a children’s book about the Christmas story. He lives with his wife and four children in Dayton, Ohio.

# MEDIA SCAN

## CATHOLICCULTURE.ORG

A great website that will help the whole family cultivate their faith in their own home. Head over to the website and you are met with News and Commentary. Go a bit further and you find an interactive Liturgical Calendar that is filled with content that ranges from Saint Feast Days to faith-filled family activities. You will have easy access to prayers, recipes and creative ideas on how to celebrate the seasons along with the Church. Not only do you get a monthly calendar, but the month overview gives you short summaries for the Gospel Readings for the month as well as Feasts Days and the Pope's prayer intentions. Finally, their resources pages is the real gem, offering the "Catholic Teaching--What You



Need To Know," which offers short, well written summaries on key, but often misunderstood teachings as well as links to additional information. Spend time here and not only know your faith better, but explore great ideas on how to live it out with your family at home!



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Laudate is an awesome Catholic app that's filled with everything you need to take your faith on the go! The app includes Daily Readings, Liturgy of the Hours, NAB and Douay-Rheims Bible translations, as well as a comprehensive list of prayers and an interactive Rosary. Though not built into the app directly, you have quick access to a web display of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a link to the Pope App. Laudate has been the #1 Catholic app for years because you get all of this and more—for free!

Download now from Google Play or iTunes Store!



## MELANIE REA

Melanie Rea is a Catholic singer-songwriter from Michigan who has been involved in music throughout her life. Even as Rea studied Social Work at Franciscan University of Steubenville, she was passionately involved in music ministry on campus. Rea's latest album, One Desire, includes original tracks as well as several familiar praise and worship songs. "I have to strive just like anybody to put the Lord first always; that's what One Desire is about. Jesus is my One Desire and I need His love to consume me, I need to be one with Him so I can share His love with others," Melanie said about her latest album. Available on iTunes and Amazon.



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MAY  
**2-4**

**AWAKENING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH**  
Norfolk, Virginia

Featuring Raniero Cantalamessa, Preacher to the Papal Household.

- For more information visit [www.adc2014.org](http://www.adc2014.org)

MAY  
**2-4**

**CALLED BY NAME...HEALED BY LOVE**  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Featuring Archbishop Albert LeGatt, D.D., Father Marc Drouin, Sister Nancy Keller, Deacon Larry Oney.

- For more information, visit [www.catholicrenewalservices.com](http://www.catholicrenewalservices.com)

MAY  
**5-9**

**ASSOCIATION OF DIOCESAN LIAISONS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
San Antonio, Texas

Featuring Father Bob Hogan, Dr. Mary Healy, Walter Matthews, and more.

- For more information visit [www.associationofdiocesanliaisons.org](http://www.associationofdiocesanliaisons.org)

MAY  
**16**

**MARRIAGE ON FIRE: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PLAN FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY**  
Palatine, Illinois

Featuring Greg and Julie Alexander.

- For more information, visit [www.thealexanderhouse.org](http://www.thealexanderhouse.org)



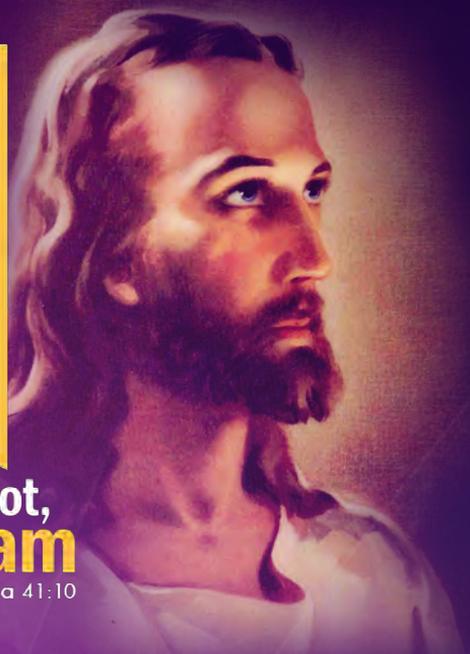
MAY JULY  
**30-27**

**FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY OF STEUBENVILLE**  
Adult and Youth Conferences

- For more information, visit [www.steubenvilleconferences.com](http://www.steubenvilleconferences.com)

# Shalom Festival 2014

**fear not,  
for I am  
with you** Isa 41:10



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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>ORLANDO, FL</b><br>May 02-04      | <b>BRONX, NY</b><br>May 10     | <b>SAN BERNARDINO, CA</b><br>May 17-18 | <b>KALAMAZOO, MI</b><br>May 24-25   | <b>BROOKLYN, NY</b><br>May 31   | <b>HOUSTON, TX</b><br>Jun 07        |
| <b>WASHINGTON D C</b><br>Jun 14 - 15 | <b>MIAMI, FL</b><br>Jun 21-22  | <b>CHICAGO, IL</b><br>Jul 12-13        | <b>LOS ANGELES, CA</b><br>Aug 02-03 | <b>DALLAS, TX</b><br>Aug 09-10  |                                     |
| <b>SAN DIEGO, CA</b><br>Aug 23       | <b>NEW JERSEY</b><br>Aug 30-31 | <b>ATLANTA, GA</b><br>Sep 06-07        | <b>SACRAMENTO, CA</b><br>Sep 13-14  | <b>DETROIT, MI</b><br>Sep 20-21 | <b>SAN ANTONIO, TX</b><br>Sep 27-28 |

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“AND I WILL  
ASK THE  
FATHER, AND  
HE WILL GIVE  
YOU ANOTHER  
ADVOCATE TO  
BE WITH YOU  
ALWAYS”

JOHN 14:16