

# AD INFINITUM

Reflections from the Bloggers  
of the Catholic Apostolate Center



Apostleship • Lessons from the Saints  
Prayerful Life • The Church Year  
New Evangelization

*Edited by Victor David*  
*With a Foreword by Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C.*



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## **Foreword**

**Fr. Frank S. Donio, S.A.C., D.Min.**

**When we launched the Catholic Apostolate Center in November of 2011, I wrote in the first Ad Infinitum blog post that, “It is my hope that the Catholic Apostolate Center may assist in spreading the Gospel message of Jesus Christ by forming apostles for the New Evangelization.” Over the past few years, I have marveled at how great the response has been to our mission of helping others deepen their faith. Seeing that kind of reaction keeps me, the staff, and collaborators motivated to continue our ministry.**

**Our blog is one way that we have been able to reach so many people and carry on the mission of the New Evangelization. Since January 2012, our blog posts have reached thousands of readers week after week. This would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of the dozens of writers who have contributed to this endeavor. Their understanding of the Catholic faith and its impact on their daily lives offers a great witness to their personal encounter with Jesus Christ (Cf., Evangelii Gaudium, 3).**

**And now through this e-book, we hope that our loyal readers and those who have not had an opportunity to read our blog can reflect on and strengthen their relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, the Infinite Love.**

**Please enjoy reading this collection of insightful, thought-provoking reflections.**

**May the Charity of Christ urge us on!**

**~Fr. Frank S. Donio, S.A.C.  
Director, Catholic Apostolate Center**





## **A Note from the Editor**

**The following is just a selection from the hundreds of posts that have appeared on the Catholic Apostolate Center's Ad Infinitum blog.**

**This ebook is divided into five sections, each group offering the faithful a different perspective on the faith. You will find suggestions on how to live a life akin to the Apostles, receive lessons from the saints, and much more!**

**Anytime you see something underlined or flash as you turn the page, feel free to click the item to see a blogger's source or further resources they wish to provide.**

**Enjoy these musings - may you find great inspiration from these pages!**

**~Victor David  
Editor**



# APOSTLESHIP



Jesus Washing the Feet of the Apostles, by Del Parson, © 1983 IRI

# The Call to Holiness

## By Alex Boucher

The call to holiness and the mission presented to the Church from Jesus Christ is certainly a challenging one. The fact that God created us with the ability to freely choose not only between right and wrong but between varied truths allows the members of Christ's body, the Church, to live out the freedom given by God by our birth and baptism. The Catechism defines freedom as "the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility ... Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude" (1731). The 'mission,' so to speak, of Catholics in this day and age is to live the Gospel message and to promote a New Evangelization.

This does not mean that everyone is called to any particular vocation. However, everyone is called to a vocation. It is up to the individual, because of their freedom, to choose and discern where they are being called by God and for what purpose. Thomas Merton, in his book *New Seeds of Contemplation*, eloquently puts it:

Our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny. We are free beings and sons of God. This means to say that we should not passively exist, but actively participate in His creative freedom, in our own lives, and in the lives of others, by choosing the truth. To put it better, we are even called to share with God the work of creating the truth of our identity.

Concrete personal reflection has never come easy for me, and there is a reason that people tend to hide their emotions. Reflecting on the meaning of vocation and what God is calling me to do conjures up memories of high school retreats of discovering where God is found in daily life. While structured experiences of faith exploration and formation are important in shaping the broad spectrum of faith, I have learned that is not all of what my faith encompasses.

At the very first meeting with my spiritual director, he asked, "Who is Alex?" I began to spew answers such as student, friend, brother, and the like. What I wanted to avoid was the internal reflection on the self because I didn't want to have to address the underlying feelings regarding vocation and personal identity. If we are indeed called to shape our own identity, then we very often have a choice. This could be a choice between choosing the truth over a falsehood or even between particular vocations. In discernment, it is my task to look forward, to look to the future. If I dwell on the things of the past, I will never adequately be able to say that I have done what God is calling me to do, whatever it may be. It is the Christian's responsibility, my responsibility, to discern this vocation, whatever it may be, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If we must seek the Creator "spontaneously," as the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* puts it, on their own accord and out of impulse, then it becomes clear that the mission of the baptized Christian is to seek God always and in all things. The Italian priest Saint Vincent Pallotti, patron of the Catholic Apostolate Center, wrote, "Seek God and you will find God. Seek God in all things, and you will find God in all things. Seek God always and you will always find God." I have often found consolation in this prayer of Saint Vincent. It serves as a reminder to attune my heart and mind to God, in all things and at all times. Out of this freedom of choice and seeking comes a responsibility to act out of instinct and to lead others closer to Jesus Christ by first seeking the very God who created us.

# "Lord, if you wish, you could make me clean."

By Bart Zavaletta

The story of the Blind Bartimaeus is one of the most telling encounters between Jesus, our Savior, and our broken humanity so critically in need of salvation. The truth is we are all Bartimaeus'; we all deeply desire to receive the sight or "insight" only the Lord can provide.. But what is it that we long so much to see? And, what keeps or blinds us from seeing it?



I believe, as experienced in my own life, we all long to see that which all other sight is meant for, the Way. That is to say, we all long to see the way to

So what keeps us from seeing Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6)? My own sight has

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blindness with, perhaps, more drastic consequences than any Bartimaeus' physical blindness had caused. This spiritual blindness is the type that can challenge or even cripple the strongest of faiths. Yet, like many of the paradoxes found in scripture, this blindness can, through the Grace of God, serve to open our senses to what we must hear: the footsteps of the One who approaches.

And if, like Bartimaeus, we come to courageously trust our Lord and learn to turn away from the surrounding fear that disables our discernment, what we really come to hear is His voice calling us; giving us our vocation to come and follow him: "On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you." (Mark 10:47-49) When I hear the story of the blind Bartimaeus I can't help but reflect on my own encounter with the living Savior, especially as He passes through my mind and heart amid the pangs of a hostile and blinding crowd of anxious emotions.

Another particularly telling part of the story is how Bartimaeus, the "son of honor" repeatedly calls out to our Lord the, "Son of David". King David was a man, much like Bartimaeus, who was destined for honor and dignity. Yet, he was blinded by his own brokenness and crippled by the powerlessness he felt against his own humanity. King David, like Bartimaeus, in Psalm 51 cried out to God with an unwavering confidence in God's Divine Mercy. My own battle with anxiety has led me to cherish a deep sense of humility. I am not in control, I don't have all the answers, I often cannot endure on my own, I need others, I need communion, I need Christ.

Moreover, we hear the words of the prophet "be not afraid, I am with you" (Isaiah 41:10). And again, we continue to hear the words of St. Paul and all the martyrs who boasted of their weaknesses which won for them the strength of Christ (c.f. Cor. 12:9-10). So let us cry out! With all humility and confidence and faith in the words of another one of Christ's redeemed... Domine, si vis, potes me mundare! "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." (Mt. 8:2)



# Nunc Coepi

## By Krissy Kirby

Transitions can sometimes be the hardest part of our lives. Often, transitions are filled with hope and anticipation, but other times they are filled with fear and anxiety. The transitions I'm currently thinking of include moving, new jobs, graduation, marriage, children, losing a loved one, and many more. Everybody's lives change, both in good times and in more difficult ones; the key is figuring out how to maneuver through those changes and create new beginnings.

Transitions often change our faith-based routines. Prayer, Mass times, and proximity to a Church are the top contenders for what may be lost or overlooked in these fearful times of anticipation and uncertainty. What we forget is that prayer and dependence on Christ are the most important things to hold onto. As Psalm 77: 1-2 says, "I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord..." When we are afraid or in trouble, God is there. He is there in the easy and joyful transitions, too, waiting for gratitude and recognition. Our faith is the vehicle by which our lives are maneuvered.

All of life's stop signs and road blocks, in each pit stop and flat tire, in every new paint job and deep clean, Christ is there as our GPS if we let him. No matter how long it takes to recalculate our journey through transitions, God is with us and wants us to ask for guidance.

I have recently graduated from college, a time that brings many changes. In our commencement address, we received one solid takeaway: nunc coepi, which is Latin for, "Now I begin." I'm realizing, as did our incredible Catholic speaker, that in all of life's transitions, nunc coepi is applicable. If during life's stop signs, we say, "nunc coepi," we can continue with our job searches. If at a financial roadblock, we say: nunc coepi, recognizing that God will provide and make sure the bills are paid. It can be a simple phrase that helps us recognize the blessings, and continue on with whatever God's plan for happens to be. The faith behind the phrase nunc coepi shows faith in God's plan for each of us, and through each of life's transitions.

My favorite verse in the Bible comes from the moment that Gabriel tells Mary that she has been chosen to be the Mother of Jesus, and says in Luke 1: 37-38, "Fear not! For nothing will be impossible with God."

And then Mary responds with, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to Thy Word." Like Mary's response to her own life-changing moment, can we say "Yes" to God? Can we, in our own transitions, continue to say, nunc coepi? Now I begin.



# The Greatest in the Kingdom

## By Chris Pierno

From the very beginning of my schooling, I can remember the constant encouragement of my family to do better – to strive for the highest goals. I'm sure we can all remember being lectured about the importance of getting good grades, reading at a higher level, the absolute necessity in life for multiplication tables, etc. This led to being told how important it is to go to college, to do well in school, to graduate with a high GPA – with honors – magna-summa cum laude – I'm sure many of us have heard all this before, or are hearing it right now. These achievements are indeed important – they lead to us getting good jobs or moving on to higher learning. Without these accolades it would be difficult for us to achieve our goals.

Today, many of us are in an environment where we feel like we need to constantly achieve more – to gain notoriety, a high social status, or a promotion at work. While it's always fine to strive for something, it is important to remember that it's not all about being noticed – or being the best. There is so much more to life than trying to get to the top of the heap.



In Gospel of Matthew, the disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (MT 18:1) Jesus presents the disciples with a child, instructing them that unless they become like the children, they will never enter the Kingdom. Jesus furthermore says, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (MT 18:4) We are tasked to remember that being humble is an essential part of life. We shouldn't be boastful or prideful when we succeed, we should be grateful for the opportunity to make a difference and help others.

We should take a cue from our Holy Father, who has made the choice to actively be as humble as he can in word, deed, and action – even though it is not required of him. When we can, we should always choose to be humble, to allow others to go before ourselves, and to remember that if we want to enter the Kingdom we should think back to our childhood – where we were always looking up and not looking down.

## Small Things With Great Love By Rebecca Ruesch

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."  
-Blessed Mother Theresa

Growing up attending Catholic schools my entire life, the life and teachings of Mother Theresa were always something that I was familiar with. There is something about an Albanian woman who gives up her life to serve the poor and dying in the slums of Calcutta that makes people stop and evaluate their own lives. It's incredible to imagine one person completely uprooting their own life and going to try to combat the extremes of poverty in India. Mother Theresa embraced Catholic Social Teaching on the dignity of the human person and went above and beyond in her ministry. In theory, we would all like to have as much of an impact as Mother Theresa. However, the average person today recognizes his or her own inability to make such an extreme lifestyle change. We are comfortable in our lives today and uprooting them like Mother Theresa did is something we are not prepared to do. Making a huge impact, while desirable, is not usually possible for most of us.

In this last week, these words have taken on a deeper meaning for me, having just finished over a week of training to be a Resident Assistant at my university. I am exhausted and excited, but mostly, inspired. One of the main points that our supervisors made during our training is that we as RA's have a tremendous impact in the smallest ways possible. Mother Theresa's words are a good reminder to me that being a presence with my residents is the most important thing I can do. Sometimes, all a student needs is someone to listen to them, no matter how insignificant their problems may seem. College students can make poor decisions, and the role of an RA is often to discipline those decisions and enforce rules that many of these students disagree with. We are seen as students with nothing better to do than get our residents in trouble. The reality is, I enforce the rules and document my residents because I care about them. I recognize that very often it will feel like a thankless task, my residents will blame me initially when their decisions result in disciplinary sanctions. But I hope that even when I do have to have these harder conversations and confrontations, they will eventually come to realize that I do my job out of love for them.

In our daily lives, we often forget how even the smallest gestures can make the most meaningful impacts. If we live our lives as Mother Theresa suggests, doing the small things with great love, our lives might have even more of an impact than we realize. In the gospel this past weekend, we heard the "greatest commandments" from Christ himself: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37,39). Love can take many forms, and the smallest gestures can be the biggest examples of love. For a heartwarming story about the huge impact we can have without even realizing it, watch this video on "Lollipop Moments" and be amazed!



# The Challenge of Apostleship

## By Pat Fricchione

"The apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it."

These words come from the opening lines of the "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), one of the nine decrees that come out of the Second Vatican Council. They are quite moving and powerful documents that were handed down to us by the council fathers. This particular document on the laity shows that the Church is dependent on the apostolate of all people. But the term "apostolate" seems so daunting; clearly the word is rooted in the idea of being an apostle. I tend to think back to the Twelve Apostles, which creates a certain amount of anxiety. How can I even think about living up to the great examples of these twelve? Yet they are our example, and our apostleship is essential to the life of the Church.

In the Church we tend to use the word apostle quite a bit and in many different ways. It appears in terms such as: apostolic, apostolate, and apostleship. To find a secular answer, I looked up the word "apostle" in a Merriam-Webster dictionary. In using a dictionary, my hope was that I might come to a better understanding of what it means to be an apostle. The first definition that I came across for apostle was "one sent on a mission." This first meaning really helps expand the idea of the New Evangelization in simple terms. The discovery of this definition led me to formulate the following question: "What is our mission as baptized Catholics?" This is a very important question that has been the subject of major debate. A simple answer is that we are called to go out into the world around us and proclaim the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ. How this is accomplished is a decision that must be made by each one of us. We must find our own niche in the greater mission of Christ. We have been given a divine mission that we must go out and complete.

An interesting dilemma of this universal apostolic call is that for some reason people tend to shy away from it. I think that people tend to think that they are not worthy of such a calling or that they are not holy enough. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have all been given the necessary gifts from God to be able to be an apostle. These gifts are not always automatically known to us. Because of this, it is essential that we go out into the world and discover what our God-given talents are. Once we have become aware of our gifts, the task at hand becomes more manageable and attainable.

Personally, I have found that being an apostle in the world today can be quite difficult. Through my active search and prayer to recognize the gifts and talents God has given me, I have discovered that I am someone who is easy to talk to. In response to this realization, I make myself available for people, especially my close friends, and I make sure that I both listen and give general advice when necessary. Doing this, however, can be difficult because there are many instances when time is limited, and I need to make a decision about what to put on hold. This can be difficult, so I stop to think about the things on my agenda versus the needs of the person seeking my counsel. Taking this time to reflect makes the decision quite clear.

I developed a series of questions that has helped me in this process. I've found it very beneficial to go over them every now and again, particularly during the Lenten season. The questions are: Do I understand what it means to be a true apostle of Christ? Do I have an understanding of my mission at this current time in my life? Am I making decisions that help in my mission? Do I understand the gifts that God has given me to fulfill my mission? Do I thank God for these gifts and abilities?

My hope is that you find these questions as helpful as I have. Mary, Queen of the Apostles, pray for us!

# Loving Your Enemies

## By Eileen Welch

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus asks us to love not only our neighbor, but our enemy as well. It says: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'"

It is easy to hate those who cause us pain, but God calls us to love them instead, to demonstrate the perfect love that He shows us. As children we are always told to treat others with kindness and respect, and loving those who we do not like is a challenge that continues throughout our lives. How do we turn the other cheek? Jesus says, "Offer no resistance to the one who is evil" "Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go for two miles."

God asks us to embrace the challenges of our enemies and instead of responding with hate respond with the love He shows us. He points out that many of our enemies are not so different from us,

"For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?  
Do not the tax collectors do the same?  
And if you greet your brothers only,  
what is unusual about that?  
Do not the pagans do the same?  
So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

How can we translate this to our everyday life and what is the benefit? Find an "enemy" a rival in a class, a competitive sibling, a disgruntled roommate. It is easy to respond to their negativity or the feeling that they are persecuting you with equal hatred or unpleasantness. But, this benefits no one. If we instead respond with peace and love, we stop a cycle of hatred and persecution and show to them the love the God shows to us. This furthers peace throughout the world and within our society, it has the power to solve great conflict and bring the smallest bit of happiness to someone. God's love is perfect and can only be achieved and spread if we his children are actively working to spread it, and if we are at the same time resisting the urge to respond to hatred with hatred. The beginning of this week's gospel references the "Eye for an eye" form of justice in society, and it asks us to rise above this need to get even and bring about change through not just acceptance of our enemies, but love of them.



# In God We Trust

## By Sarah Morris

Every four years, a Presidential Inauguration takes place. On this day, hundreds of thousands turn out on the National Mall in Washington and millions tune in on television to watch the great spectacle. On January 21, 2013, President Barack Obama raised his right hand and placed his left on two stacked Bibles as he took the oath of office for another four-year term.

Inauguration Days are joyous for some but disappointing for others. Yet as Catholics, we also understand that regardless of who wins the oval office, Christ has already won. Because of Christ's victory, we are called to act with charity toward our fellow citizens and even those who are not citizens. Sacrificial love transcends party lines and political boundaries.

This day is a reminder to us that our country is in need of being rooted in God and in our faith. Yet it cannot be done by one human being and through political methods. One of the unique and fascinating traits of St. Vincent Pallotti, founder of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, was his ability to get others involved in the mission of the Church. He understood that an internal revitalization of the Church or renewal of faith was not going to occur by a single individual. Rather, he envisioned the renewal of the Church as everyone's task—everyone's mission. St. Vincent Pallotti formed a small group of followers at the beginning of his ministry to use their talents to evangelize and spread the good news of the Gospel. We too are called to use the skills and talents that God has given us and as the motto of the Catholic Apostolate Center states, to "revive faith, rekindle love and form apostles." This is what it means to participate in the universal apostolate. And since we are created "in the image and likeness of God," each of us has spiritual gifts that can touch the hearts of others.

Consider the official motto of our nation: "In God we trust."

What God asks of us is that we trust in Him at all times, whatever the circumstances and in whatever situation, including whoever is in office. We must submit to His will as the all-knowing, all-powerful and ever-living God. All we need to know about our future and the future of our nation is contained within the trust of His will. We may have the tendency to want to change the direction and determine the course because we think we know it all. But our intelligence and judgment will only take us so far because God we cannot perceive the things God has in store by our sheer intellect. His ways are spiritually discerned. "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord." (Isaiah 55:8)

The United States has long declared where this nation's trust resides. Our country has historically placed trust in God. Presidents come and go and so does inaugural hype and rhetoric. But the message of Christ and Christ himself are the same yesterday, today and forever (cf. Hebrews 13:8).



## Making Good Soil

### By Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C.

Growing up in a farming community in southern New Jersey (yes, New Jersey does have farms, that is why it is called the Garden State), I learned a little something about soil that is good for planting and soil that needs work, sometimes a great deal of work, until planting can happen. Good soil does not just "happen". There is preparation and proper nurturing, even times of rest so that the soil is best. In his recent encyclical Lumen Fidei, Pope Francis talks about "good soil,"

"In the parable of the sower, Saint Luke has left us these words of the Lord about the 'good soil;' 'These are the ones who when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance' (Lk 8:15). In the context of Luke's Gospel, this mention of an honest and good heart which hears and keeps the word is an implicit portrayal of the faith of the Virgin Mary" (Lumen Fidei, n. 58).

When we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption, we are offered by the Church the great example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, ever-faithful disciple, who witnesses for us the way to live well our baptismal call as disciples and apostles of Christ.



"By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 967).

By witnessing faith and charity we live well our baptismal vocation. Our vocation as baptized is our primary vocation. All of the other vocations as married, single, consecrated, or priest are all secondary to this primary vocation as follower of (disciple) and sent by (apostle) Jesus Christ. Each is a way one can live out the primary vocation. How does one decide? Through a process of discernment, one is called to be informed, pray, make a choice, and take action. I make it seem easy. The process is not an easy one, but like making "good soil," it is necessary in order to make a truly informed choice about how to live our vocation as a disciple and apostle. You might not be ready to make a choice about what way to live this vocation for life, or maybe you have done so already, but living it out as a disciple and apostle is what all of us are called to do. The Blessed Virgin Mary can assist us in our discernment of our apostolic vocation in life and in living it out faithfully and well, truly being "good soil."

May we join together in the prayer of Pope Francis at the conclusion of Lumen Fidei:

"Mother, help our faith! Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call.

Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.

Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature. Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One.

Remind us that those who believe are never alone. Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!"

# Catholic Social Teaching Through Youth Athletics

## By Casey Tisdell

Basketball and world peace... what do the two have in common?

As an athlete, I could tell you a lot about the positive benefits of athletics. There are many physical, emotional, mental, and social benefits and developments that come with participation in sports. As a softball coach for 8 years, I can also tell you about the many success stories that my players have had because of youth athletics.

Through my years coaching, there is one story in particular that sticks out in my head, it was about 5 years ago, my Junior year of high school. One young girl, about the age of 9, joined my Little League softball team. She was one of the most difficult kids I had ever coached; between the arguing over every piece of instruction she was given, the fighting with the other girls, and the bad sportsmanship, which resulted in many games spent on the bench, we struggled. I was so frustrated with her, until things changed about 10 weeks into the season, when her grandmother came to me to say thank you. She told me that this girl's father had left her and her mother wanted little to do with her. Her grandmother signed her up for softball to get her out of the house, and into something to bring her out of herself. She told me that the time, attention, and patience I gave this girl helped her cope with the immense difficulties she was facing at home. I went home and cried that night.



To be honest, I would have never experienced any of this if my father hadn't pushed me to influence other girls the way I had been influenced as a 7 year old girl by my coaches. He taught me to turn what I love into something I could give back to the community. I never fully realized the immense positive effect youth athletics had on children until that day. Thankfully, someone else did. Two men, Brendan and Sean Tuohey started the program [Peace Players international](#). This organization used youth athletics, specifically basketball, to bring together developing communities and bring kids out of their homes to do something to create a better world for themselves.

Brendan and Sean Tuohey turned what they were passionate about into a program working towards a bigger goal – international social justice. While God may not call you to something as large-scale as that, maybe he's calling you to change the life of the little girl on the neighborhood softball team. Each person has a different calling to help change the world... what's yours?



# Go!

## By Nick Wagman

"The Lord be with you!"

If you're still tempted to respond "And also with you!" you're not alone. It's been a few years since the third edition of the Roman Missal was introduced in the United States, and most Mass-goers seem to have it down. But as the responses become more of a habit, there is a danger that we begin to overlook the significance of what we are saying.

I'll proudly admit it: I love the new translation of the Mass! It is so beautiful to praise God with such eloquence and majesty. But my favorite part is the end of Mass. Not because "yay, Mass is over," but because we are commissioned and sent forth to do God's work in the world.

In the new translation, the priest or deacon has four options for the dismissal. Note that each begins with "Go!" We are being sent out. The new ones are particularly poignant: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life" and "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." Amen! I am reminded of the words often attributed to St. Francis, "Preach the Gospel at all times, when necessary use words."

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." Having received Christ during the Mass, we are sent forth as emissaries of the Gospel in the world. Each of us is called to be a modern day apostle, glorifying God in our everyday lives and "preaching" the good news of the Gospel through simple Christian witness.

If we are to guard against the temptation to simply 'go through the motions' once we have committed the new mass responses to memory, we must continue to examine the import of the words that we are saying. Taking into account the words of the dismissal, how can we better glorify the Lord by our lives and announce the "good news" as Christian apostles in the world? Acting as leaven and enabled by God's grace, we can raise up our fallen world to the glory of God.

So what are you waiting for? Go!



# Lessons from the Saints



## Vincent & Mary

### By Pam Tremblay

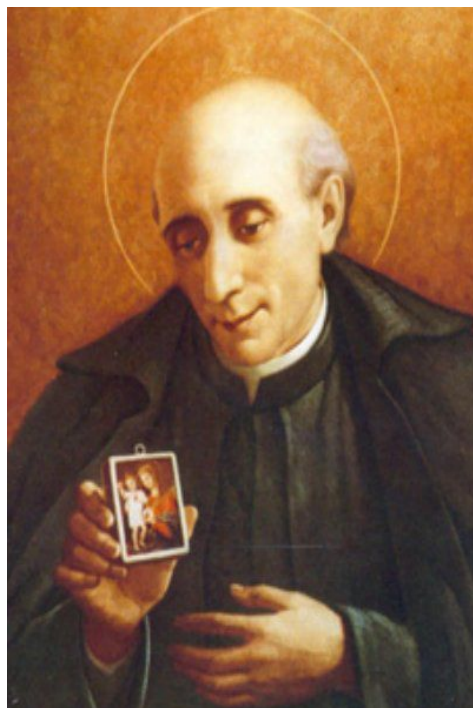
Being a "cradle Catholic" I never questioned why we had 4 different statues of Mary in our kitchen or why every May we put a crown of flowers on our "Garden Mary" outside. It was common to hear the advice of praying to the rosary if you couldn't sleep and thus one would be able to find countless glow-in-the-dark rosary beads tucked into my bed. Almost every woman in my family had Marie as their middle name and like myself, if it wasn't a middle name it was taken as a confirmation name. It wasn't until college, living under the shadow of "Mary's House", the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington DC, that I began to understand that it was through Mary that I would come to know her Son.

St. Vincent Pallotti understood this and had a deep connection with Our Lady and entrusted himself to her. He wrote "I resolve, my God, from all eternity and for all eternity . . . to love, honor and glorify my beloved Mother Mary; and to behold her loved, honored and glorified to the same degree that You, O Eternal Father, have showered her as Your Daughter, that You, O Divine Lord, have esteemed her as Your Mother, and that You, O Holy Spirit, have accorded her as Your most pure spouse." (Soul of a Saint, p. 82)

His devotion went beyond the pious practice of the time and enlightened a burning love within him. He spoke of Our Lady as, "Mother of Divine Love" and "Queen of Apostles." It is said that he spoke, "I shall not rest until I, if this is possible, have achieved an infinitely tender love for my much beloved and much loving mother, Mary."

St. Vincent, in his deep love for Mary and a desire to be humble, wore a silver reliquary box around his wrist with the image of the Mother of Divine Love painted on ivory mounted on it. He did this so that when people came to kiss his hand, a practice of that time, instead of kissing his own hand they would instead kiss the image of Our Lady.

Let us look to St. Vincent as an example of how a love for our blessed mother can help us in reviving faith, enkindling charity and become an apostle of Christ.



## Lessons from St. Augustine

### By Nicholas Shields

Every August 28th we celebrate the feast of St. Augustine, a Doctor of the Church and one of the most important theological writers of the 4th and 5th century. Many of us have either studied Augustine or at least heard some of his more famous quotes. One in particular is quite striking: "Our heart is restless until it rests in you." These words are taken from one of Augustine's most well known writings, the Confessions, in which Augustine discusses his long journey towards Christ and his conversion to Christianity.

"Our heart is restless until it rests in you."

These are powerful words. They direct us toward Christ in a simple way that speaks to everyone, for everyone has a restless heart. Pope Francis tells us that Augustine is speaking of three types of restlessness: "the restlessness of spiritual seeking, the restlessness of the encounter with God, the restlessness of love." This restlessness, whether we recognize it or not, is a desire to know God and to have a deeper relationship with Him. None of this is easy, but God is always there for us. He is waiting with open arms, just as he waited for Augustine in his conversion to Christianity, so that we might rest in Him.

Of course, the natural question to ask is how we can rest in the Lord. Augustine gives us a clear answer in his Confessions. He says:

"No one knows what he himself is made of, except his own spirit within him, yet there is still some part of him which remains hidden even from his own spirit; but you, Lord, know everything about a human being because you have made him... Let me, then, confess what I know about myself, and confess too what I do not know, because what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me, and what I do not know I shall remain ignorant about until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face."

Augustine is giving us an important model of faith to follow, one of deep personal reflection, one that teaches us how to reflect and why we should reflect. Why? Because in reflection, we find God, in reflection, we find rest.

But Augustine is very clear about how reflection works. He says, "What I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me." Reflection is not solitary; we have to reflect with God. It is a prayer.

We have all been told time and time again that prayer is an integral aspect of our everyday lives, but prayer does not have to be formulaic, it does not always have to be recited from the back of a card. These types of prayers are amazing and so helpful in directing our lives, but some of the most beautiful prayer is when we reflect with God, when we open up ourselves to Him and just talk to Him and listen to Him in our hearts. Who better to show us the importance of reflection than our Mother? Luke 2:19 tells us "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." Mary, the Mother of God, born without sin, who through her body brought Jesus into this world, still took the time to reflect with the Lord.

Augustine and Mary are both powerful examples to us. They were holy people, but they were human. They faced struggles in their lives and in their faith. Their hearts were restless in their journeys toward the Lord. But through their example, through their lives, through personal reflection with the Lord, they show us how to find rest in Him.



# Feast of St. Benedict

## By Michael Phelan

The first time I stayed in a Benedictine monastery, I was struck by the silence, especially since the monastery was only a few hundred feet away from my dorm (which was never silent). During meals in the refectory, walks in the hallways or the monastic cloister, down time in my assigned cell, both at daytime and during the night, there was a serious, purposeful silence. In his Rule, Saint Benedict constantly encourages his monks not to speak too much, and especially to abstain from vulgar and scurrilous speech. But what is the point of this silence? Why does Saint Benedict praise it so highly?

“Listen carefully.” This is the first and most basic instruction laid down by Saint Benedict in his Rule, written for monks in the early sixth century. He was telling his monks to perk up and pay attention, because important guidelines for monastic life were coming their way in the ensuing 73 chapters. His advice, in those two words, seems to sum up much of Benedictine spirituality.

Saint Benedict’s world was not too different from the world we live in today. His life began in the year 480, only four years after the fall of the Roman Empire. He was a witness of political upheaval, international war, and class warfare. This is not much different from our times. His answer to all these problems, however, was not to escape from the world in a monastery, but to find a place in which he could seek God in a stable environment.

Why, then, is St. Benedict’s first piece of advice to listen? Saint Benedict was a keen observer of the human person, and he recognized what was separating people: noise, both internal and external. Even today, how comfortable are we with silence? Think about it. We need music in order to drive down the street; we need music to go for a run; some even need ‘white noise’ in order to fall asleep. How often do we see people, old and young, with their nose buried in a phone or searching for the next song instead of enjoying and appreciating God’s gift of creation around them? Or internally, are we truly listening to the other person in the conversation, instead of just thinking about what we will say next? Silence is the first step. Once we stop talking, turn off our music or put down our phones, then we have to quiet ourselves on the inside. We need to begin, in silence, to find Christ in the other.

In each one of us there is an innate yearning, which can only be discerned and realized when we slow down from our own business and busyness and understand that we all want something more. God speaks in the silence of our hearts. Therefore, you have to “attend with the ear of your heart” to what God is calling you to.

The Prologue of the Rule of Saint Benedict has, in my opinion, some of the most beautiful language ever written. I would suggest to anyone who has never read it to get it immediately. Saint Benedict wrote an amazing line – a rhetorical question – “What, dear brothers, is more delightful than this voice of the Lord calling to us?” But how can we ever hope to hear this delightful voice of the Lord unless we stop and listen?

Saints Benedict and Scholastica, pray for us!



## St. Dominic's Book of Charity

### By Matthew Rice



As I drive home, I must pass it. At the traffic light its siren call implores me to come closer. Near the parking lot its gravitational pull draws me in. Often, even several times a week, I succumb, make the right turn, get out of the car, and enter the used book store.

Today the Church celebrates my fellow book lover, Saint Dominic. Dominic lived in the early 13th century, when the Albigensian heresy was entrenched throughout Europe. After several lay preaching movements had failed to quell the heresy, and fell into error themselves, St. Dominic formed the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans), an order of priests dedicated to studying and intelligently preaching the Catholic faith. Their studies required books, and thus references to books abound in early Dominican writings: rules for the sharing and care of books, stories of the miraculous recovery of books dropped into a stream, and measures to ensure that all friars are provided with "books and other necessities of life".

Yet, as I've discovered through my addiction to the used book store, books can also present temptations. I'd be content to hide behind my growing stack of books for a lifetime. Instead of being charitable, I'd read about charity. Instead of being ready to "account for the hope that is in" me, I'd lift canned arguments from Apologetics books as my hope fades, for hope cannot continue when faith in the person of Jesus Christ is replaced with the mere acceptance of a number of intellectual propositions.

"I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves". This was Pope Francis' challenge to World Youth Day pilgrims, but it is the same command that St. Dominic gave to his friars in 1217. The Pope had finally approved the order and the friars probably looked forward to long hours of study, but Dominic had other plans. Against their objections, he sent his friars throughout Europe to preach, saying, "We must sow the seed, not hoard it".

That is the key to Dominic's charism. His studies were not for his own pleasure, but rather, as the primitive Dominican Constitutions put it, "study ought to tend principally, ardently, and with the highest endeavor to the end that we might be useful to the souls of our neighbors".

Saint Dominic loved books inasmuch as they helped him to love God and neighbor. In a world plagued by heresy, charity led Dominic use his books to instruct the ignorant, but when famine struck, Dominic did not hesitate to sell his books to feed the poor, for he "could not bear to prize dead skins when living skins were starving and in need".

In this year of Faith, we must follow Dominic by deepening our knowledge of the faith. Yet, more importantly we must look to Dominic's example of how to live it.

# St. George: What Tales Teach Us About Courage

## By Abigail Craycraft

Pope Gelasius (d. AD 496) said of St. George that he is one of the saints "whose names are rightly revered among us, but whose actions are known only to God." Little can be verified about the life of St. George. He is remembered as a martyr for the faith, and claimed as a patron by thirteen European countries. His intercession is sought constantly on behalf of soldiers and farm workers (and those suffering from the plague, though luckily with less frequency as of late).

St. George is best remembered for his defeating a dragon to rescue the fair maiden (which naturally makes him a favorite of this fairy-tale loving girl). The beast attacked a quiet little kingdom, and his hunger demanded hefty payment, leading up to the necessary sacrifice of the king's own daughter. Just as the dragon is about to devour the princess, St. George rides by, conveniently enough, and after making the sign of the cross and proclaiming the name of Jesus, he defeats the dragon. In thanks, the entire kingdom is baptized. The end.

But clearly it's not the end, because this myth has been a favorite for 1500 years.

So what can a 3rd century saint, whose life and deeds are wrapped in myth and legend, tell us about being a Christian in the 21st century? Like in so many other tales and stories, the facts are less important than the message they bring. In this case, we learn that dragons are indeed real. Sometimes they are obvious and obtrusive, demanding immediate attention, like road rage or constantly breaking into conversations with "Well, in my opinion." Often, however, they emerge in the form of redundancy, mediocrity, boredom, or the benign. What do we do about these sneaky, shadow dragons which creep into our lives in the form of a snooze button or accidental rude comments? These dragons grow slowly in the secret and dark where nobody can see them and think poorly of me.

This tale also reminds us that courage takes many forms. Often, courage is speaking out in defense of the faith in the face of blatant injustice, as is still seen in too many places in the world. For my life today, courage takes the form of remaining steadfast in seemingly benign moments, like laundry and emails. My challenge is to remain dutiful and prayerful while I wait. For this twenty-something, courage is taking the waiting as seriously as what I am waiting for. I wait to finish my Masters; wait until I get married; wait to move closer to my family; wait for a job. Lately I have been praying for a heart like Mary's, courageous in all matters, great and small. She allowed God to break into her quiet life, and then she waited for her Son to be born, waited to find him in the Temple, waited for the Resurrection. As the psalmist says, "Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord" (Ps. 27:14).



I recently stumbled upon an icon of St. George which I bought for my fiancé. It is currently hanging in his bedroom, and in less than four months will hang in ours. I love to see it when I visit, because George's story is one I can relate to. For, as G.K. Chesterton once wrote: "Fairy tales are not important because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten." St. George, pray for us that we may develop courageous hearts to maintain our faithfulness to Christ in small moments and defeat the less obvious dragons in our lives.

# Reflections on St. Catherine of Siena

## By Tyler Lomnitzer

Only one block behind one of the most famed and architecturally impressive structures in all of history lays the body of a woman who shook the souls of those who encountered her. St. Catherine of Siena's body (her head is at the Basilica of San Domenico in Siena) is underneath the high altar in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, a minor basilica that belongs to the religious order to which she dedicated her life to, the Order of Preachers. Her body is approximately three kilometers away from the historic center of Rome as well as approximately three kilometers away from St. Peter's Square in Vatican City. There could be no more precise a location for the body of the woman who single-handedly restored the papacy to its rightful home. No person understood more profoundly the inseparable nature of Church, Tradition, the West, and Rome.

Beyond her saving negotiation skills to restore the papacy to the Eternal City when three "popes" competed for supremacy, St. Catherine of Siena reached spiritual heights that ought to be strived for. Not only a mystic, but one who experienced the gift of tears and understood the saving power of interior suffering, she was also named Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI in 1970. Although "Catherine knew great suffering" (Benedict XVI, General Audience, November 24, 2010), she shined with a joy that reflected the intensity to which her heart was conformed to the heart of Christ. Fr. George Rutler explains the joy of those sanctified, "The culminating evidence of sanctity is a joy that is not of this world. Saints always suffer in various ways as a consequence of their heroic virtue, which pits them against the 'wickedness and snares of the Devil,' but there is no such thing as a sad saint. The saints are proof of the existence of God and his mercy by their very lives, which are testimonies greater even than miracles or the logic of natural theology." St. Catherine of Siena is the exemplary model who proves that holiness is happiness.

Her holiness came from nothing other than her devotion to the Eucharist. In his Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis, Pope Benedict writes that "the Eucharist is at the root of every form of holiness." He then offers the names of many saints that have inched toward perfection because of their Eucharistic devotions, among them St. Catherine of Siena. The Eucharist motivated each and every one of her actions and was the source of her supernatural joy.

Every word and teaching of St. Catherine of Siena ought to be read in light of her Eucharistic faith. Zealously, she once said, "Lord, I treasure your knowing how to give the world a kick" (Letter T360). St. Catherine of Siena believed, rather she knew to be true, that the Lord's Supper, the Crucifixion, and Holy Mass are all one and the same and that the remarkable mystery of Christ present each and every day to the world in Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity is the life-giving reality of which anything is possible, but most importantly, the salvation of souls. This is the kick the Lord gives to the world. It manifests itself in many forms, but always originates from the Eucharist.

St. Catherine of Siena, ora pro nobis!





# Feast Day of St. Monica: When Persistence Pays Off

## By Monica Thom Konschnick

Growing up, I often balked at the uniqueness of my name. It was different and I could never find novelty license plates on vacation with my name on it. Although I secretly always appreciated being the only Monica in my class, I sometimes longed to have been named Katie or Laura or Emily, much like most of the girls in my class. At one point, I distinctly remembering yelling out in sheer desperation, "I HATE MY NAME!" because I was unable to procure sparkly pencils that said Monica. With time and maturity, though, I learned to really love my name because it was a part of me and because of the connection to Saint Monica, who has become a spiritual role model to me.

As a young student in my parochial grade school, there was never any doubt as to which saint I would dress up as on All Saints Day. I looked forward each year to wearing the long black dress and black head covering that I associated with my patroness, Saint Monica. At the time, all I knew about her was that she was the mother of Saint Augustine and that she prayed for his conversion, which eventually happened.

While we don't know as much about her as we do about her son, we do know that she was active in her community and Church. She also had a tumultuous relationship with her husband, Patritius, who was a pagan. Throughout their marriage, they struggled with how to raise their children in terms of religion and, it being the 4th century, Monica was unable to have her children baptized as Christians. She probably also didn't spend much time worrying about finding her name on a pencil.



Monica spent most of her life praying for the conversion of her beloved son, Augustine. As he made poor life decisions, Saint Monica worked even harder to help her son know God as she did. She made it her life goal to see him baptized, which eventually happened in the year 387.

I am grateful to share my name with a strong, faith-filled woman who spent her time devoted to God and to her family. She has provided an example to me how to remain steadfast in your faith despite what is going on around you, both in your personal life and in the greater world. Saint Monica is an excellent example for those who chose married life as a vocation. Not every marriage is perfect, but it is in that imperfection that we require the support of our partner and, more importantly, we require support from God. Saint Monica took her role as a mother very seriously. She prayed for and wanted her children to know the love of God, as she had. And, in the case of her son Augustine, she did whatever it took, including some tough love at times, to help him find his path to Christ.

As we celebrate Saint Monica's feast day today, let us remember those Saint Monica's in our life - people guiding our spiritual lives, praying for us along our way, and being there to support us as we discover who we are in the Church, and let us be grateful for the unique aspects of our lives and our personalities that makes us different and special.

## Two Pope Saints

### By Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C.

"John XXIII and John Paul II cooperated with the Holy Spirit in renewing and updating the Church in keeping with her pristine features, those features which the saints have given her throughout the centuries."  
- Pope Francis

April 27, 2014 was a unique and amazing day of four popes, the two pope saints, John XXIII and John Paul II and the two living popes, Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict! The renewal and updating of the Church called for by the Second Vatican Council, initiated by St. John XXIII, and central to the work of the New Evangelization as articulated by St. John Paul II continued through the efforts of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, especially the Synod on the New Evangelization and finding even greater momentum through the witness of Pope Francis. Among them all, along with Paul VI, the Council, and Church leadership in general has called all of the baptized to engage in greater co-responsibility for the life of the Church and for the work of evangelization.

Various pundits, both in Church and secular media, are quick to give their sometimes very simplistic analysis of why the two popes were canonized together and the message that Pope Francis is trying to convey. If there is any "message", I believe that it is a continued or re-commitment to the on-going renewal of the Church in trustful cooperation with the Holy Spirit and in prayerful communion with the saints.

St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II were both visionary leaders who put forward programmatic plans for not simply renew of the Church as an institution, but renewal of all the baptized in faith and holiness who are called to go forth to the world and renew it as well. In 1959, St. John XXIII said, "Profession of the Christian faith is not intelligible without strong, lively apostolic fervor" (Princeps Pastorum, 32). The Second Vatican Council confirmed this understanding in Lumen Gentium through its teachings about the Universal Call to Holiness and the role of all the baptized in the mission of Christ. St. John Paul II was one of the drafters of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem) along with the then Rector General of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, Fr. Wilhelm Mähler. St. John Paul taught in his apostolic exhortation Christifidelis Laici, which followed the Synod on the Laity in 1987, that

The Second Vatican Council has reminded us of the mystery of this power and of the fact that the mission of Christ - Priest, Prophet-Teacher, King - continues in the Church. Everyone, the whole People of God, shares in this threefold mission (14).

Just after the close of the first session of the Council, St. John XXIII canonized the Patron of the Catholic Apostolate Center, St. Vincent Pallotti, calling him "an innovator of new ways whereby people could come to know the love of God" (Cf. L'Osservatore Romano, January 23, 2013). Pallotti understood well the call of all to be apostles or what Pope Francis calls in Evangelii Gaudium, "missionary disciples" (120). The Center continues Pallotti's mission in the way that St. John Paul II described it to members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate when he said:

Continue to multiply your efforts so that what Vincent Pallotti prophetically announced, and the Second Vatican Council authoritatively confirmed, may become a happy reality, and all Christians become authentic apostles of Christ in the Church and in the world!

(Homily at San Salvatore in Onda, June 22, 1986).

# Mary, Mother of God

## By Andrew St. Hilaire

Growing up in a large Catholic family gave me the opportunity to interact with the Catholic Church's love for Mary and the Saints. However, looking back just recently, it is no surprise that my appreciation of Mary came to being as I grew in a deeper appreciation of my own mother. I tell people that I would be content if I were a fraction of the person that she is. While I could go on forever about how wonderful my mother is, I'll limit myself to just sharing one characteristic of her that I think is crucial for understanding and appreciating Mary as the Mother of God: when I go to my mom for advice, she will always end the conversation suggesting that I pray about it and ask God for the necessary virtues to make an action or decision. By asking me to pray about it, she helps me direct my attention toward Christ.

You may or may not have this same experience with your own mothers, but Mary is the Mother of God, making her Our Mother as well. We all have the opportunity to approach Mary's open arms in the hope of receiving her comfort and love. But even more importantly, she is able to point us to Christ, to encourage us to grow our relationship with her Son. Look at scripture and you can see where Mary helps guide people to Christ. In particular, look at the Wedding at Cana, for instance, in John 2. Mary and Jesus were at a wedding, and the hosts ran out of wine. Mary went to Jesus and told him that they were out of wine and were in need of more. Jesus responded to her, "Woman, what is that to me and to you? My hour is not yet come." Mary did not really respond to this. Instead, she went to the waiters and told them, "Do whatever He tells you." Her remark shows that she knew that He was about to perform a miracle. She knew that he would fulfill her request. Jesus instructed the servants to fill some huge jugs with water. Because of Mary's advice they obeyed. Think about this now: Mary told Christ what the servants needed, and she then immediately told the servants to do as Jesus tells him. Does Mary not tell Christ our needs, and then instructs us to do as her Son instructs us to do? By going to our Blessed Mother, Mary can help us follow the path to Christ the way she helped the servants obey Jesus. Like the Wedding at Cana, she will tell her Son our needs and then, pointing to her Son, tell us to do as He instructs us.

Mary not only directs us towards Christ. Our hearts yearn to be like Mary. This is because Mary fulfilled God's invitation of perfect love, which allows her to become the person she was meant to be. We have that same calling. While we will not achieve this goal in absolute perfection the way Mary did, we can look to Mary as our human role model for true, authentic Christian love towards God and towards our fellow human being. Mary, being the New Eve of Creation, can directly link us to God. Think about this, if Mary directly brought Christ to the world, then would she directly bring us to Christ through prayer? She is our direct route to growing closer in Christ, as she knew Christ better than anyone else. So maybe like some of our own earthly mothers, Mary is our role model and our guide towards holiness.



# Learning from St. Martha's Example

## By Dana Edwards

We've heard the story of Martha and Mary welcoming Jesus into their home. Martha is busy tending to hospitality needs while Mary listens to Jesus. Martha complains to Jesus requesting Mary's help. Instead, Jesus answers, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Lk 10:38-42)

As a young girl, I found the story of Martha and Mary difficult to understand. Growing up in a family valuing hard work, I often associated myself with Martha's work ethic. I couldn't figure out why Jesus would value inaction rather than work. Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent will rule, while the lazy will be put to forced labor." But then I realized I had the point of the story wrong.

Jesus' response has nothing to do with working hard. It has everything to do with listening to his message. We can then see in ourselves what Jesus points out in Martha—we can be easily distracted and worried by tasks we need to accomplish in this world. Through Martha's story, Jesus reminds us that there is one thing that is important: following Jesus' message and his individual calling for each of us.

In John 11:17-27, Martha meets Jesus as soon as she learns he is coming after hearing Lazarus has died. Immediately we see a change in this narrative of Martha. She purposefully goes to Jesus and when he asks her about his belief in him she responds, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."



Next, Martha has the opportunity to serve Jesus six days after the Passover (John 12:1-8). She does so humbly and quietly. We come to understand Martha's role is a different calling than Mary's, much like in our own lives when those around us may not be called to the same occupations, tasks, talents, and other circumstances. Martha has chosen to serve with love instead of with bitterness and arrogance.

Martha's story gives us hope. Even though we can fall into the trap of trying to complete tasks on our own without God, there is opportunity for us to try again. When Jesus speaks to Martha, he is not unkind. His response is a loving one. As sinners we can only strive to learn and grow from our mistakes to make the next opportunity filled with Christ.

Known as the patron saint of cooks, homemakers, and servants, St. Martha reminds us to thank those in our lives who serve us. This can be our parents or those who cook for us, those who work in public service, or even the waiter or waitress at our next restaurant meal. As a way to celebrate St. Martha's feast day with our families this July 29th, we can pray to serve Jesus better:

Saint Martha, pray for us that we might serve Jesus better. Help us to overcome our distractions and worries to listen to his words and be present to him this day. Amen.

## "And Let Us Also Go" By Thomas Wong



Poor Thomas! One remark by my namesake and he's forever branded as "Doubting Thomas." The Church doesn't honor him each July 3rd for this, however, but for what is absolutely one of the most explicit Professions of Faith uttered in the New Testament: "My Lord and my God!" (see John 20:24-29, c.f. Luke 7:1-10) In those five words, Thomas boldly expresses his revived belief in his resurrected Master and testifies to His divinity, ready to once again follow Christ and evangelize the world about Him. While this redeeming witness is indeed memorable, it is important to not lose sight of another of Thomas' statements as recorded in John's gospel, which shows us more about his personality and in turn, our own faith in

Christ, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

This other mention of Thomas occurs when Jesus decides to travel to the village of Bethany in Judea to raise Lazarus, thus coming dangerously close to Jerusalem (see John 10:22-39, c.f. Mark 10:32-34). Remembering how the Jews there had earlier tried to stone Jesus, the disciples must have felt apprehensive about undertaking such a risky journey (see John 11:8). Thomas, however, seeing Jesus' determination, exhorts them saying, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Brave words for a doubter! Pope Benedict XVI even characterized Thomas' sincere resolve to follow his Master as something which is "truly exemplary and offers us a valuable lesson: it reveals his total readiness to stand by Jesus, to the point of identifying his own destiny with that of Jesus and of desiring to share with him the supreme trial of death" (September 27, 2006 General Audience).

This is the very definition of the Christian life! A life with Jesus is to be with Him through times of joy, peace, hope, success, and prosperity, as well as uncertainty, loss, sorrow, ridicule, and persecution. This is "no sugarplum" as Benedict describes it in Jesus of Nazareth (pg. 67), but without Christ what can one hope for to carry him or her through the trials of life? What would be the point in continuing on?

In his final five words recorded in the Bible, Thomas redeems himself after doubting Christ by exclaiming "My Lord and my God!". The wounds he touched confirm, undoubtedly, the Identity of Christ, the truth of His Message, and the authenticity of God's infinite Love, not just for Thomas, but all believers! St. Augustine comments on this: Thomas "saw and touched the man, and acknowledged the God whom he neither saw nor touched; but by the means of what he saw and touched, he now put far away from him every doubt, and believed the other" (In ev. Jo. 121, 5).

It is important to remember that Saint Thomas, like all the apostles, was personally chosen by Christ in spite of their weaknesses and lack of understanding. But Christ did not pick worthless men! Rather, their failings are a reminder that holiness is a gift from God and not a human creation, given to us, who have our own weaknesses, so God can transform them into the loving image of Christ and mature our faith. Jesus also permitted Thomas to doubt after the resurrection but did not abandon him in those doubts, instead allowing him to bear witness to the truth of the resurrection and thus verify the whole Christian message (see 1 Corinthians 15:14). Finally, we are called to not give in to our doubts regarding God, our dignity and worth, or even hard Church teachings no matter how unpopular they may seem! By looking to Saint Thomas as a model (and by praying to him for guidance), may we find comfort in our insecurities, hope in the future, and the encouragement to persevere through the difficulties of life on the way to our final rendezvous with our Lord and our God.

# The Prayerful Life



# A Lasting Joy

## By David Burkey

Not too long ago, I felt like I was on top of the world! I could sleep in without missing class, I didn't have to wear shower shoes, and was treated to delicious home cooking; yes, it was spring break! However, that week off from school seemed to pass too quickly, as it always does, and soon I found myself back at school, where a mountainous pile of work awaited me. The joy that came with the start of break, a result of time off from an often busy and consuming world of commitments, had quickly vanished, and was replaced by the stress of things to be done.

Today I came across a chapter, aptly titled "Joy", in a book I'm reading by Cardinal Dolan. Here he gave some suggestions as to what actually helps us attain a true and lasting joy, some of which took me by surprise. He first proposes that the source of all joy is peace. Looking through an exterior lens these seem to be mutually exclusive, particularly when the thought of someone who is quiet and peaceful is juxtaposed with the image of a jovial, fun-loving and joyful person. But Cardinal Dolan is referring to an inner peace that gives rise to a genuine exterior joy and happiness. This peace is rooted in the conviction that God loves us and, in return, we reciprocate this overwhelming love through our actions and interior life.

Knowing and accepting this great love can be a challenge, and is something I still struggle with on a regular basis. A wise religious sister recently told me how we must first let God love us, even with our imperfections, before we attempt to change other people – a tendency of perfectionists such as myself. How right she was! This is often a major stumbling block in finding inner peace, which ultimately leads us to genuine joy.

True joy can come about through trust in God's plan, but requires a complete surrender of ourselves and our desires. As cliché as it may sound, Cardinal Dolan suggests this simple ordering of our lives to reach this joy:

J => Jesus

O => Others

Y => Yourself

When we are ordered this way, and place ourselves last in the line of priorities, our happiness no longer relies on promotions, accolades, or spring breaks, but from a much deeper source that doesn't fade away despite busy schedules and stressors.

Lastly, Cardinal Dolan highlights an important distinction between joy and pleasure. C.S. Lewis once said, "Joy is never in our power, and pleasure is. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted joy would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasure in the world".

I realized that, while going to the beach in Cozumel, cruising the Caribbean, or simply sleeping in can all be good things and may bring me pleasure, these things will never be able to bring me real joy.

Perhaps we can all take a "Spring Break", not in the sense of a vacation (although I'm sure none of you would object to that), but rather use Holy Week to take a break and reflect on what motivates our Joy. Is it an inner peace within ourselves and an acceptance of God's immense love, exemplified in the Paschal Mystery that we will soon be celebrating? Or, is it based on the next compliment, promotion, or good grade? What do we need to change in order to reach this true Joy?

Fortunately, this joy is lasting; it is a joy that won't leave you sunburned or yearning for more in a week's time.

# The Three A's of Prayer

## By Nick Wagman

I've been trying to schedule my day around God and set aside time for prayer throughout the day, but when I set aside the time sometimes I wonder what I'm supposed to be doing. How do I pray? How do I know I'm doing it right?

Fortunately, I once had the opportunity to hear about prayer from the Archdiocese of Washington's "iPray" campus ministry conference. Dominican Brother Justin Brophy reminded us that prayer is simply a relationship with Jesus Christ. It sounds easy, but often we are caught up in rubrics and novenas and can miss that the crux of our "prayer life" must be friendship with our Lord. As Brother Justin said, "You all know what relationships are and you have relationships, so you know how to pray."

Brother went on to list his "3 A's" of prayer: prayer is attentive, authentic, and accepting.

Prayer is attentive because in a relationship with someone you just don't see them for one hour and forget about them for the rest of the day. We must be praying throughout the day and offering up our works, joys, and sufferings to his infinite glory.

Prayer is also authentic. Jesus asks us to pray from the heart and not "babble like the pagans" (Matthew 6:7). Vocal prayers like the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Divine Office have a huge place in our prayer lives, but we are also called to deeper mental prayer, going to God telling him what's on our heart and experiencing his presence in our lives.

This leads to the final "A:" prayer is accepting. God loves us unconditionally; He accepts us as we are and calls us to relationship with him despite our faults and failures because He is the Creator of the universe and knows us more perfectly than we know ourselves. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." (Jeremiah 1:5)

As we approach the Easter season with joy, let us be renewed in our relationship with Christ and ask Him as the Apostles did, "Lord, teach us how to pray." (Luke 11:1).





# A Catholic and Scripture

## By Katherine Biegner

"When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, 'It is talking to me, and about me.'"  
–Soren Kierkegaard

This past fall, while on a retreat, I took a long walk with a friend. As we enjoyed the fresh air, we talked about our spiritual goals and areas for growth. For me, my area for growth seemed clear: I needed to refresh my relationship with the Bible and better use it for meditative purposes. Then my friend, who isn't Catholic and has what my housemates call "a good Baptist Bible," said something that made me both chuckle and cringe: "Yeah, I didn't really know that Catholics don't really use the Bible too much until I met so many this year."

Cue record-scratch sound. Cue cartoon eyeballs popping out of my head. Cue fumbling words.

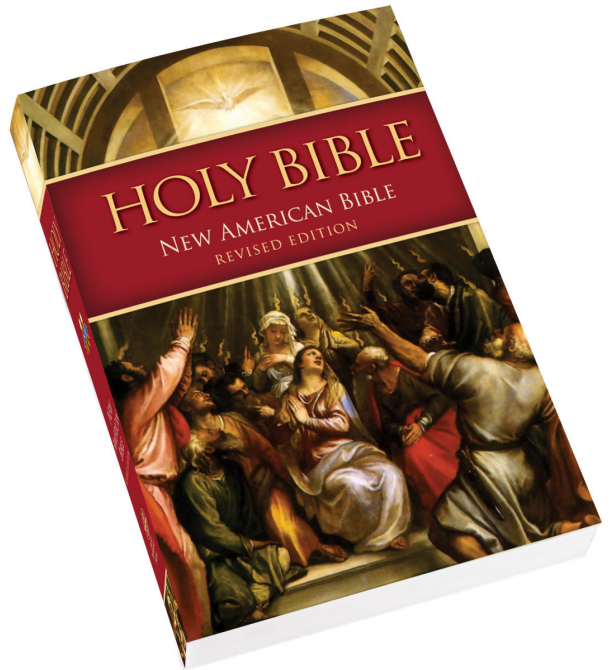
"Um well, that's not really true..." I went on to say some jumble of words to correct her and explain the Catholic

perspective. The truth is, the Scripture has a deep place in the heart of the Church. As a Catholic, I grew up hearing Old and New Testament alike each week at Mass, and as a (life-long) Catholic school girl, I not only heard and prayed on Bible stories but studied them. I am very grateful for my education; even if I can't quote chapter and verse, I have a good understanding of the Bible's history & context, as well as its eternal Truths. Yet clearly, my failure to embrace Scripture as a meditative and prayerful tool more closely looked to some (particularly non-Catholic Christians) as a general ignorance or dismissal of it. One thing you learn quickly in Bible-belt Kentucky is that people love and KNOW their Bibles. My friend's comment made it clear: The Bible is important, and I needed to get my stuff together and meet God's word more personally.

So I did. I started a plan to read a little of the Old Testament, the Psalms, and the New Testament each day. Two months into this plan, I realize that while it is the story of God's revelation to us, God's people, it is also a revelation of myself, of who I am in relation to God. While for many, the Bible brings them close to know God, I find that reading it makes me stop and go, "Just who are you, God?! And how are you calling me?" (I imagine God hears this and chuckles, thinking It's working!) But as a housemate reminded me, the Bible wasn't made to be an easy read. I won't ever "finish" it and be done, and God won't give me a "Good Christian Award" just for reading it cover to cover.

Though I already knew many of these stories and words well, they feel new to me. When I read it with a prayerful mind, and not an analytic, academic one, I see myself in the stories: my own failings, my own desires, my own questions. I won't be able to quote chapter and verse at the end of this year; nor will I have a "good Baptist Bible" covered in ink and Post-It notes. But I'm learning to approach Scripture less like Martha ("Did I do it right? Am I on schedule?") and more like Mary, simply by being with it.

Then again, ask me how I feel in a few weeks when I get to Deuteronomy and Leviticus.



# Prayer and Decision Making

## By Pat Fricchione



I once had the privilege of attending the Catholic Leadership Conference at The Catholic University of America. While at the conference, there were a number of presentations about how our Catholic faith impacts leadership. One of the key aspects that truly underlines all decision-making is prayer. Prayer can be just about anything, and that constant dialogue with God can help fortify any sort of decision that we have to make. The keynote speaker of the conference, Col. Larry Morris, dedicated a decent portion of his address on his own personal prayer. He discussed how he began and ended every day in prayer. Being a military man and lawyer, he found that structured prayer was his way of finding God's support for the day.

Prayer is an essential part of faith that allows for heaven and earth to interact on a very personal level. The Church puts great emphasis on prayer and how it penetrates every aspect of life.

The Church has even devoted the fourth and final section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to prayer and what prayer means. Mother Teresa often spoke about prayer and how prayer affects the individual. She once said, "Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God himself. Prayer begets faith, faith begets love, and love begets service on behalf of the poor."

Prayer can transform the heart in ways that are inexplicable. It is done in such a way that it can be perceptible and communal. While prayer is that moment of personal connection with God, it is still part of our community within the Church. We pray as a Church, and that sense of community can come in a number of different ways. The most evident example of this is in the celebration of Mass. Mass is an opportunity where the physical and divine can meet; it is where Jesus physically is present within us. Mass is where the community of believers can come together wherever they are and be united in that one moment. The second example comes from other common prayers of the Church, such as devotions, novenas, and other prayers that have developed over the centuries. Here the same words of prayer are expressed all across the world in hundreds of different languages and, in a similar manner to the Mass, they unite us all. The final example is our own personal prayer that often occurs with no structure or sometimes, even without words. This personal prayer is a part of the common desire to speak with God that unites the world.

When prayer gets brought into decision-making, the process instantly changes. Instead of making quick decisions based on outside forces, prayer helps guide us to the decision with a certain amount of comfort. Daily prayer can help answer the small day-to-day decision. Prayer is also a great resource when major decisions come up. We will each face major decisions in our lives, and the types of decisions are unique to us. When we bring it prayer, we can make a clearer and firmer decision.

## **"Young Man, I Tell You, Arise!"**

### **By Alyce Anderson**

A fresh start... Our society always seems to be longing for a "fresh start." There's a sense of pride and victory when we can commit to a new beginning. But why is it so difficult to remember that as Christians, by virtue of our baptism, we are called to a fresh start each day with Christ?

Our first reading today reminds us that we are members of the Body of Christ our baptism. "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body... and we were all given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The vocation we receive in baptism is not to lay dormant in our hearts; rather, it is a vocation that we should choose to live out each day. When we choose to intentionally live out the promises of our baptism, we are renewed by its waters and are given a "fresh start" to live as the Christians we long to be.

In Christ's love, it is never too late for a new beginning. We see this in today's Gospel reading, when Jesus brings the only son of a widow back from the dead. And do you know what his call to new life was? Jesus said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" (Luke 7:14). This is our call, too! Jesus says this to our hearts, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" "Young woman, I tell you, arise!" The fulfillment of our call is the way we live out the radical nature of our baptism. The Christian life is not easy, but that is why we are called each new day to "arise" and fulfill the promises of our baptism, "[serving] the Lord with gladness" (Psalms 100:2).

What are you going to do today as Jesus calls you to "arise?" This is your fresh start. It may not seem like the perfect day to begin anew, but as Christians we know that today—this ordinary day—has been given to us by God and we are being called to "arise!" You have been called, you have been chosen. So "arise," my friend, and let this new day be a new offering to our Lord:

Do you renounce Satan? I do.  
And all his works? I do.  
And all his empty show? I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth? I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered death and was buried,  
rose again from the dead  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father? I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and live everlasting? I do.

And may almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who was given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit  
and bestowed on us forgiveness of our sins,  
keep us by his grace,  
in Christ Jesus our Lord,  
for eternal life. Amen.



## Finding Joy in Our Lenten Prayer

### By David Burkey

Each year it seems that just as soon as we've concluded the joyous season of Christmas, we find ourselves putting away the carols and nativity scene just to replace them with our Friday fish sandwiches and talk of our Lenten sacrifices. At first glance it may seem that the coming of Lent each year calls for us to "put away" our joy. After all it's a season of penance to bring ourselves closer to Christ through his suffering – not exactly the definition of joy. But is it possible to still have joy during this season of prayer and reflection?

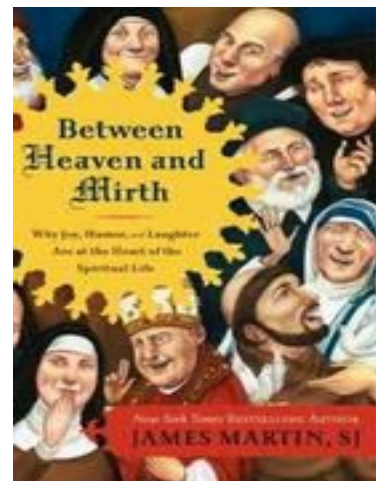
Recently I read Fr. James Martin's book, [Between Heaven and Mirth](#), in which he discusses how joy and our spiritual life don't have to be mutually exclusive. Particularly he proposes ways in which we can incorporate joy into our prayer life, suggestions that we could put into practice this Lent.

First and foremost we must be willing to bring our joy to the Lord through prayer. Just as we might call up a good friend with exciting news, so also should we cultivate that same desire to share our daily joys with the Lord. Although we may be in Lent, our daily lives aren't devoid of joyous occasions. What made you laugh today? What was your "high point" of the day? When I was growing up my family would sit around the dinner table sharing our "high point," or our favorite thing that happened to us that day. Forcing myself to remember something good was always easier some days than others but it reminded me there was always something for which I could give thanks.

Additionally, beyond just recalling joyous moments, we can use our prayer to think back to the people, experiences and memories that perhaps we may take for granted. For myself, I can far too easily forget to recognize the blessings of being able to attend a university and pursue a degree, as well as the tremendous influence of my parents. Surely my years here in college and the lessons my parents instilled in me have also given rise to joy in my life; it's just not something I always remember on a daily basis. Even more importantly, in remembering these people and experiences we may take for granted we develop a greater sense of gratitude and realize that our joy doesn't exist in a vacuum, but because of these blessings that God has given each of us.

In this we see that joy is much more than just sheer happiness. Rather, it is a reflection of our prayer life and relationship with God. As the French philosopher Leon Bloy once said, "Joy is the most infallible sign of God's presence." The secular world often views joy as synonymous with simple emotional happiness, yet, according to Fr. Martin, the Christian definition of joy is happiness in God and revolves around our relationship with Him. This is precisely what allows us to have joy in the midst of suffering, and yes, even Lent.

Although at its outset Lent may not seem an occasion for joy, it is an occasion to deepen our prayer life and our internal joy - our happiness in God. In this prayer we can develop a greater sense of gratitude for both the blessings in our lives and, especially this Lent, an appreciation for Christ's Paschal mystery, all of which can lead to a richer relationship with our Lord. St. Paul sums it up best in his Letter to the Thessalonians: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).



# Angel of God, My Guardian Dear

## By Rebecca Ruesch

Angel of God, my guardian dear,  
To whom God's love commits me here,  
Ever this day, be at my side,  
To light, to guard, to rule, and guide.  
Amen



Today we celebrate the Memorial of the Guardian Angels. The prayer above was one my mother taught me when I was a child, and even now I can easily recall it. She taught me to say it as I was going to bed, a reminder that my Guardian Angel would be watching me as I slept. Throughout Scripture, we see the importance of angels and their role as intermediaries between us and God. A prime example of this is the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary to announce to her that she would give birth to the son of God. But, beyond the known archangels, we recognize the role of individual Guardian Angels. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that "from infancy to death human life is surrounded by their [angels'] watchful care and intercession. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life. Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God" ([CCC, n. 336](#)).

When I saw that today was the Memorial of the Guardian Angels, it got me thinking about this idea of a Guardian Angel, something I hadn't thought about a lot as an adult. As children, many of us are taught about our Guardian Angel, who is continually watching over us. It's a comforting thought, to think that there is a specific angel "assigned" to protect and watch over you...and only you! It's creates a sense of security and safety, especially in the mind of a young child. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus alludes to these angels, remind us to "not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father". ([MT 18:10](#))

Now that I'm older, I certainly don't think of a Guardian Angel in the same way. As a child I imagined an invisible person, following me around constantly to make sure nothing bad happened (which is a daunting task for anyone, but I pity the angel assigned to protect me, with my proclivity for clumsiness!). As comforting as the idea of an invisible protector seems to me now, I recognize the idea of a Guardian Angel as something different. Guardian Angels can be seen as a symbol of God's enduring love for us. In the huge expanse of the human population it is often easy to feel insignificant. But the symbol of a Guardian Angel serves to remind us that God's love is individual and complete! We were made in the image and likeness of God, and He truly loves each and every one of us on a personal level. So tonight, say a prayer to your Guardian Angel, remembering that God watches over you through these Angels, a sign of his unending Love!

# Struggles of the Catholic Young Adult

## By Jay Schaefer

As I finally sit down to write this post, I once again have that awful realization that I've let my tendency to procrastinate get the best of me. And, once again, I beat myself up over it because I know I've failed to follow through and honor my word. It's a cycle of self-deprecation that so many of us fall into, particularly young adults.

When I did some investigation on St. Jerome, I laughed at myself over that train of thought. Most well-known as the biblical scholar who revised the Latin Bible (generally known as the Vulgate), this Doctor of the Church was also incredibly hard on himself when he failed. Butler's Lives of the Saints says of Jerome:

*He was, as someone has said, no admirer of moderation whether in virtue or against evil. He was swift to anger, but also swift to feel remorse, even more severe on his own shortcomings than on those of others. A pope is said to have remarked, on seeing a picture of Jerome striking his breast with a stone, "You do well to carry that stone, for without it the Church would never have canonized you."*

I suppose we young adults are in good company when we, too, are hard on ourselves for missing the mark. It's really no wonder Catholic young adults have such difficulty accepting those times we fall flat on our faces. Fresh out of our academic careers, whether high school or college, we're used to very high expectations on our performance. We tend to gauge our self-worth on quantifiable "goals": our GPAs, extracurricular involvement, "likes" on Facebook, retweets on Twitter, number of job interviews, etc. Every time we miss the mark we've set for ourselves, it somehow translates to utter personal failure.

This, of course, is foolishness. It's all well and good to be involved and occupy our time with things. St. Jerome himself said, "Be ever engaged, so that whenever the devil calls he may find you occupied." It's another thing, though, to obsess over being occupied and, thus, increasing our chances at "being successful". We know it in our heads, but fail to grasp it in our hearts, often at great detriment to our interior lives. So what is one to do? I'm no spiritual guru, but I can share a few things that continue to help me overcome this recurring sense of unworthiness.

1. Daily Prayer- It goes without saying that daily prayer is essential. Even if you start with "Hey God, it's me again. I'm sorry I keep failing at this. Please help", you'll reap the benefits immediately. Like with any other relationship, frequent dialogue is of primary importance.
2. Mass- The Eucharist is literally the greatest physical thing in the world: Christ in the flesh. We have the opportunity to receive Him every single day; take advantage of it. And while you're at it, take a leap of faith and try out...
3. Reconciliation- Yes, the oft-dreaded Confessional. Admittedly, I absolutely hate going—but I sure love leaving! While it's hard to do, it's like anything else in life: the greatest reward comes from the greatest sacrifice. Take a leap of faith if you've been away for a while. The "spiritual car wash" really is one of the greatest gifts God offers us.
4. Spiritual Direction- Regular dialogue with a spiritual guide provides an objective view of our journey. It takes a level of openness and vulnerability, but having someone to walk with gives us much-needed encouragement and accountability.
5. Patience- St. Francis de Sales said it best: "Have patience with all things; but, first of all, with yourself."

We're humans, and fairly young ones at that. The expectation we place on ourselves to be perfect is so unreachable because we're inherently imperfect. We're constantly developing, growing, falling down and getting back up again. It's only God who can make us perfect; we just keep getting in His way. The next time you go all St. Jerome on yourself, drop that stone and look instead to the One who is Perfection itself. He'll help you back up on your feet every time.

## Come, Holy Spirit

### By Laura Berlage

I wouldn't necessarily go so far as to characterize myself "slow of speech and tongue" as Moses does, but I do face certain insecurities when it comes to speaking out (about the faith or any topic). I am a perfectionist. I often hold back from evangelizing out of fear that I will say the wrong thing, or even the right thing but not do it justice. This fear is the reason I prefer writing; I can revise until the text says (almost) precisely what I want. However, I am finding more and more that I am being thrown into situations which do not have space for revision. How can I be sure to respond in a way worthy of my baptismal call?

When we volunteered together on a recent Confirmation retreat, my friend gave an eloquent reflection on the person of the Holy Spirit as a gift and an advocate to us and for us.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit - including those which precede eloquent speech, such as knowledge and understanding - are truly the gift of the Holy Spirit, the person of the Trinity. We are given God, whom we can call to our side to provide us with whatever strength we currently need... even when we're unsure what we truly need. St. Paul points out that "we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Romans 8:26).

My friend, who is a high school teacher, found that on the days when he remembered to pray to the Holy Spirit before class, the class had the most fruitful discussions. University of Notre Dame President Emeritus and civil rights champion Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, repeats the simple prayer "Come, Holy Spirit" hundreds of times throughout the day, in immediate preparation for every situation. If that prayer is good enough for him, it's good enough for me.

While comforting, the Spirit's guidance does not excuse us from all responsibility in developing the coherent response of the Church to the world. St. Peter reminds the faithful that we must "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Peter 3:15). Even with the Holy Spirit as our advocate, preparation is necessary. I must be disciplined and conscientious in my study for my upcoming comprehensive examinations. I must continue to grow in prayer, as well as increase my knowledge of my faith and I must be aware of my witness to the faith in word and deed with each person I encounter

Yet once the critical moment of speech or witness arrives, just breathe a call to the Holy Spirit and take God's own Word for it: Do not worry about what you are to say (Lk 12:11).

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Enkindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.



# The Church Year





# Seeing God in All Things

## By Patrick Sullivan

"To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wildflower/ hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour." During my junior year at Chaminade High School, Bro. Stephen Balletta, S.M. drilled these hallowed words of William Blake deep into the recesses of my brain. I've kept that stanza from *The Auguries of Innocence* neatly tucked away, perhaps in the same aisle of my mind as the such and such causes for World War I, the date of the Battle of Hastings and when to use affect as opposed to effect. Trivial though it may have seemed at the time, some six years later these words have finally manifested their power. William Blake, in that short, un-rhyming and jumbled stanza has captured what it means to see the world sacramentally.

The infinite world captured in a grain of sand, the boundless beauty expressed in a wildflower, the gift of holding infinity in the palm of our hand and the paradox of fitting eternity into one hour all capture (to the extent that human speech and thought are able to communicate and conceptualize) – the essence of sacramental nature. A sacramental worldview is less like viewing the world through rose colored glasses and more like journeying through space and time in Dr. Who's TARDIS; the inside is exponentially larger than its external appearance implies.

Somewhere alongside my knowledge of the Battle of Hastings and World War I is also a (working) definition of sacrament: a tangible sign of the invisible grace of God (cf. [CCC 1131](#)). Each of our seven sacraments has a clear and tangible sign (e.g. the bread and wine brought for consecration and the water and oil used in baptism) that manifests that salvific grace which is otherwise beyond the grasp of our senses. A sacramental worldview, however, should extend beyond the liturgical function of our seven sacraments; rather, it should extend the sacraments themselves.

Living a sacramental worldview means, quite simply, viewing the world as sacrament. A redundant definition it might be, but often times the simplest explanations are the best. If we do truly believe that the Sacraments are moments in time where the invisible grace of God is made visible and tangible then seeing this same grace working constantly in and through our daily lives would only beg that we see the sacramental nature of daily life. This is not to say that every blade of grass is truly the transubstantiated body of Christ, but it does substantiate St. Ignatius's charge to see God in all things. Furthermore, viewing the world through "sacramentally-tinted glasses" would mean seeing the very world itself as sacramental; it would mean recognizing our lives and everything that they contain as the gift that they are. Indeed, it would mean seeing this world, our fallen world, for what it truly is: a tangible sign of the invisible and salvific grace of God. That being said, the question is not so much what it means to live with a sacramental worldview, but rather how this worldview will change the way we act.

Every grain of sand is a window to the self-giving and creative essence of our God, every wildflower a taste of His beauty; we hold infinity in the palm of our hands before the reception of the Most Blessed Sacrament and eternity in an hour with each liturgy. Perhaps the Brothers at Chaminade knew what they were doing after all.

# Chocolate Shakes and Liturgy

## By Stephen Schad

Liturgy is just exhilarating! What could give you more of a spiritual rush than a thirty minute homily being read straight from the page, a cantor who sings with the voice of an angelic chicken, an altar server who must be awakened from her mid-Mass nap to bring the Missal to the altar, and a lector who proclaims the Word of God with monotone gusto and the speed of a snail?

Okay, yes, liturgy on the surface can be quite unexciting. We can often leave Mass unnourished, and critiquing everything that left us unsatisfied. Yet, everything that we critique, everything that leaves us unsatisfied, is what is essential to liturgy itself. Liturgy is a reflection of us, the faithful. So, perhaps, we are quite unexciting; however, I don't believe this is the case. I think liturgy takes on a different type of excitement, an excitement that fulfills us in a way that nothing of this world can compare to.

There are many times when I'm having a bad day, and I hope and pray that a large McDonald's chocolate shake will give me the nourishment and comfort that I need to continue on. As I sit in the drive-thru line, I'm excited about my chocolate shake to the point where I can even taste it! Ten minutes later, after consuming 22 fl oz. of ice cream goodness, I find myself sick and even more unnourished than before.

The excitement of the chocolate shake is an excitement of this world that will never last. It does not even come close to the nourishment and excitement that the Eucharist brings to those who believe. Everything we do flows from liturgy. Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) says that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows" (SC 10). Just as we bring bread and wine to the Altar to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, when we come forward to receive Christ, we bring our very selves to the Altar of God to be transformed and commissioned to Christ's ministry on earth.

This has been the purpose of Eucharistic liturgy since the beginning of the Church. In the second century, Justin Martyr defended the Eucharistic practices of the Church by stating the following: "through the word of prayer that comes from God, the food over which the Eucharist has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood" (Apologia I, 65-66). We are unable to do Christ's ministry here on earth without the fruits of our liturgical worship. Every time we celebrate Mass, we are coming to the source, the origin, of all life and ministry. How exciting is that? If we truly understand that our Eucharistic celebration is where it all begins, then no boring homily, no awful cantor, no napping server, and no monotone lector can ever lessen the excitement that abounds beneath the surface of liturgy. No matter what liturgical experience we may have on the surface, the excitement of liturgy should pour forth into our lives, helping us to engage in the ministry that Jesus established for us on earth.

As I mentioned, liturgy is a reflection of us, the faithful. It is us doing the work of God, on behalf of God and for God's people. Because we are only human, liturgy may not live up to the idea of excitement that we are used to. However, liturgy is home to a different excitement, a lasting excitement, an excitement that will always be present. It's just a question of whether we've come to Mass open to this excitement. Have we come to Mass for a chocolate shake, or have we come to be sent forth to proclaim the Gospel of the Lord?



# The Journey of Advent

## By Lauren Scharmer



I have a very distinct memory from when I was a little girl (okay, twelve years old...) of anxiously awaiting the Christmas morning tradition of opening up Christmas presents. I was so excited that instead of waiting for the parental mandated 6:15am wake up call, I did it my way. I changed the time on my alarm clock, woke up my whole family and demanded that we start Christmas a little early. This moment of impatience several years ago plays into a much larger reality about this world that we live in – we are so anxious to get to the final destination as quickly as possible that we forget that the journey is just as important as the destination.

That is what Advent is – the journey to Christmas. The word itself comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.” In the midst of the craziness of the holiday season—peppermint mochas and Hallmark Christmas movies included—it is natural to feel like these weeks leading up to Christmas are all about the countdown, and not about the coming. Just as I was all too anxious and turned the clock forward to get my Christmas day started, it is easy to wish away these days of simple waiting and trade them in for the hustle and bustle of Christmas Day.

In an effort to more fully appreciate this journey to December 25th, it is necessary to find ways to live out this coming in our own lives. Practically, what does this mean? It means recognizing that the Advent journey requires silence, prayer and most importantly perseverance. Although everyone loves a good peppermint mocha, it is through these three things that we can ready the way for the coming of our Lord at Christmas.

Although seemingly impossible, finding silence among the chaos of these days can be done in simple ways—whether it is turning off that Josh Groban Christmas song that has been playing on repeat in the car or taking the chance to catch one’s breath between glasses of eggnog at a family Christmas party. Finding times for prayer can be as unassuming as waking up five minutes early to read that day’s Mass readings or saying a Hail Mary when we are stressed. Lastly, perseverance is not only a necessity of the Christian life, but a necessary part of a peace-filled Advent.

The most beautiful part of these days before Christmas is that the destination of our journey is not a rigged alarm, but God Himself in the unassuming form of a baby. This innocence of the baby Jesus reminds us that this season is a time for simple acts of faith, acts of faith that both allow us to appreciate the gift that is waiting for us and the journey that makes it possible.

## Et Verbum Caro Factum Est By Alex Boucher

Ever since I was a little kid, I have loved Midnight Mass. As a student of the Church's liturgy, some of the externals certainly contribute to this: darkness, incense, singing, a full church. Yesterday was no different. The outside air was cold, the church full, the music beautiful as always. With the exception of a blaring fire alarm because of a smoking thurible being placed too close to a sensitive smoke detector, Mass went off without a hitch!

But why do we gather in the middle of the night on one of the longest nights of the year? Why do we celebrate this great solemnity year after year? What can we continue to learn from "Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father...born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary" (Proclamation of the Birth of Christ)?

The collect (opening prayer) from the "Mass during the Night" beautifully illustrates the reason that we gather on that holy night:

O God, who have made this most sacred night  
radiant with the splendor of the true light,  
grant, we pray, that we, who have known the mysteries  
of his light on earth,  
may also delight in his gladness in heaven.

God's light came to earth as an infant over two thousand years ago. The Incarnation is miracle and pure gift, but it is also human. "Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis—And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The Word, Christ himself, was, as the Nicene Creed says, "incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man."

In his Midnight Mass homily, Pope Francis said, "The grace which was revealed in our world is Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, true man and true God. He has entered our history; he has shared our journey." Emmanuel, God with us, was born in a manger fully human and fully God. Jesus Christ is not some distant, historical figure. He experienced the joys and sorrows of daily living just as we do today, and is as alive today as he was in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

As we celebrate the octave of Christmas, let us not forget the great miracle of the Incarnation of the light of the world. "The Word became flesh, and we have seen his glory" (John 1:14). May the glory and joy of Christmas remain alive in our hearts and in our lives today and every day.



## **A Mother's Joy and a New Year**

### **By Brett Garland**

Standing between the ornate choir and high altar of Toledo's medieval cathedral is the statue of La Virgen Blanca, one of my favorite depictions of the Blessed Mother. As Mary cradles Jesus in her arms, as if presenting him to us, Jesus' hand affectionately clasps the chin of his loving mother. In this tender moment Mary's face expresses an infectious joy, a joy that is quite appropriate for today's Solemnity in which the Church celebrates Mary as the Mother of God. As we come to the end of the Christmas Octave and usher in the New Year, may we be filled with the everlasting joy that Christ alone can bring. Let us make Mary's joy our own!

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever."

-Luke 1:46-55



# Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving

## By Samantha Alves

With the liturgical season of Lent – one of the holiest and most sacred times for our Church many Catholic minds are churning in anticipation. While we prepare ourselves with the due reverence for Lent, we are equally busy devising just exactly what we shall sacrifice and how shall we keep it. While this great fast is meant to ignite a vision of our Christ, unyielding in temperance through the desert in the face of Satan's temptations, our holy fast often is diminished to a game of "what is the best fasting practices to talk about with others?" or "I'll kick start my diet by giving up sweets for Lent." Suddenly our religious devotional practice becomes much less about Christ, much more about ourselves.

This is not to say our mismanaged practices are meant to only serve ourselves. It is also not meant to say that our "sacrifices" are not challenges. Nor is this meant to discourage anyone from giving up sweets. This is to say that there is a chasm in many of our modern, personal interpretations of our Catholic practice. Often, we attempt to fulfill the tradition without prayer or holy intentions and we boastfully bemoan our devotion with ironic agony to our friends and family "I won't even have sweets on Sunday, not a bite!"

This, I believe, is not what is meant for our journey through Lent with Christ. This journey is a glorious opportunity for devotion and recommitment to prayer, abstinence, and almsgiving. We may share our devotions with others, but we should seek to share as a means of support and reflection without pride or seeking attention.

So, I propose a new kind of devotional practice. Instead of banishing the tasty treats from your pantry or giving up your favorite television show, let's take one step closer to our Community of Faith in our Lenten sacrifice. These practices help us to grow closer to Christ. This year, why not try this through a prayer-filled recognition of the struggles that our brothers and sisters here on Earth face each day?

Practicing sacrifice with added prayerful reflection and a commitment to our community is much more doable than one might think! This Lent, park in the back of the grocery lot; as you walk towards the door, say a prayer for older adults who may be challenged to walk such a short distance Or, if you like to give up sweets, do so in celebration for the abundance of what you have been blessed with! The money that is not spent on sweets may be used to purchase non-perishables to donate to a local Saint Vincent de Paul societies. The idea is that while we make sacrifices this Lent, we do so in the spirit of Christ and in support of our community!

When we sacrifice of ourselves so that others may be blessed in the wake of our actions, we grow closer to Christ. As we sacrifice with a humble and gracious heart, prayer becomes a natural step towards not only a stronger relationship with Christ, but so too, with fellow members of our community. Brothers and sisters, let us prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Easter season by using the sacrificial Lenten season as a means to strengthen the bonds between Christ and community.



# The Annunciation: A Collaboration Between God and Mary

## By Andrew St. Hilaire

The Annunciation emphasizes both the importance of Mary and how the Annunciation brings the Incarnation of God into the realm of human history. I have noticed that people, when discussing this crucial event, typically compartmentalize these two aspects while forgetting their interconnectivity. I also find that this can result in one compartmentalizing their relationship with Mary and their relationship with God, failing to recognize how the two are woven together. I say this because I am certainly guilty as charged! Seeing the beautiful harmonization of the New Adam (Jesus) and the New Eve (Mary) can help us better understand the correct approach to bringing our hearts closer to God during Lent.

You might then ask how this interconnectivity between Mary and the Incarnation occurs. Yes, Mary did give birth to Jesus, and many people stop there. However, I believe the harmonization is more than the mere act of Mary giving birth. This is where the Annunciation comes into play, as Mary agreed to submit herself fully to God's will. The nature in which such agreement is founded on remains an open question. In a blog I wrote some while back, I talked about [God as Infinite Love](#), and I reference this again because I am referring to a spirituality of collaboration, where the Love of God is a collaborative invitation to participate in His will, which subsequently leads to being one with His love. We walk on our journey together with God, and this connectedness is why such a harmonization between the role of Mary and the Incarnation of Christ exists.

The answer to how this harmony exists lies in the gift of free will. God could have entered humanity, without our consent, into a new order where the original graces and gifts would be restored. However, God wanted us to love Him, and such love requires an act to freely choose Him while simultaneously rejecting something else (i.e. sin, worldly pleasures, and so forth). If God were to redeem humanity through the Incarnation of Christ, it would then be by human consent, in order that our dignity is maintained and we are able to participate in this Infinite Love of God, and that God would offer the Incarnation (and therefore the opportunity to regain access to full participation in such Love) by means of collaboration with humanity. It is only through such collaboration that participation in the Love of God can occur.

This is where our Blessed Mother, Mary, enters into the conversation. In the Annunciation, Mary is asked by the Angel Gabriel if she would freely consent to God's plan to take humanity out of the abyss and to let him be completely enraptured by God's Love (See Luke 1:26-35). Her response was the greatest act of liberty the world has ever seen: "Be it done unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). This freedom is perfect because her Son was willed, and not merely accepted in any unforeseen or unpredictable way. There was no element of chance, but a desire of the Father to enact His will of salvation by means of collaboration. Mary, having full faith and love for God, essentially said "yes, I am willing to collaborate with Your will in order that I may participate in your Love." Her willingness to collaborate is an act of harmonization, one that we cannot ignore in our lives of prayer and charity.

With this being noted, how does this pertain to our journey of faith during the Lenten Season? Like Mary, we are called by God to collaborate with His will in order that we may grow in holiness and be ravished by His Love. The Annunciation reminds us that we have this gift of freedom to participate in such collaboration. After all, it would not be collaboration if we were forced to participate! We are shown that we can choose God and reject the things that keep us away from Him. This choice is deeply rooted to the extent that God would offer such a choice pertaining to our very own salvation, the Incarnation of His very own Son. Fortunately, we have an example, a role model who perfected this very act of freedom. That role model is Mary, as she collaborated with God's will. Because of such a harmonization between Mary and God's plan, the same harmonization can occur with us and God. We can pursue this harmonization with God by asking for Mary's intercession. She can then us respond to such an invitation by saying: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy Word."

# The Magnificent Hallelujah

## By Victor David

On April 13, 1742 in Dublin, Ireland, Handel's famous oratorio Messiah was premiered. Surprised? When we think of the Messiah we immediately think of Christmastime. Woe to the city orchestra that dares pass the holiday season without at least one performance of one of western music's most beloved pieces. Yet, far from being a Nativity carol, the Messiah is truly an Easter gift.

Part II of the oratorio closes with one of the most well known choruses, "Hallelujah." It occurs during scene seven, titled "God's ultimate victory." This follows scenes dedicated to the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah  
For the lord God omnipotent reigneth  
Hallelujah

The kingdom of this world; Is become  
The kingdom of our Lord, And of His Christ  
And He shall reign for ever and ever  
King of kings forever and ever hallelujah hallelujah  
And lord of lords forever and ever hallelujah hallelujah  
And he shall reign forever and ever  
Hallelujah

At the beginning of Holy Week, we celebrate Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, humbly on a donkey. We are then invited to journey with him. We are there at the Last Supper when the Eucharist is instituted. We stand with the Blessed Mother and John the Evangelist at the foot of the Cross. We mourn Jesus' death with them. We are asked, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" But then, at the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday, we rejoice at the news that the tomb is empty. Christ is risen, he is truly risen. At Mass, we do not exclaim "Alleluia" just once. We proclaim it three times.

The "Hallelujah" Chorus presents us with what the Triduum and Easter are all about. Christ, through his sacrifice on Good Friday, he takes on the sins of the world and opens Heaven up for the faithful. In his Resurrection on Easter Sunday, death is overcome. In conquering both sin and death, Jesus truly becomes the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. His rule knows no end, for he reigns for all time.

Tradition dictates that when the chorus is sung, all must stand out of reverence for the Messiah. During the Easter season, and indeed all our lives, we too must stand and journey with Christ. By doing so, we take part in that kingdom of our Lord. By doing so, we remain close to the Lord of Lords. By doing so, we can be part of the heavenly chorus that forever sings, "Hallelujah!"





# Pentecost As A Personal Confirmation

## By Dana Edwards

We celebrate Pentecost fifty days after Easter to commemorate the Holy Spirit's descent on Christ's disciples after His Ascension. We are, in many ways, celebrating the birthday of the Church and our individual commitments to God.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to share our faith, to have the ability to open our hearts in understanding one another and God's message. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord), we become fully alive in our personal relationship with God so we can give better witness to His message. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "...the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity" (CCC 738).



We can use Pentecost as an opportunity to make our faith our own while sharing God's word. By utilizing our individual talents and volunteering in some aspect of our church, we strengthen our faith and build community.

I remember wanting to be an altar server after receiving my first Holy Communion in second grade. I began altar serving and continued to do so until I received Confirmation. Serving during the Mass allowed me, as a young girl, to better understand my Catholic faith. My parents remember me saying how I enjoyed altar serving because I had to pay attention (and stay awake) during 8 a.m. Sunday Mass. Assisting the priest on the altar, I began to fully understand and celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist every Sunday. I attended Catholic school and was able to make connections between Religion class and weekly Mass by serving during church service. Once confirmed, I continued to volunteer in my church as a lector as well as taught religion education to grade school children. Actively participating in my church allowed me to fully engage in my Catholic faith and grow spiritually.

No matter our age, the Catholic Church encourages us to be active participants in Mass and in our Church. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we can come to discover where the Church needs us and how we can best share the time, talent, and treasure God has given us. My parish hosts a ministry fair each year, which gives parishioners an opportunity to see other ministries within the Church and where we can best serve God and our community.

Pentecost allows us to renew ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis asks us in his daily Mass homily on May 19th this year to question ourselves: "What kind of heart do we have? ... Is my heart fixed upon everyday gods or is it a heart fixed on the Holy Spirit?" It is easy for us to get wrapped up in life's habitual tasks at home, work, with family, colleagues, etc. Pope Francis encourages us that the Holy Spirit "gives us strength, gives us the steadiness to be able to move forward in life in the midst of many events."

# Lessons from the Holy Cross

## By Mark Straub

On September 14th, we celebrate the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). That love is never more evident than our Lord's passion and death on the Cross. By that Holy Cross, we have been redeemed. Jesus Christ foretold his Passion to the Apostles, instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and fulfilled God's plan for human salvation at Calvary upon that Holy Cross. This, my friends, is the greatest love ever known to humankind; by the grace of God, we will come to know the fullness of God's love in eternity. The promise of eternal salvation was made possible upon that Cross and we, as Catholics, are called to pick up our cross and follow Christ daily. This is a very hard thing to accomplish in today's world.

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to guide and strengthen us while following his commands. Paul tells us: "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me" (Philippians 4:13). Jesus Christ empowers us with the Holy Spirit today just as he did with the Apostles. It is exactly that God-given power that we need in today's often secular world to preach Christ crucified and "fight the good fight," as St. Paul says. For if we profess Christ without recognizing and living his sacrifice on the Cross, we cannot be disciples of the Lord. Peter found that out when Jesus admonished him after the foretelling of his passion and death. I keep written on my desk calendar in my office and in my daily liturgical calendar, a Latin phrase that I think summarizes this idea: *Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi* - As we worship, So we believe, So we live.

As we worship, so we believe, so we live. We must, through worship and prayer, "Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). We must believe all that Jesus has taught us, that he is our Lord and Savior, and that he suffered and died so that we may live. We must live out our faith in what Jesus has called us to do by spreading the good news and picking up our cross and following our Lord. This is not an easy task. It isn't easy being a Christian. Christ never said it would be easy. Being a Christian is not just being a member of a religion, it is our way of life. We live the faith Christ gave to us. When we struggle with this, when we get lazy or complacent with our prayer time, or if we need a reminder of just how much we are loved and what our calling is, we need only to gaze upon the Holy Cross.

We can also reflect on the Prophet Isaiah, when he told us exactly what Christ has done for us and for the salvation of man: "Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross." Remember, worship, believe, and live in the glory of Christ crucified!



# **"To Become A Saint Isn't To Become A Statue..."**

## **By Alex Boucher**

As a Catholic school student in the fifth grade, I learned about the "cult of the saints." I remember being extremely confused at the time, as I had no idea what the phrase meant, and I don't think it was ever actually explained to us. In preparation for All Saints Day, we were tasked with choosing a saint and writing an essay about them. After wide consultation amongst family members, I chose St. Jude Thaddeus, the patron saint of hopeless cases. Perhaps this was my family's way of saying that I was a hopeless case at the age of 10, but I digress.

A dozen or so of us lucky students who wrote superb essays were chosen not only to present our essays in front of the classroom, but also to dress up like our sainted friend and read the essay at the conclusion of All Saints Day Mass at the parish church. I set off to find out what St. Jude looked like. Flowing robes and lots of green fabric. Without asking my mother to dig out the old photo albums, let's just say that it happened, and that the experience got me hooked on the "cult of the saints."

Every November 1st we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. This celebration includes the many saints and blessed "who have gone before us with the sign of faith" (Roman Canon), in addition to both the ordinary and extraordinary who intercede for us daily in Heaven but who have not officially risen to the "dignity of the altar." These holy women and men serve as examples of how to live, love, and serve the world around us. We are all called to love, and we are all called to be saints. As a priest said during a homily while I was on vacation this summer, "To become a saint isn't to become a statue. It is to become real." Through living out the love that Christ showed us on the cross and by emulating those who have gone before us, we all assist in building up the Body of Christ.

In Pope Benedict XVI's homily on All Saints Day in 2006, he said, "Holiness demands a constant effort, but it is possible for everyone because, rather than a human effort, it is first and foremost a gift of God, thrice Holy." If holiness is a gift from God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – it is our responsibility to strive for holiness in order to be, as the priest prays during the Roman Canon, "counted among the flock of those [God] has chosen."



As an Anglophile and lover of English hymnody, I leave you with this. Enjoy, and blessed Solemnity of All Saints!

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# The New Evangelization



# A Culture of Encounter Begins in Our Own Hearts

## By Patrick Finn

Each of us can likely recall a short list of places in which the Lord has spoken to our hearts in a special way. A Eucharistic adoration chapel; one of my favorites, a beach town in the winter; a faraway mountaintop; or even a simple social hall can all be places of encounter with the Triune God. What is one such place for you?



My faraway mountaintop place of encounter with God can be found in Tuscany, three hours north of Rome on the Monte della Verna. This is a sanctuary, now in the care of the Order of Friars Minor, where on this day—September 17, 1224—Saint Francis received the Stigmata, the physical wounds of Christ Himself, on his hands and feet. The place is reached by a switchbacking road—up, up, up you go! The place is impressive for its almost startling peacefulness, a felt reality that this is a place where God is—IS, for sure—you know it, you can sense it from the moment you step off the bus.

La Verna's indelible mark on my own heart comes from one Source—the action of the Holy Spirit, felt and experienced during a brief visit nine years ago. These encounters in awesomely holy places must encourage us to run after Jesus and to place ourselves on the Emmaus Road, so to meet Him there.

Pope Francis has spoken several times of the need for a "culture of encounter" as a foundation for peace and real justice in the world. The first place where this culture begins, I argue, is our own hearts. If what our Lord Jesus says in the Sermon on the Plain is true—"From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45)—we need encounters with the Lord to fill and shape our hearts, thus to be kind in our encounters with others.

Saint Francis' life of encounter with Christ reached a pinnacle in the Lord impressing His own wounds upon Francis' person. You or I might never receive the physical wounds of Christ in our own hands or feet, but we can foster the culture of encounter in our own life of prayer. Ministering and witnessing out of the overflow from our hearts will help build the Kingdom of God on earth!

# Growing in Faith as Missionary Disciples

## By Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C.

"Do we love the Church as our Mother, who helps us to grow as Christians?  
And how do we go beyond ourselves in order to bring Christ to others?"  
-Pope Francis, General Audience, September 11, 2013

Stop for a moment and re-read again the two questions above. Reflect on how you would answer them. Pope Francis reminds us in his first encyclical, Lumen Fidei, that our growth as a Christian is not an individual act.

"It is impossible to believe on our own. Faith is not simply an individual decision which takes place in the depths of the believer's heart, nor a completely private relationship between the "I" of the believer and the divine "Thou", between an autonomous subject and God. By its very nature, faith is open to the "We" of the Church; it always takes place within her communion" (Lumen Fidei, 39).

The Church is the place where we are nurtured by Christ through the community of faith, where we grow in Christ through the sacraments, and where we encounter Christ in those around us, especially in the poor and the suffering. We cannot remain in our comfort within the Church, though. We need to move outward to others and assist them in encountering Christ.

Our growth as Christians is a life-long process. There is always more that we can learn, understand, and experience in faith, especially the teachings of our Church. Bringing Christ to others as an apostle or, as Pope Francis emphasizes, a missionary or missionary disciple\*, makes a demand on us to know and live the faith. Being catechized does not simply mean knowing the faith, it means witnessing to it in our lives. On-going formation in the faith, being catechized, is a dynamic process that is for life! Our growth in faith is not simply our action alone, however, it is the work of Christ within us and the relationship that we have with him nurtured through prayer.

Click [here](#) for resources on catechesis and on prayer!

\*The term "missionary disciple" is used throughout the "Concluding Document" of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences held at the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil. Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (now Pope Francis) personally guided the development of the document. Click [here](#) to read it.



# The New Evangelization and Morality

## By Brett Garland

A major contention that many people – both young and old – have with the Church is that it is an institution of “Thou Shalt Nots” and other moral imperatives that have little or no relevance in the modern world. In essence, the Church is seen as little more than an outdated social services agency, or even worse, a dismal and ahistorical museum perpetuating a false sense of reality. This emerging perception of the Church parallels a larger cultural shift from the acceptance of objective truth toward a secular relativism.

In an address to a group of U.S. bishops in Rome for their ad limina visit, Pope Benedict XVI proposed that the Church’s response to this “eroded” perception of reality is one of the greatest “spiritual and cultural challenges of the new evangelization.” Because of the Catholic Apostolate Center’s commitment to being an instrument of the new evangelization, this bears much significance on the direction of our work. But what impact does – or should – this emerging situation have on our daily lives?

In the words of the Holy Father, “the Church in the United States is called, in season and out of season, to proclaim a Gospel which not only proposes unchanging moral truths but proposes them precisely as the key to human happiness and social prospering”. As Catholics, we are called to uphold the perceptive vision of reality that has been gifted to us by the Holy Spirit through Divine Revelation. It is only through upholding this vision that we can ever hope to accurately understand our place in the world around us and “the deepest truth about our being and ultimate vocation, our relationship to God.”

As Catholics, we are beneficiaries of an astonishing intellectual legacy that was developed over the course of two millennia by scholars who examined these mysteries through the complimentary lenses of faith and reason. Contrary to popular opinion, the Church’s moral teaching is not merely a hodge-podge of archaic prohibitions, but a doctrine that is congruent with the logical nature of reality and informed by Divine Revelation. As the Pope explained in his address, the moral teaching of the Church “is not a threat to our freedom, but rather a ‘language’ which enables us to understand ourselves and the truth of our being, and so to shape a more just and humane world. She thus proposes her moral teaching as a message not of constraint but of liberation, and as the basis for building a secure future.”

If we are to succeed in being apostles of the New Evangelization, then one of our most critical objectives should be to proclaim the beauty, consistency, and relevance of the Church’s moral teaching, without which we would be left with an incomplete view of our own humanity. Informed by this teaching, it is also important that we serve as prophets in the public sphere of these truths. As Pope Benedict XVI emphasized, “it is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realize the grave threats to the Church’s public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres.” Even more pertinent to the work of the Catholic Apostolate Center, the Holy Father went on to say that “the preparation of committed lay leaders and the presentation of a convincing articulation of the Christian vision of man and society remain a primary task of the Church in your country; as essential components of the new evangelization, these concerns must shape the vision and goals of catechetical programs at every level.”

Blessed John XXIII was once quoted as saying the following: “We are not on earth to guard a museum, but to cultivate a flourishing garden of life.” The New Evangelization is not concerned with re-presenting a forgotten memory from the past, but with re-proposing the living and eternal truth of Jesus Christ that continues to sustain His Church. The Church’s moral teaching is just one part of this truth, but as the Holy Father makes clear, it is an essential part to humanity’s self-understanding.

# Women in the Church

## By Krissy Kirby



Have you ever wondered about women and their place in the Catholic Church? I have. When I was little, I wanted to be the Pope (before I decided my dream was to become President, of course). Only then did I discover that since I was a girl, I could not become the Pope. That infuriated me as a small child, and sparked my interest in learning more about my life's vocation as a woman of faith. Only as I have grown older have I begun to learn how I can actively participate in my faith traditions, as a layperson and as a woman.

We are witnesses and called to be exemplary versions of ourselves. We are called by Christ to function in our Church using our own gifts, talents, and love. The example of women leaders in our Church shines through to us in the lives of many female saints and other

women in our Church who used their femininity to do God's will. We read about Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Mary who were friends and followers of Jesus and who were with him throughout his ministry on earth. Later in the 14th century we see St. Catherine of Siena, who helped bring the papacy back to Rome. St. Clare of Assisi founded the female religious order similar to Franciscans. St. Therese of Lisieux is a Doctor of the Church, thanks to Blessed Pope John Paul II. These women and countless others have made their mark on the Church in critical and defining ways, allowing other women to look up to them and see how to live out God's love through actions and service. In [Mulieris Dignitatem](#), a 1988 apostolic letter by Blessed Pope John Paul II, he says, "Holy women are the incarnation of the feminine ideal." This tells us to follow the example of the holy women in our Church, who taught us all a great deal about the special place women hold.

The New Evangelization needs women to be examples of true womanhood. What is a true example of womanhood, you might ask? Who do we look to for guidance? Well, Mary, the Mother of God is a perfect place to begin. In the Blessed Mother, we see a sinless woman, courageous and steadfast in her faith, who said the ultimate "Yes" to God at a young age. In the face of adversity and rejection, she showed how stronger her faith was by bearing the Son of God and then delivering her child in a stable. No simple feat! Throughout Jesus' life, she was with him, both in person and in prayer. When he was lost and teaching in the temple, she worried like any mother would about her son, then pondered these things in her heart; at the Wedding of Cana, she knew when he needed a nudge to begin his ministry; at the foot of the cross, she wept for the life and humanity of her son. As a woman and a mother, we see Mary's grace and strive to imitate her desire to do the will of God, unwavering in faith and holiness.

As true, confident, feminine examples of love and generosity, we need to know and understand Church teachings and desire to do more as laity in our Catholic faith. As individuals we are a part of the Body of Christ, with an important responsibility to love and with incredible opportunities at the end of our fingertips. *Mulieris Dignitatem* encourages us—women of faith—to deepen our own understanding about ourselves, and be a witness of faith. We must recognize that our vocation is to understand and teach the faith, to evangelize the world, to desire to grow ever more deeply in Christ's love, to care for the poor and destitute, and even to answer the call to religious life. But, the most important of these things is to love unconditionally. As Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

The New Evangelization is a way for all people who are members of the Body of Christ (especially women) to reconnect with God and to rekindle the desire to live our lives to their fullest potential.



# **"Preach the Gospel at All Times; Use Words When Necessary"**

## **By Jay Schaefer**

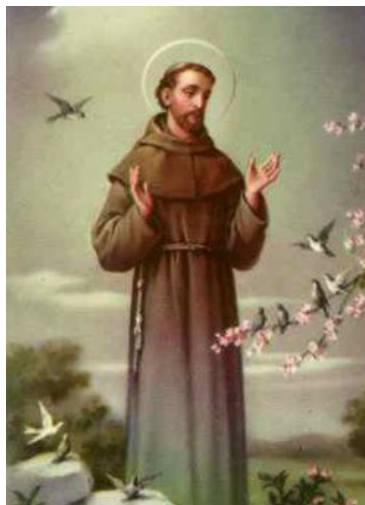
It certainly surprised me to find out that one of Christianity's most popular saints never actually said this, nor did he write the "Make me an instrument of Your peace" prayer! While these often-used quotes are very much in the spirit of St. Francis, the sentiment was likely inspired by a line from the Franciscan Rule, in which he said, "Let all the brothers, however, preach by their deeds."

We all know St. Francis as the saint of simplicity, of appreciation for God's creation, and, of course, preaching to the birds. He was known in his lifetime as a man of great poverty, giving up all that he owned for the poor. In fact, as a young man, he stripped off his clothes in the middle of Assisi and renounced all worldly possessions, including his inheritance from his father. From that point on, Francis spent his life in service to the Gospel and God's people, spreading the message of Christ by the way he lived his life and interacted with others.

It comes as no surprise, then, that our current Pope, a Jesuit, made a nod to this charism of simplicity and authenticity in choosing the name of Francis. It is, I believe, a stark reminder to the Church universal of exactly what the New Evangelization is all about: encountering Christ in our everyday lives and bringing Him to the world in the simplest ways possible. There is no better delivery of the Gospel than to treat every person we meet with simple Christian charity, as though he or she were Christ Himself. We are, after all, made in His very image and likeness!

Two years ago while on pilgrimage to Rome, I had the great blessing of taking a day trip to Assisi. Many of us have heard the story of the San Damiano Cross, through which Francis heard the Lord say, "Rebuild my church, which as you see has fallen into ruin." Spending a day of prayer before that same cross, walking the hilly streets Francis traversed so many times in his life, and praying in the Porziuncola (the chapel Francis built with his own two hands), was like a step right into the life of the Saint. It inspired me in a very profound way to always remember that the goal of our faith is quite simple. If we live our lives with true authenticity to the Gospel, we rarely have need for words.

Looking, then, to the example of Pope Francis and his namesake, today's Feast reminds us to live our faith simply, to find God in the simplicity of nature, the beauty of His creation, and in the face of each person we meet. It is how Christ lived his life, and how we are called to live ours. With that reminder, may we all be the instrument of His peace that our world so desperately needs us to be.



## Joy and Music

### By Chris Pierno

There are many places in life where we find joy. Often times, I find joy in my family – going home for holidays and being with the people that I love the most. I find joy in my friends – a second family that arguably knows me best. I find joy in my work – encouraging others to support an institution that means so much to not only me, but also to the Church in the United States.

When I think of my Catholic faith, I can only think of joy. This was especially evident during the recent election of a new Pope when I saw the entire world rest its eyes on our Church. It gave me great joy to answer people's questions about my faith, help them to learn more about what it means to be Catholic, and strengthen my own faith. Joy in our faith can be found in a variety of different contexts.

The one place where I find the most obvious joy, however, is within the hymns and songs of praise that are sung so beautifully in churches throughout the world. Over this past Triduum and Easter Sunday I heard magnificent music that brought people to tears.. One thing which astounds me every time I attend Mass is that it doesn't matter if you can sing or not – liturgical music is meant to be sung by anyone. The entire congregation is meant to join in and sing their praise to God. You can see visually the people around you either belting their notes or perhaps listening intently to those around them. Whichever way one chooses to participate, there is no doubt that you can find Joy within the music both sung and played.

One of the things I like to do immediately upon entering a pew is to figure out what hymns are going to be sung as the processional and recessional. If I don't know the hymns, I try to hum the notes to myself in an effort to learn before the music starts. When the organist starts playing, I am transported – if only for a few brief moments – to a place of Joy. The people singing around me are all focused on one thing: praising God, saying thank you for giving us this day, and joining together to start off their week on the right foot.

As I was writing this post, I stopped to go to Mass in downtown Washington, DC. Again, the music chosen immediately brought me into the moment. Each liturgical season brings with it an amazing group of hymns. Everyone I've spoken to have their favorites, especially at Christmastime. As for me, I'm a sucker for Easter hymns. Whatever the case may be, liturgical music has a way of bringing us closer to God in so many ways. Next time you're at Mass, take it in – notice that everyone around you is all focused on the same thing: praising God and thanking him for giving us this day.

What's my favorite hymn? Too many to choose from, but I'll leave you with this beautiful piece of music that I think anyone can appreciate – especially when you least expect it.



# Commentary on the New Evangelization

## By Bart Zavaletta



I think it is important that we not lose site of the crucial call of the New Evangelization. In effort to sustain the energy, enthusiasm, and inspiration we all drew from the Year of Faith, we should not forget what it is that we're up against. The enemy can only reach a vantage point if he is ignored and therefore permitted to advance his position and plan of attack. This is what I hear the Bishops warning against in the following excerpt in which they discuss the obstacles to the transmission of the faith.

"The principal obstacles to the transmission of the faith are the same everywhere and arise from within the Church and the Christian life, namely, a faith which is lived in a private and passive manner; a person's not feeling the need to be instructed in the faith; and a separation of faith from life. The responses also mention obstacles from outside the Christian life, especially from culture, that make it difficult and perilous to live and transmit the faith: consumerism and hedonism, cultural nihilism; and a closure on transcendence which extinguishes any need for salvation."

The response from the Bishops is two-fold: 1) Obstacles from within and 2) Obstacles from without. I don't know which to fear more? Perhaps, the obstacles that exist from within are more detrimental to the life and mission of the Church than the obstacles that arise from the outside. Nevertheless, we can be sure that a combination of the two can be deadly to the spiritual life. I know in my personal life there are many times in which I have chosen a "private and passive" manner of living out my faith that was certainly influenced by the culture. I don't need to go to Mass, I don't need to confess my sins to a priest, I don't need to visit the sick, I don't need to donate or give my money for the benefit of the Church or others, I don't need to stand out on a public sidewalk with a sign that causes people to reflect on how abortion hurts everyone. And so on, and so forth. My faith, so I thought was fine the way it was: "personal and passive."

Except that's not the way Faith was meant to be lived. Faith, like life, is not meant to be lived in isolation! We are social beings with a need for communion! We can't allow an individualized, "what's in it for me" type of culture to get us to think sharing and living out our faith in communion doesn't matter! I am fully aware of this now and my vocation to teach reminds me every day that I am not called to be a passive receiver of the Gospel but an active "re-gifter"!

# Finding Comfort and Hope in the New Evangelization

## By Pat Fricchione

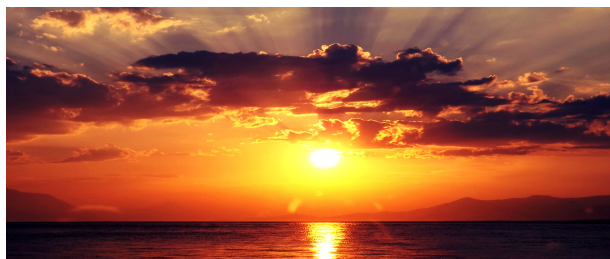
"The joy of love, the answer to the drama of suffering and pain, the power of forgiveness in the face of an offence received and the victory of life over the emptiness of death" (Porta Fidei, 13)

Death is often something that we do not like to discuss, especially in the context of the New Evangelization. These two concepts might seem like they don't mix well, but I hope to show how they are. It is quite natural that we try to deflect the topic of death and dying and why we do not want to face the reality of a difficult situation. But, when death comes into our lives we have no control and it is something that we must handle. After the wake and the funeral are over, and the family goes home, the void is still there. The sense of loss does not want to go away and it seems like we cannot move on from the loss.

On March 7th, 2014, I went through this pain for the fourth time this past year with the passing of my paternal grandfather and namesake. I lost two grandfathers, a cousin, and a close family friend who I consider more like an uncle. Each of these individuals have greatly impacted my life and I would not be who I am without them. Recently I have done a lot of reflecting on what these lives have meant to me. Time and time again I go back to the number of lessons that my grandfathers' have taught me. They taught me some of the classics like fishing, a love for music and art, gardening and the importance of a good cup of British Tea or Italian coffee.

But it was not these lessons that are the most important that matter. These two men also taught me the importance of family, tradition, love, and faith. My maternal grandfather was a great lover of music; he was a singer and a violinist. He introduced me to the Masses written by Mozart, Beethoven, and Verdi. Through his love, he showed me how music can represent a love for God and his creation. Music has come to affect my life and how I pray to God. He broadened my horizons and taught me about musical tradition that dated back centuries, and his love for this went far beyond the music itself. It helped one transport oneself to become close with God. My paternal grandfather taught me two different aspects of faith: a devotion to Mary and the importance of service. He suffered from Alzheimer's disease, which caused great pain and eventually an almost complete loss of memory. There were only four things he could remember before he passed away; his brother, his wife (my grandmother), his personal motto, which was "great and grateful no matter what", and how to pray the Hail Mary. His devotion to the Blessed Mother was a quiet one. His service to others was like his devotion, a quiet one. He was just as happy serving on a board of trustees or picking up trash at the church picnic as long as it helped others.

On the night before my paternal grandfather's funeral, one of our parish priests began the prayer vigil. He offered a short reflection on what this meant and there was a part of it that has stuck with me. This young priest said that our relationship with the dead was not over, but rather was changed. The relationship was now through the eternity of Jesus Christ. Our faith teaches us that Christ connects us regardless of time and that life continues after death. The New Evangelization is a reminder of this hope and comfort. Pope Emeritus Benedict got this right in Porta Fidei, it is the joy of love that conquers death and gives us hope. This hope is found in our faith, and fills the void from the loss. While the sting of death will always be present, it is Christ, who walks with us at every step, who takes away the sting and returns our capacity to love one another.



# Commentary on the New Evangelization

## By Bart Zavaletta

"Commitment to ecumenism responds to the prayer of the Lord Jesus that 'they may all be one' (Jn 17:21). The credibility of the Christian message would be much greater if Christians could overcome their divisions and the Church could realize 'the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her children who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her' We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face" (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 244).

Over the nine years that I was at St. Jude Shrine in Baltimore, Maryland, I had the opportunity to participate in and then to host an annual prayer service for Christian Unity. It became a very popular celebration and leaders from various Christian communities participated, including the Archbishop of Baltimore.



To me, though, the most important people who participated were the people who went week to week to their faith communities in various parts of Baltimore, but never had the opportunity to pray together with Christians from other communities. Prayer is powerful and to underestimate its power to unite us leaves us lacking in the virtue of hope. Such hope is not naïve, but is based on firm trust in the work of the Holy Spirit.

Year after year, during the Week of Christian Unity, Christians are invited to pray that "they may be one." St. Vincent Pallotti, patron of the Catholic Apostolate Center and founder of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, worked diligently for unity in the Church, using the liturgical Octave of the Epiphany in Rome as a means to unite in prayer members of the Eastern and Western traditions of the Catholic community who were rather disconnected from one another. This celebration was held in the city of Rome from 1836 until 1968. His feast day, on January 22nd, is in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Collaboration of all Christians can lead us toward Pallotti's vision, hope, and prayer that one day we may be "one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ" (Cf., Jn 10:16)

Since our mission as the Catholic Apostolate Center is derived from the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti, who fervently prayed for such a day, we invite you to pray not only individually, but draw other Christians together in prayer. Prayer, though, is not the only thing that we can do. We can learn more about what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about the needed work for building unity among Christians. We invite you to explore the many resources that we have on our new Christian Unity page. May we also take up the call of the Catholic Church spanning from the time of the Second Vatican Council to the appeal of Pope Francis today:

"The search for unity among Christians is an urgent task... We are well aware that unity is primarily a gift from God for which we must pray without ceasing, but we all have the task of preparing the conditions, cultivating the ground of our hearts, so that this great grace may be received" (Address to the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, June 28, 2013).

# Blogger Biographies

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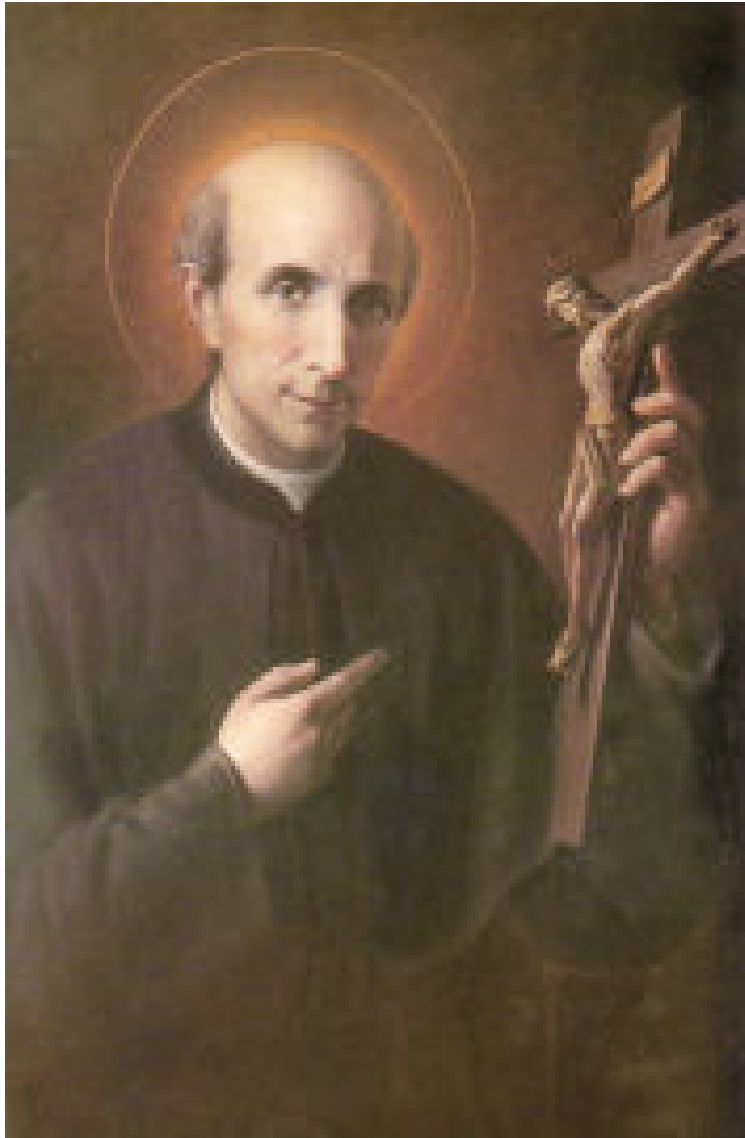
**Patrick Finn** serves as the Communications Director for the Black and Indian Missions office in Washington DC





Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles  
Patroness of the Catholic Apostolate Center





St. Vincent Pallotti  
Patron of the Catholic Apostolate Center



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