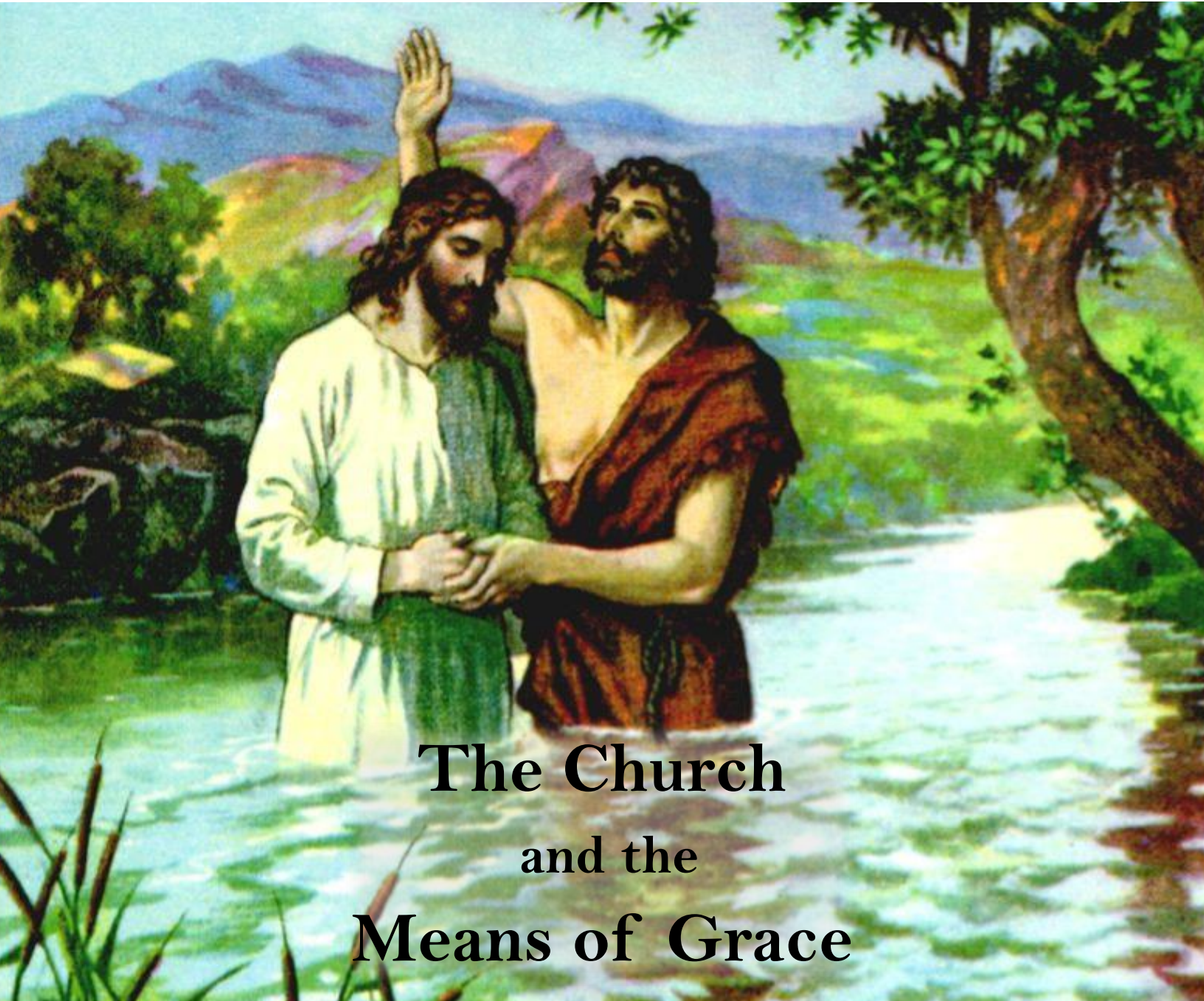


LOGOSOPHIA

A Pilgrim's Journal
of Life, Love & Literature



Issue #2
Spring 2020



The Church and the Means of Grace



Greetings, fellow pilgrims!

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Welcome to our second issue of LogoSophia Magazine! This issue is based on The Church and the Means of Grace. We have explanations of why we each believe what we do, as well as stories of grace, poems, songs, and much more! I hope you enjoy, and please let us know what you think! I hope and pray that you are healthy and at peace during this trying time.

Pax!

Sarah Levesque

Editor in Chief

WANTED

- Readers of any faith to interact respectfully with writers and other readers through book/media suggestions and letters to the editor, as well as comments on LogoSophiaMag.com and social media
- Writers of Christian faith to augment the works of our Staff
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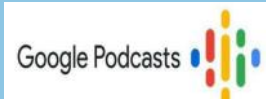
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Happy
Spring!



Letters to the Editor & Others

This is where we will be putting anything you send in - letters to the editor, notes to authors, questions, agreements and disagreements... we can't wait to see what you have to say! Just be sure to tell us what article you're responding to!

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A SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE SACRAMENTS

BY TAN WILSON

If you're the average church-goer or new to the faith, you might be a bit confused by the topic of this issue. What are the "means of grace"? What is meant by "sacrament"? Why do Catholics and Protestants have different numbers of sacraments? I'm going to attempt to answer that in as few words as possible.



First of all, what is meant by "sacrament" and "means of grace"? Well, they refer to the same thing. The term "sacrament" is generally used by Roman Catholics, Lutherans, most Anglicans and Methodists, and a few Reformed Calvinists. The word is Latin and originally referred to an oath of allegiance taken by Roman soldiers. To most Christians, they are the means by which God imparts His grace to us, thus the term "means of grace".

The Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches tend to call these "mysteries" rather than "sacraments". In a mystery, something is hidden within something else. In this case, the spiritual benefit is hidden within a ritual or physical object. If you talk to five different Eastern Orthodox folks, you'll get five different opinions; I suppose that's why they call it a mystery.



The Roman Church, the Eastern Church, and some Anglican churches have seven sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist (Lord's Supper), Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Ordination (Holy Orders). This probably goes back to the understanding of a sacrament being an oath of allegiance or covenantal agreement. The Hebrew word for "covenant" literally means "to 'seven' oneself", seven being the holiest and most perfect number in Judaism. So naturally, it would make sense for there to be seven.

Lutherans and most Calvinists only count Baptism and the Eucharist as true sacraments. Some Calvinists regard prayer and Scripture reading as sacraments, and a few Lutherans include reconciliation as a sacrament, but for the most part, these groups only acknowledge two sacraments. They believe this because they are the two ordinances directly commanded by Christ. They are also the two ordinances that all Christians everywhere will experience. You may never experience marriage or ordination, but you will certainly be baptized, and you ought to partake of communion at some point.

That's a basic rundown of what we mean by "Sacrament" and "means of grace" all those other terms. I've only scratched the surface of sacramental theology, and I would highly recommend you do some research on this yourself, or talk to your minister. It's a fascinating topic. I hope all of this will help make sense of this issue of LogoSophia, and that you'll better understand how other Christians think and why they believe what they believe.



Canticle of Brother Sun & Sister Moon by St Francis of Assisi

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord, All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.

To you alone, Most High, do they belong, and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour, Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, And fair and stormy, all weather's moods, by which You cherish all that You have made.

Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water, So useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for love of You and bear sickness and trial.

Blessed are those who endure in peace, By You Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death, from whom no-one living can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.

No second death can do them harm. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks, And serve Him with great humility.

CONTROVERSY CORNER

What are the means of grace recognized by your denomination?

What is Controversy Corner?

Controversy Corner is the section of LogoSophia Magazine where people of different faith traditions discuss controversial topics in a succinct manner.

If you would like to submit a topic for discussion, please let us know!

Don't see your denomination represented? Help us fix that! We're always looking for new writers!

Disagree with the representative of your denomination? Write in and tell us why in a respectful manner, and we'll publish it in our next magazine under "Letters to the Editor & Comments"!

For these and any other questions, comments or suggestions, email us at Editors.LogoSophia@gmail.com.

Confessional Lutheran: J.C. Ellis

In Confessional Lutheranism (i.e. very demonstrably the mature theology of Dr Martin Luther and the Lutheran Reformers) there are four Means of Grace: Holy Scripture, Holy Baptism, the Sacrament of Repentance (i.e. Confession and Absolution) and the Sacred Eucharist (there are various titles for this Sacrament). These for us are the only Means of Grace because we define them as that through which God grants the forgiveness of sins. See in our official confessions the Book of Concord, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, article XIII. (VII) Of the Number and Use of Sacraments.

CONTROVERSY CORNER

What are the means of grace recognized by your denomination?

Nondenominational Evangelical Protestant: Elizabeth Nguyen

There are different definitions for the *means of grace* so as a nondenominational position, I rather pertain to an interpretation that the means are the visible, physical ways through which God uses to remind, assure, and strengthen our faith. This can include: Scripture, Prayer, the ordinances of Baptism and Communion; also Fellowship, Tithing/ Giving, Worship, Miracles, and so on. I feel like many people's lists would keep to the first four only (Scripture, Prayer, Baptism, Communion) while placing the remaining practices in an alternate category, which I completely understand. The strictness and flexibility of this list again relies on the *means of grace* definition, and that can vary between nondenominational churches and the individual.

Presbyterian Church In America: Joshua David Ling

Westminster Confession 27.4 states "There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained." - All institutions of God are called Means of Grace, but Marriage, for example, was given to all mankind and not just the Church. Thus it is differentiated. Further back, chapter 27 states: Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word.

CONTROVERSY CORNER

What are the means of grace recognized by your denomination?

Reformed Catholic: Ian Wilson

So there are a number of different opinions about what a means of grace is, as you can see here. But the two most generally agreed on in Scripture and the Church Fathers are communion and baptism. I'm going to go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, we find that there stood two trees at the center of the garden; the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. The tree of life had the power to grant eternal life. When God banished our first mother and father from the garden, He cut us off from life. But He restored that life in the second Adam, Jesus Christ. To restore our connection to God's life, Christ had to endure crucifixion; a form of execution that makes use of a tree. In baptism, we are united with Him in His death and raised to life, and in communion, we partake of His life.

Roman Catholicism: Sarah Levesque

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments, which are the greatest means of grace. These are baptism, confession/reconciliation, confirmation, communion/receiving the Eucharist, marriage, holy orders, and anointing of the sick/last rites. There are other means of grace called 'sacramentals', which are signs that point to the sacraments and help foster piety. These include (but are not limited to) blessings, holy water, rosaries, saint medals, crucifixes and the Sign of the Cross. And of course, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and reading Scripture are all grace-filled activities. This is by no means an exhaustive list, just a general idea of what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

CONTROVERSY CORNER

What are the means of grace recognized by your denomination?

Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic: Christopher Woods

Like the Roman Catholic Church, the Byzantine Catholic Church also recognizes the seven sacraments as the most powerful and direct means of receiving grace. They should all be considered under the light of theosis, the end goal of total union with God. Baptism and Confirmation are the initial sacraments, bringing us into the Body of Christ, the Church. These sacraments give us our pure wedding robe, that we may join the feast of the Eucharist without reproach. Yet if we do smear our wedding robe with sin (and we all do; only Christ Himself and His blessed Mother, the Theotokos, were without sin), Christ offers Repentance, so that we might reorient ourselves and find the light of His face once more. In Marriage, a man and a woman pledge to unite themselves to each other and to aid each other in growing closer to God. When a man becomes a priest, he unites himself to Christ by promising to faithfully lead the people of God in the path of Truth, and to follow God's will in every moment of his life. The prayers during the Anointing of the Sick beg the Holy Spirit to come and grant healing, not only of bodily ills, but of spiritual ones, as well. Every Holy Wednesday, the day before we remember the Last Supper, everyone in the church receives the Sacrament of Anointing, regardless of their physical condition. Each sacrament is a source of such wonderful grace, such divine power—I wish I could reflect on them longer.



These Rites

By Joshua David Ling

Verse 1:

So much was done here before us.
Before we bowed down, you loved us.
You condescended to us through the years,
And fought all to tell us what we could not hear.

Chorus:

You said:
These rites-
are to-
Bring nothing but memories of how I love you-
And hold you
In my hand,
And give you the strength to stand.

Verse 2:

Liquid reminders we're finite.
The Water and the Blood that we're cleansed by
The bread it gives strength and hope to our bones
And shows us the story of how we'll get home.



Chorus:
You said:
These rites-
are to-
Bring nothing but memories of how I love you-
And hold you
In my hand,
And give you the strength to stand.

Bridge:

Remember you're a child of God,
Remember you're purchased by blood.
Remember the sign of the water on you.
Remember it's no lie.
It's totally true.



Chorus:
You said:
These rites-
are to-
Bring nothing but memories of how I love you-
And hold you
In my hand,
And give you the strength to stand.

Yes, you give me the strength to stand.

From Killarney Traynor
To Mary Higgins Clark

Dear Mary Higgins Clark,

My first memory of your name is connected to a story about my mother. I was maybe ten years old and hanging out in our home library (we were homeschooled and my dad is a big reader, so a home library was something of a must). I loved books and was convinced at the time that the best way to become a grown-up and someone worthy of respect was to read as much as I could as fast as I could. The result was, I oft-times tried to read beyond my abilities.

Anyway, I was perusing the thriller section of the library and I found a paperback version of "Where Are The Children?", with its creepy cover of a lonely house and a mitten lost in a field of bobbing tall grasses. I was enthralled and pulled it out. My mother's voice stopped me:

"Don't read that," she said, "or you'll never be able to enjoy the Fall again."

I stopped dead in my tracks. I thought, can a book truly ruin your enjoyment of a season? Does an author have that power? What sort of witchcraft be this?

Needless to say, I put the book back. Fall was one of my favorite times of year (it competes with Summer, Spring, and Winter) and I didn't want Halloween or apple picking cursed by figments of your imagination. Yes, ma'am, that was how I first came to know of you: Mary Higgins Clark, the stainer of my mother's Autumn season. Don't take this the wrong way - there is a lot of power and respect in that designation.

Years went by. I remained intrigued by you and finally, when I was brave enough, I checked out a copy of "Weep No More, My Lady". It caught me from the first chapter and yanked me through adventure, mystery, and romance. By the time I tumbled out of my reverie at the last chapter, all I could think was, I want more!

I don't know how many of your books I've read over the years, but there were so many that the plots and characters now blend together. I always loved the lead character. She was always a hard-working, somewhat well-to-do woman, in her late 20s to very early 40s, honest, brave, and full of great personal integrity. She was someone a reader would hope to become someday (and the fact that she always knew how to dress, traveled to fabulous locations, and ate the most delicious things were only icing on the aspirational cake). But it was more than just the leading lady - your books would chill and enthrall, but never left me feeling sticky or uncomfortable, as other bestselling pulp would do. You weren't a Christian author in the traditional sense, but I could read your books and comfortably recommend them to my more strict Christian friends. I just couldn't put my finger on why.

It was only after I became Catholic that I realized something surprising: whenever there was a funeral in your book, it was a funeral Mass, something I'd never noticed before. And once I noticed this, I realized that all of your leading ladies were faithful Catholics. Women whose faith, though not openly spoken of, informed their every decision, bolstered their courage, and provided them refuge in times of grief. In one novel, your leading lady, watching her daughter serve on the altar, mused over how the world had changed since she was a child in the church - something every active Catholic is very familiar with.

This broke my brain. I was - and am - an avid reader of Christian fiction, but I didn't like the way Biblical truths and morality were sledge-hammered home. I've always thought that the louder you preach, the less likely anyone is to listen. My feeling was that the best way to evangelize is not to speak (unless necessary of course) but to be an example, to live your life and create your art in such a way as to make people say, "I want that, but I'm not sure what that is. Can you tell me the secret?"

That's what you did. I wanted to be like your heroines and, in the most important way, I succeeded. Your stories demonstrated to me that cool, clever, courageous people can be faithful

too. You don't need to be a nerd or a professor or a church mouse (not that there's anything wrong with those) to be Catholic or a faithful Christian. You can be a nerves-of-steel district attorney or a red-carpet stunner of an actress or a curious and courageous realtor who, at the top of her game, uncovers a murder plot. The Catholic world is not confining - it's freeing and empowering.

I learned that from you. And I learned an enormous lesson about writing from you. You don't have to use a sledgehammer to drive your point home. You can present it quietly and allow time for eager young readers, like me, to grow the seed and learn the lesson when they are ready for it.

Two years ago, I was in New York City, attending a writing conference (a truly terrific event - I wished I'd started going earlier). I just managed to get Jeff Vandermeer to sign my book (and to thank him for all the nightmares he'd given me) before I raced to St. Patrick's Cathedral for Sunday Mass. As I was going down the aisle for communion, out of seeming nowhere, your name appeared. It was on one of those little plaques on the pew, one of many, but yours stood out like a beacon to me.

Honestly, I don't know what your spiritual life was like. I haven't a clue if you were the Mother Theresa of Manhattan or something else, but what I do know is, you were one of the voices that had led me home. I saw your name and I thought, I really should write to her and thank her.

In the hurly-burly excitement of being in NYC by myself for the first time, I forgot. Now it's too late to write this letter to you in person. But nevertheless, I want to thank you. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your faith. I don't know if you ever thought of your books as inspirational, aspirational, or even particularly faithful. But they were one of the things that helped me find my way. They help me still - and they are really a blast to read to boot.

Thanks for the thrills, Ms. Higgins-Clark. I owe you one.

Yours,
Killarney

PS: Oh, and I read Mount Vernon Love Story and loved it. That scene with the buttons? #sigh #lovestory #soromantic

KILLARNEY TRAYNOR

NOVELIST. SCREENWRITER. STORYTELLER.

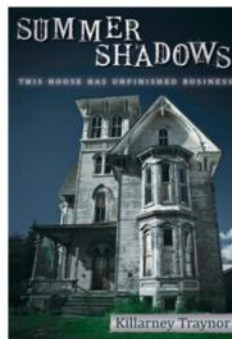
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La Table de Sapience

By J.C. Ellis

The LORD's Word hath left from His throne.¹

He left the greatness of splendour—
Left light so bright it can't be known;
No mortal knoweth his wonder.²

This Word doth have no start nor birth;
He be begotten yet unmade.³

This Word came down to here on earth;⁴
By the Good Father was he bade.⁵
The Word hath hewn seven siles,⁶
A house indeed did he create.⁷

Wisdom, yea, hath for us no wiles
And he leaves no room for debate
But calleth us all to himself.⁸

He doth send forth all his servants,
They were bought with his bloody pelf,⁹
To call to board, he ne'er relents.

A board, hearken, he hath prepared¹⁰ —
Himself the sacrifice prepared¹¹ —
Himself the table spread prepared!

Whoso be simple let him come!
He who wants wit let him turn in!¹²
Come eat his bread evéry crumb!
Drink his wine, ah, do come within!¹³
His flesh, the bread, endless life gives;
His blood, the wine, all sin forgives!¹⁴

(1) See Wisdom 18.15; (2) St John 1.18; (3) St John 1.1-3, St John 1.14 &c.; (4) Baruch 3.37, St John 1.14;
(5) St John 3.16 &c.; (6) A "sile" is a pillar; (7) Proverbs 9.1; (8) St Matthew 11.28 &c.; (9) "Pelf" is money;
(10) Proverbs 9.2; (11) Genesis 22.8; (12) Proverbs 9.4; (13) Proverbs 9.5; (14) St John 6.53-58, I Cor. 10.16,
I Cor. 11.23-29

Apology:

1. A regretful acknowledgement of an offense or failure
2. A very poor or inadequate example of something
3. A reasoned argument or writing in justification of something, typically a theory or religious doctrine (1)

From the time I was a child until after college, my view on marriage was very simple: a marriage was a relationship in which a man and a woman vowed (preferably before God) to love, honor and cherish each other forever. I knew there was far more to it than that, and I remember bits and pieces of my 10th grade moral theology class where we talked about it, but that was my simplified everyday version. “Gay marriage” was a term I had heard many times, but I knew that the Catholic Church does not recognize unions between people of the same sex to be marriages. I knew why, too – this sort of union does not follow the natural law, plus (as a slogan goes) God had made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve, and He had destroyed Sodom, a city where homosexuality seemed the norm (see Genesis 19:4-8). I knew that the Church made it very clear that it is acceptable to have homosexual desires, but that it is not acceptable to act on them. The reasoning? You can’t really control your desires, but you can control your actions.

Then a new family entered my life, and some of the members of this family were happily in long-term stable relationships with people of their own sex. And I had to wonder, *why is it not okay to call this a marriage?* I knew it wasn’t, and because I couldn’t agree, I grew apart from this family I had connected with so deeply. I accidentally offended members on more than one occasion by not knowing how to introduce them and by freely speaking my beliefs to other friends in person and on social media. Looking back, I could have been far more tactful, and I’m heartily sorry for my tactlessness. I wish I hadn’t needed to disagree with them at all. Sometimes I wish I could turn my back on this one tenet of the Catholic faith I believe in, so as to regain that closeness. But though I lost the deep relationship I had with this family because I couldn’t agree with them, I know it would be far worse to lose my relationship with God because I disagreed with Him.

In order to justify the loss of relationships, I resolved to write this article. I needed to solidify my beliefs one way or the other, and I needed (for my own sake) to be able to defend them. I also felt led to write it because everywhere I looked I seemed to see something that prodded me to do so. When I was still only considering my position, 2 John 9 hit me over the head: “Anyone who is so ‘progressive’ as to not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God” (2). That made it clear for me, once and for all, that I was not budging on the subject, no matter where it got me.

What is marriage?

That depends on who you ask. Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines marriage as “The state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law.” Technically not wrong, but according to this definition the number of people involved does not matter, nor do their sexes, ages or even species (though it is doubtful a non-human could legally give consent). For the purpose



By Sarah Levesque

An Apology of an Apology

A Defense of the Catholic Church's Stance on Marriage

of this article, I'm going to call this definition of marriage "the relational view of marriage", something described elsewhere as "about affirming adults and their love and commitment for one another" (3).

Interestingly, the above definition of marriage does not match the definition found in Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary. This 1983 edition defines marriage as "1. a: the state of being married; b: the mutual relation of a husband and wife; c: the institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family..." This is much closer to the Catholic teaching.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines marriage in the following way: "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (4). This is what I will call a Sacramental Marriage.

This is not to say that certain non-sacramental marriages (my term) aren't real. A union could be considered a non-sacramental marriage if it is the union of a man and a woman, who give themselves to each other completely and become one flesh, whose relationship is ordered toward the good of procreation (5). This definition has been called the "conjugal view of marriage."

It seems most people in our time ascribe to the relational view of marriage over the conjugal view. It also seems like that change has happened since Merriam Webster published its 9th New Collegiate Dictionary in 1983. I'm not going to go into why that change came about, though it's an interesting topic. But it's also interesting that some of us – particularly the Catholic Church – have stubbornly held on to the conjugal view of marriage.

Why does the Catholic Church cling to the conjugal view of marriage?

There are many good answers to this one, but I'm going to start with a seemingly unrelated example first. If I were the judge of a pie contest, I would have to have a pretty good idea of what a pie was. It's an entree or a dessert, typically baked and generally round, often with a crust on the top. It always has a crust on the bottom, and something inside as a filling. Now, a contestant brings me a cake to be judged in my pie contest. This contestant is adamant that her cake is a pie. She argues that it is a dessert, that it is round, that it is baked, and that it is delicious. I can't disagree with any of those points, but her cake does not have a crust on the top or on the bottom, nor does it have a filling, and so it does not fit my definition of a pie. The contestant argues that my definition of a pie is wrong, but I show her my grandmother's copy of *The Betty Crocker Cookbook* and tell her if it's good enough for my grandmother, it's good enough for me. She accuses me of being old fashioned and gets one hundred people to back her up. But I have no reason to change my definition of pie, and if I'm the judge of this contest, I get to make the rules. Pie is pie, and there's no reason to change the definition.

Well, God is the judge of us. He's also the One who created us, and the One who gave us marriage. So I'd say He's got a pretty good right to define it. How does He do this? In the Old Testament, He presented Adam with Eve, and later He rained fire and brimstone (sulfur) on Sodom, where homosexuality was the norm (6). From the city of Sodom we get the word "sodomy," a word that used to mean "copulation with a member of the same sex or with an animal" as well as "anal or oral copulation..." but now is used only for the latter definition (7, 8). Someone might say, "Oh, but that's the Old Testament. What about the New Testament?" To that I say, Jesus's first public miracle was in Cana, where he changed water to wine at the wedding of a man and a woman. If that's not an affirmation of the conjugal view of marriage, I don't know what is. He also confirms it in Matthew 19, when the Pharisees try to test him:

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (9).

Long story short, it doesn't matter how many people clamor for God (or the Church that follows Him) to

change it, it's not going to happen any more than I'm backing down on my definition of pie.

But for those who would prefer a logical argument over the faith approach...

Why does only the conjugal view of marriage count for the Church?

The short answer is that the relational view of marriage does not account for a lot of marriage. Let's go through it point by point. Again, the conjugal view of marriage is the union of a man and a woman, who give themselves to each other completely and become one flesh, whose relationship is ordered toward the good of procreation.

Why must it be a man and a woman?

Well, biologically speaking, it's pretty clear that man and woman were made to fit together. Even if you look at Ancient Greece and Rome, where homosexuality was not unusual, the term "marriage" was used exclusively for man-woman relationships (10).

Why must it be only one of each?

This is because one of the ends or purposes of marriage is the union of the spouses, the complete giving of oneself to the other. I don't believe it's possible to give yourself completely to more than one person. If I give someone a complete pie, I can't give any part of that pie to anyone else unless I take some from the original person I gave it to. "But love isn't pie." True. But even Jesus said, "no man can serve two masters." Not that spouses are masters, but the point stands. Think of the TV show *Sister Wives*, which shows the life of a Mormon man (Kody) and his wives. Kody had different times he would spend with his different wives. If he's spending that time with Meri, he's not spending it with Janelle. While I'm well aware spouses can't spend all of their time with one another, I don't see how he could be considered to have given himself entirely to Janelle if he's spending some of his time, effort and attention on Meri (or one of the others).

What does it mean to become one flesh?

It is an echo of Genesis 2:24, which reads, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." This is repeated throughout the scriptures, as Jesus, St Paul and others quote it. It comes right after Adam is presented with Eve, and he calls her "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" (11). What does this mean? It's just a very Biblical way of saying that marriage is a sexual union, that spouses give themselves bodily to each other. The marriage is consummated. What is consummation? The New Oxford American Dictionary defines it as "to make (a marriage or relationship) complete by having sexual intercourse." Merriam-Webster – both in the modern online dictionary and in the 1983 version – define "consummate" as, "to make (marital union) complete by sexual intercourse." Does this mean a marriage isn't complete without sex? Yes, since it is the ultimate giving of oneself to another. This is why sex outside of marriage is traditionally frowned upon. "Does that mean the marriage of Mother Mary and Saint Joseph wasn't complete?" No, because although Mary died a virgin, their marriage was a fully valid Jewish marriage (as opposed to a Catholic marriage, which did not yet exist), and they were apparently quite content to live without consummating their marriage. There's a lovely article on this that I'll put in the citations here (12).

What is procreation, and what does it mean that marriage must be ordered towards it?

Procreation is defined simply as "to reproduce" by the New Oxford American Dictionary. Both the earlier and the modern Webster dictionaries agree. The Catholic idea is the creation of new life through the union of God, husband and wife. Marriage must be ordered toward children because, as my mother says, it's not about being self-centered, but being God-centered, spouse-centered, family-centered, child-centered. In the last few decades, the world has divorced sex from children through contraceptives and abortion, and it has become ever more self-centered. People selfishly use each other for pleasure and so see others as objects instead of persons (if you don't believe me, listen to modern music, particularly my favorite genre, country). This is the opposite of what God intended. This is why the Catechism states "the spouses' [sexual] union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves [pleasure and enjoyment] and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family" (13).

What does this mean for people whose marriages don't follow the Catholic standard?

Honestly, I don't know. I suspect they might have a harder time building or continuing their relationship with God, but that's just a suspicion, and it's not my place to judge. After all, one's relationship with God concerns no one but that person and God Himself. They might have a harder time maintaining their relationship with each other – my mother has said that the graces given through Sacramental Marriage have saved my parents' marriage time and time again, as well as the marriages of other people they know.

What I know is this: it is God's place, not mine, to judge people. He has called me to love Him and to love people regardless of their situations, be they neighbor, friend or enemy. He has also called us to tell the truth. As Mother Teresa once told someone who complained she was offending people, "Jesus said, 'I am the Truth', and it is your duty and mine to speak the truth. Then it is up to the person who hears it whether to accept or reject it" (14). She also said, "If you judge someone, then you have no time to love them" (15). She was well aware that we are all called to Love – not love as in "I want earthly happiness for them" but Love as in "I want eternal happiness for them." Granted, I want both for myself, my friends and family, but eternal happiness is more important, which is why our relationships with God ought to be our first priority.

I was taught to 'love the sinner, hate the sin', and I try to live that, because a person does not consist solely of their mistakes. We must look on people with hope that they will change for the better. I hope people look at me that way. After all, we are all sinners, each in our own way. It is all we can do to build our relationships with God as we inadvertently or intentionally continue to do things that pull us away from God, for what is sin but something that separates us from Him? "...[F]orgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...."

Conclusion

When I originally sat down to write this article, it was simply my side of a conversation I never got to have. It developed from there as I discovered exactly how the Catholic Church defined marriage, and as I posed questions and found answers. I talked with some friends who gave me more questions to look into, and others who steered me toward more resources for more answers. Now I am once again content with where I stand on the subject of marriage. I hope my findings might be helpful to other people, too.

As for the family that started me on this journey, I don't think any less of them, though we don't see eye to eye on this subject. They're good people. I respect them and, given the chance, I'd still enjoy their company. I offer them my friendship, my well-wishes and my prayers, and I hope they will accept my apology for my tactlessness and any other offences. I also hope that they will accept me for who and where I am, as I accept them.

Questions and Answers

These are questions that I came across during my research, or others asked me upon reading this article. The answers are based on my own opinion, the Bible, & the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* whenever possible.

"If it's not hurting anyone, it's making them happy, and isn't affecting me, why should I care?"

Maybe you shouldn't. On the other hand, maybe God is calling you to gently correct this person. I can't answer that one for you. All I know is that for me, when I had the opportunity (before writing this, before losing those relationships I talked about earlier) to use the term "marriage," "husband" or "wife" in a way that didn't follow the definition of the Catholic Church, the words stuck in my throat. I either couldn't say them or I had to modify them because I had a strong sense that it wasn't right to call the union in question a marriage. I'm paying dearly for it, but I can't turn my back on the Church and her definitions. What I should have done was found alternative words to use – maybe 'significant other' or 'partner' instead of 'husband' or 'wife,' 'relationship' instead of 'marriage,' or some other terms that would be considered acceptable by the individuals.

"Do I have to say something to them if they call their union a marriage and it doesn't match my definition?"
That depends entirely on the situation and on you. If you are uncomfortable with them using the term

“marriage” for their union, perhaps you can find a non-confrontational way to tell them. Either way, find an alternative term to use that is not offensive to them.

“If someone I’m close to is in a relationship that estranges them from God, is it my duty to say something?”
That also depends on the situation, I would think. There’s a point where if it’s none of your business, it’s none of your business. However, Jesus said, “If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone...” (16). St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness” (17). If you do say something, say it in a loving, gentle way, remembering that it is not your place (as it is not mine) to condemn anyone. Don’t forget that Jesus also said, “How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (18). Similarly, in John 8:7, when Jesus encountered a prostitute (who obviously wasn’t following the Catholic or Jewish standard of marriage), He told the Jewish judges “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

“If my society normalizes that which estranges people from God, is it my duty to object?”
Absolutely. I don’t know about you, but I don’t want anyone to stumble in their walk with God when I could have prevented it by speaking out, as Jesus said, “If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone to be hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (19). Even if I can’t prevent it by speaking out alone, my objection combined with others’ may eventually change the norms.

“What about living together?”
Living together with someone you’re romantically involved with, or cohabiting, is frowned upon by the Catholic Church primarily because the couples typically engage in sex outside of marriage. Additionally, living together in that way has all the cares of a marriage (i.e. finances and chores and all the other things that come with sharing one’s life and home with someone else) without any of the graces. If you think about it, cohabitating with someone says, “I don’t trust you enough to promise myself to you forever,” or “I don’t trust your promise of forever.” If you need more reasons, check out this video and article combination (20).

“What about divorce?”
Malachi 2:16 reads, “‘I hate divorce,’ says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘because the man who divorces his wife covers his garment with violence.’” Additionally, Jesus covered this pretty well in Matthew 19, saying “...what God has joined together, let no one separate... I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (21). However, the Catholic Church can declare a marriage annulled (void, invalid) if there is a serious or just cause, such as the sexual immorality that Jesus mentioned.

“Does adoption or fostering count as procreation?”
No. Adoption and fostering are both amazing things, and I hear they’re both very fulfilling. However, being a parent doesn’t necessarily mean you’re open to new life. “...Wishing to associate them in a special way in his own creative work, God blessed man and woman with the words: ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (22).

“What if the couple physically can’t have kids?”
If a man and a woman who have given themselves to each other completely and become one flesh are *open to procreation* – that is, they are not trying to do anything to prevent it (i.e. using contraceptives), their marriage is following the Catholic guidelines. While children are the “supreme gift of marriage,” the Catechism also says “spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning...” (23, 24).

“Does this mean gay marriages aren’t real marriage?”
The Catholic Church does not recognize same-sex relationships as marriages. Bishop William Love of the Anglican Church in Albany NY explained it well when he said that allowing gay couples to marry does “a great disservice and injustice to our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ, by leading them to believe that God gives his blessing to the sharing of sexual intimacy within a same-sex relationship, when in fact He has reserved the gift of sexual intimacy for men and women within the confines of marriage between a man and woman” (25).

“Hasn’t the gay community been persecuted enough?”

The gay community has suffered intense persecution, and it should never have been persecuted at all. But my intention is not to persecute anyone or point fingers, only show what the Catholic Church believes and defend it. The Church doesn’t seek to persecute anyone either, but only seeks to steer people closer to God. That doesn’t mean that people who call themselves Catholic don’t persecute others; sadly, this does happen. However, no matter who says otherwise, the Catholic Church teaches only love, not hate. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (26).

Author’s Note and Disclaimer

I am far from an expert on marriage. Though I strongly believe my vocation is marriage, I am not married and I have never been married. I do, however, have many good examples of Catholic marriage in my life, including my grandparents, who faithfully lived their ‘till death do us part’ for 52 years; my parents, who have been married for 30 years and counting; and many of their friends, most of whom have been married for decades. For the full text of what the Catholic Church teaches on marriage, read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Part Two Article 7: The Sacrament of Matrimony, and Part Three Article 6: The Sixth Commandment. There’s also an interesting article (written in 1993) you can find here (27) that delves into the great historical significance of the Jewish teachings about sexuality, upon which the Catholic doctrine was built.

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AMAZING GRACE

John Newton, 1779

A - maz-ing grace! How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I
once was lost but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Portion be,
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

To hear a new version of this song, check out our Audio Magazine! See page 2 for details

Book & Media Recommendations

More Than This by Trading Yesterday (2011). Alternative rock at it's finest, Trading Yesterday's music is hugely inspirational for me. Top tracks are "Shattered" and "She is the Sunlight". -TK

The Stoneholding by Mark Sebanc and James Anderson (2004). A beautifully written fantasy novel, The Stoneholding describes the struggles of a small village, under attack by foreign invaders. -Chris

The Rescuers by Margery Sharp (1959). The story of intrepid mice sent to save a political dissident from his enemies. This book was the inspiration for the 1977 Disney classic and introduced the world to the wonderful Miss Bianca. -TK

Avatar: The Last Airbender (2005-2008). One of the best TV shows, and something the whole family can enjoy. Aang, the last of his people, must save the world from the tyrannical Fire Lord. It's full of humor, powerful stories, and one of the best redemption arcs I know. -Chris

The Song of Albion trilogy by Steven Lawhead
-Joshua

The Lord of the Rings Trilogy by JRR Tolkien (fiction, originally published 1954). The classic fantasy story of Frodo and the Ring of Power. Worth every word! -Sarah

Captains Courageous by Rudyard Kipling (fiction, originally published 1897). A rich, spoiled teen's adventures on the high seas becomes a thrilling, coming-of-age story that shows the importance of loyalty, gratitude, and hard work. -Amanda

Sacred Meditations by Johann Gerhard (originally published 1606). This devotional work is like spiritual nitroglycerine! It is wonderfully deep and very sacramental!
- J.C. Ellis

With Fire and Sword by Henryk Sienkiewicz (book, originally published 1884): Sienkiewicz tells a classic story of adventure and romance, set in 17th century Poland and Ukraine. Pan Jan Skshetuski, a Polish nobleman, struggles to save his betrothed from a wild Cossack, even as all Ukraine erupts in rebellion against the Polish king. -Chris

more
Book & Media Recommendations

The Negotiator
by Dee Henderson (fiction, 1999).
When negotiator Kate O'Malley walks into another hostage situation, she has no idea that this one will change her life, or that someone is setting up a disaster with her name on it. The whole trilogy kept me on the edge of my seat!
-Sarah

Master of One: Find and Focus on the Work You Were Created to Do by Jordan Raynor (2020)
For anyone with many goals but little accomplished: Raynor helps us to think about the gifts God has given us and how to invest in the ones which God is calling for us to use for His kingdom.
-Liz

The Secret of the Rosary by St. Louis de Montfort (d. 1716). St. Louis goes into detail about the multiple reasons why the Rosary is so necessary and how it works so well.
-Amanda

Has American Christianity Failed?
by Bryan Wolfmueller (2016).
Wolfmueller shows in this work how sadly many churches conflate law and gospel. I think every North American Christian ought to read this book and though one may disagree with some of his Lutheran conclusions one will still take alot away from this book.
-JC Ellis

What do YOU want to suggest?

Let us know at Editors.
LogoSophia@gmail.com

Afraid of All the Things: Tornadoes, Cancer, Adoption, and Other Stuff You Need the Gospel For by Scarlet Hiltibidal (2019)
Whether you're scared of the most unlikely things, of the most realistic things, or even of God Himself, Hiltibidal brings us on a heartfelt journey through her own history of fears which eventually led her closer to God who provides the comfort we need in this very scary world.
-Liz

The Westminster Confession of Faith (Original 1646 edition)
-Joshua

The Book of Hebrews
-Joshua

He Will Help Us, He Will Save Us

Thinking about Prayer in *Hellsing*

By Liz Nguyen

It's not uncommon for media and entertainment to use elements of Christianity in their narratives. When used accurately and with respect, Christianity gives hope to a broken world. When there's misinformation and bias, Christianity appears hateful and harmful.

If a TV show or a book utilizes some form of Christian elements, I often have to draw a "Where is Jesus?" card because he is so often separated from the gospel he brought to us.

In stories that I grow to love, I end up caring for the characters, how they view the world around them, and what their relationship with God is. Though these characters are fictional, they can reveal something deeper about ourselves and the people around us.

At the thought of prayer, I am reminded of this monologue from a manga series called *Hellsing*, written by Kouta Hirano:

“...FOR GOD’S SAKE, EVERYONE, FIGHT.
GOD WILL NOT HELP THOSE WHO BEG FOR HELP.
HE WILL NOT SAVE THOSE WHO BEG FOR MERCY.
THAT IS NOT A PRAYER, IT IS JUST AN APPEAL TO GOD.
YOU MAY DIE...FIGHTING IS PRAYER ITSELF...
AT THE END OF TEARING, BREAKING, CLEAVING, AND SCATTERING
PRAYERS AND PRAYERS AND PRAYERS.
BEFORE MY WRETCHED SELF, BEFORE OUR
MISERABLE SELVES, LIKE A HERD OF HORSES,
GOD WILL DESCEND!! FROM THE HEAVENS!!”

SPOKEN BY ALUCARD, MAIN CHARACTER
HELLSING, VOLUME 8, CHAPTER CASTLEVANIA 1

The language used is pretty extreme. *Hellsing* is a fictional story about one vampire, Alucard, fighting all the vampires, ghouls, Nazis, and Christian adversaries he could fight in modern day England. Pretty wild, isn't it? The narrative comes with its stereotypes and inaccurate interpretations of Christian theology, but despite the fact, I found myself drawn deep into the story's philosophical themes about humanity, life, and death. Underneath all the visual elements of gore and violence, the characters shine through in their very flawed states. Alucard especially shines because his relationship with God is explained in the story.

Alucard was originally human (as with vampire lore), born in the 1400s, and as a child, he is drawn with a necklace adorned with a cross. This represented his faith. He was abused horribly, yet he still reached for this cross. Even at a young age, he didn't ask God for mercy from his circumstances. By adulthood, Alucard went into war, but when he ultimately lost against his enemies, he grew disillusioned with the Lord. He eventually gave up his humanity at death's door, and his cross symbolically shattered.

How do you see God when you pray to Him?

How do you see yourself in relation to the God of the universe?

The Lord's Prayer is a model from Jesus himself. God should be praised as our holy Father who resides in heaven. He provides us all of our hardships, failures, victories, and miracles. We are left in a place of humility, required to rely on God to provide all our needs because none of it comes from us.

For Alucard, we see the roles reversed where he saw himself as his own provider and God as a heavenly being that rewards him for his efforts. If God doesn't help people who won't or can't help themselves, then any success or failure is highly dependent on us alone, and God only cares to bless the work of the successful ones. But then what does prayer become? If we're not coming to God to ask for His provision, are we instead boasting of our works and demanding our reward?

THEN JESUS TOLD THIS STORY TO SOME WHO HAD GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SCORNEDED EVERYONE ELSE: "TWO MEN WENT TO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY. ONE WAS A PHARISEE, AND THE OTHER WAS A DESPISED TAX COLLECTOR.

THE PHARISEE STOOD BY HIMSELF AND PRAYED THIS PRAYER: 'I THANK YOU, GOD, THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER PEOPLE — CHEATERS, SINNERS, ADULTERERS. I'M CERTAINLY NOT LIKE THAT TAX COLLECTOR! I FAST TWICE A WEEK, AND I GIVE YOU A TENTH OF MY INCOME.'

"BUT THE TAX COLLECTOR STOOD AT A DISTANCE AND DARED NOT EVEN LIFT HIS EYES TO HEAVEN AS HE PRAYED. INSTEAD, HE BEAT HIS CHEST IN SORROW, SAYING, 'O GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME, FOR I AM A SINNER.'

I TELL YOU, THIS SINNER, NOT THE PHARISEE, RETURNED HOME JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD. FOR THOSE WHO EXALT THEMSELVES WILL BE HUMBLLED, AND THOSE WHO HUMBLE THEMSELVES WILL BE EXALTED."

LUKE 18:9-14 NLT

Can you believe that? The tax collector *prayed* for mercy from God, and he was given it. He didn't have to fast or tithe first before God would honor his request.

The same happened in the the book of Psalms:

I TOOK MY TROUBLES TO THE LORD;
I CRIED OUT TO HIM, AND HE
ANSWERED MY PRAYER.

PSALM 120:1 NLT

When we cry out to God in faith, He hears us. We are assured of this. Our God heard the suffering of His people in Egypt and came down to save them. Our God also came down from Heaven to become man and lived a perfect life, so He could save us from our sins through His death and resurrection. God doesn't change. His methods of saving us may differ for each circumstance, but in His great wisdom, God saves us His way, in His time. If we trust His goodness, then our prayers are filled with saving faith.

AND THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT GOD WANTS US TO PRAY FOR. BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT PRAYS FOR US WITH GROANINGS THAT CANNOT BE EXPRESSED IN WORDS. AND THE FATHER WHO KNOWS ALL HEARTS KNOWS WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING, FOR THE SPIRIT PLEADS FOR US BELIEVERS IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S OWN WILL.

ROMANS 8:26-27 NLT

The clear presence of God's mercy and grace in Scripture makes me wonder how Alucard got it wrong. Was he doomed by his pride? Was he a victim of poor Scriptural teaching? Or is it lack of knowledge on the manga author's part? Though the issue may be more rooted to the author and our reality, I like to explore the idea that Alucard probably didn't have direct access to Scripture during his human years unless he could read Latin manuscripts. By the time Bibles were printed and translated in the language of the masses, Alucard had already turned into a vampire and turned his back on the faith. I don't think he would've opened up a Bible if given the chance.

If he allowed himself to read the word of God with his own eyes, could his view of God change?

Praying to God, in itself, can be very intimidating. All we have are words and thoughts to give Him. We come to God to ask for forgiveness of our sins, or we beg for His help in our miserable circumstances, or we approach Him not even knowing how to tell him what we want without saying the 'wrong' thing. When we don't always come up to Him with praises and unsoiled dress shirts, we can feel ashamed, as if our failures mean that God wouldn't want us around anymore.

WHEN [JESUS] SAW THE CROWDS,
HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM
BECAUSE THEY WERE CONFUSED
AND HELPLESS, LIKE SHEEP
WITHOUT A SHEPHERD.

MATTHEW 9:36 NLT

Maybe this has happened to you with other people. If we disappoint those we love, or we can't provide what our loved ones want, they mock you, they distance themselves from you, or they leave you altogether. We're left wondering what we did wrong. But God looks on us with compassion no matter what mess we're in.

Think back to the story of the Prodigal Son:

"SO [THE YOUNGER SON] RETURNED HOME TO HIS FATHER.

AND WHILE HE WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF, HIS FATHER SAW HIM COMING. FILLED WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION, HE RAN TO HIS SON, EMBRACED HIM, AND KISSED HIM.

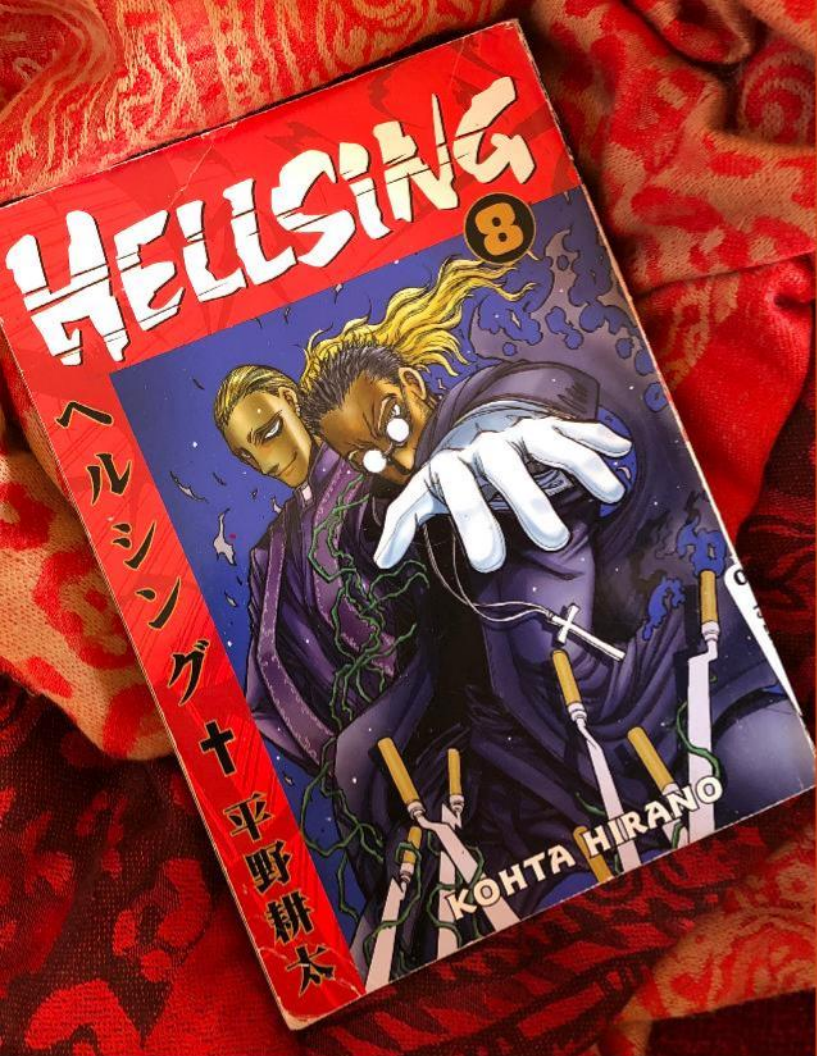
HIS SON SAID TO HIM, 'FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST BOTH HEAVEN AND YOU, AND I AM NO LONGER WORTHY OF BEING CALLED YOUR SON.'

"BUT HIS FATHER SAID TO THE SERVANTS, 'QUICK! BRING THE FINEST ROBE IN THE HOUSE AND PUT IT ON HIM. GET A RING FOR HIS FINGER AND SANDALS FOR HIS FEET. AND KILL THE CALF WE HAVE BEEN FATTENING. WE MUST CELEBRATE WITH A FEAST, FOR THIS SON OF MINE WAS DEAD AND HAS NOW RETURNED TO LIFE. HE WAS LOST, BUT NOW HE IS FOUND.'..."

LUKE 15:20-24 NLT

The father runs before he hears the confession. The father celebrates after the confession. The son didn't have to work as a servant in order to prove that he was worthy of anything. So when we pray, remember that our Father in heaven is already there to welcome us back into His presence, ready to forgive and to help. He is so merciful and full of grace.

If I could talk to Alucard,
I would want him to know that.



If you are interested in reading the *Hellsing* series, please read with discretion. The series is a horror/action graphic novel (manga) with two animated adaptations, *Hellsing* (2001) and *Hellsing Ultimate* (2006). I would recommend the series only to mature audiences because there are depictions of violence, sexual assault, gore, inappropriate language, references to the KKK, along with characters with Nazi connections and characters labeled as “Catholic” and “Protestant” while acting estranged to biblical Christian living.

Hellsing does showcase a good vs evil narrative with an underlying theme of humanity, life, and death. There are humorous and endearing moments between the more gruesome scenes, but it is not a series for everyone.

Let me end with this verse for you:

THIS HIGH PRIEST OF OURS
UNDERSTANDS OUR WEAKNESSES,
FOR HE FACED ALL OF THE SAME
TESTINGS WE DO, YET HE DID NOT SIN.
SO LET US COME BOLDLY TO
THE THRONE OF OUR GRACIOUS GOD.
THERE WE WILL RECEIVE HIS MERCY,
AND WE WILL FIND GRACE TO
HELP US WHEN WE NEED IT MOST.

HEBREWS 4:15-16 NLT

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Instead, let the Spirit renew
your thoughts and attitudes.
Put on your new nature,
created to be like God—
truly righteous and holy.

Ephesians 4:21-22 NLT



Scripture Search

Match the Bible verse to its citation

1. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
A. Matthew 11:28
2. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
B. 2 Thessalonians 3:3
3. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.
C. Jeremiah 29:11
4. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
D. Romans 12:12

By Michael Milisci

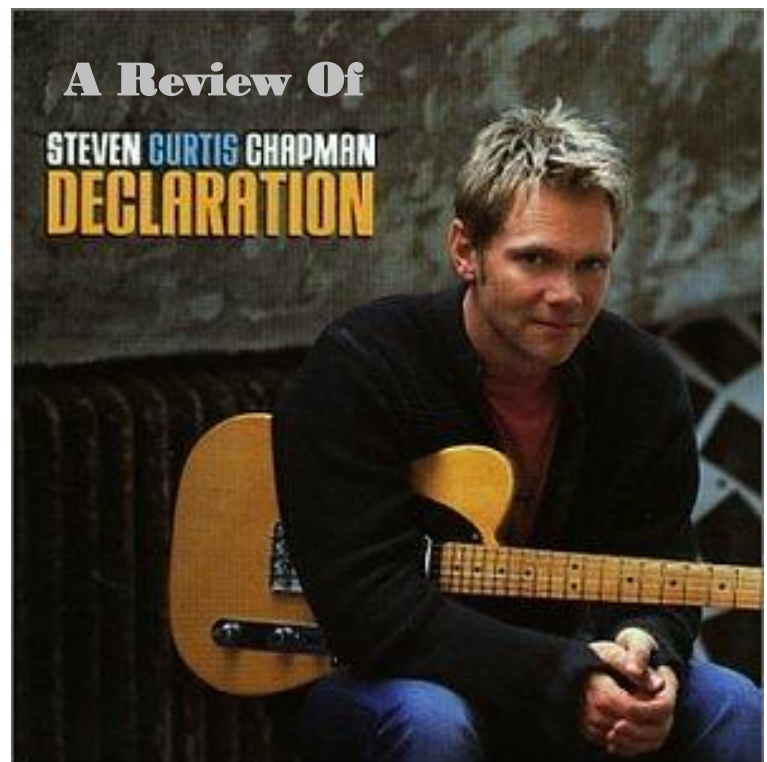


Musical Musings

My name is Michael, and I am a metal head. I love all kinds of heavy metal and hard rock, from Abbath to Metallica and to ZNÖWHITE. I also enjoy a wide variety of other bands, including Phish, The Smiths, and Meat Loaf, but I always find my way back to secular music. I wanted to challenge myself to listen to something Christian, so I decided to give Steven Curtis Chapman's "Declaration" album a listen and write about it because it is so different from what I'm used to listening to.

This album was released in 2001, and looking at it with a 2020 mentality, it's easy to see that it's definitely a product of its time. There are references to Regis Philbin hosting *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, and the music has a very post-grunge sound, similar to the secular bands: Live, Matchbox 20, and Third Eye Blind. The opening track "Live Out Loud" sounds like a Christian version of "Life is a Highway." The following 2 tracks "This Day" and "Jesus is Life" continue the rocking tone and start the album off to a good pace. But instead of going track by track, I am going to discuss a few standout songs and the general feel of the album.

"No Greater Love" slows things down a bit, and has an interesting inspiration: in 1956 a group of Evangelical Christians attempted to contact a Native Ecuadorian tribe to spread the word of Jesus. The group, consisting of Jim Ellion, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian, attempted to make contact with the Huaorani, a native tribe with a reputation of being vicious killers. The Huaorani speared the missionaries to death. Two years later, in 1958, another group of missionaries were able to make peaceful contact with the tribe, learn the language, and bring them translated Bibles. Mincaye Enquedi, the tribal leader, accepted the gift of Bibles, learned from them, and became a preacher and elder in the newfound Huaorani



Christian Church. Nate Saint's son, Steve Saint, was a baby at the time of his father's death, but once he turned 10 he lived with the Huaorani people. Mincaye, as he is referred to, felt a personal responsibility in raising Steve, because Mincaye was the one who actually killed Steve's father, and he adopted Steve as his tribal son. They have spoken at several conferences together, discussing their relationship and challenges they faced. The music for the song is fitting, as it is a slow paced acoustic ballad which ends with Mincaye doing some tribal chanting.

"No Greater Love" flows directly into "God is God", another spacey sounding slow song, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra providing an orchestral background. A few readers may recognize the London Philharmonic Orchestra as the orchestra that provided the soundtrack to the original Lord of the Rings trilogy. There is some tribal chanting in the background, reminiscent of the previous track.

"See the Glory" picks things up to a more upbeat sound again. A Nintendo-sounding 8-bit riff opens the track, which then morphs into a guitar-driven rocker. There are a few more 8-bit sound effects thrown into the song, specifically a "coin" effect after the chorus, and the entire breakdown is an 8-bit interpretation of the main riff.

"When Love Takes You In" is a ballad about how adoption is a life-changing and positive force for some people. This could be easily written off as indulgent and preachy, but Chapman puts his money where his mouth is concerning the themes of this song; in 1997 he and his wife adopted 3 children from China, which gives some credence to his message here. The music itself is slow with Chapman playing a piano, being accompanied by the London Philharmonic Orchestra again.

"Savior" is a fitting end to the album, it sounds like it was lifted from the soundtrack to a Disney movie with a lone flute signaling the beginning of the song before the rest of the symphony makes its presence known. A lone acoustic guitar accompanies Chapman's singing during the first verse, and the following verse and chorus feature the sweeping orchestra accompanying Chapman's singing. The lyrics are about searching for Jesus Christ, our savior; the first verses are about people walking through confusing parts in their lives, unsure of where to turn, ultimately leading up to the final verse of Jesus being nailed to the cross as the savior for all of humanity. The final two minutes are all orchestral, which really cements the soundtrack feeling of the song.

I enjoyed the album more than I thought I would, it reminds me of the music I grew up listening to as a teenager in the early/mid 2000's. If I had heard this when it was first released, I can see myself trying to learn to play these songs on guitar. "Jesus is Life" has a bluesy guitar riff that repeats throughout the song, and "God Follower" features arpeggiated chords that sound fun to play. At first, I had a gripe that the songs are too direct with their message. There is no room for interpretation, what you hear is what you get without any

subtle, hidden meanings. Several themes are touched upon throughout the album. Aside from the songs I discussed earlier, some of the themes are: don't go looking for trouble, the desire to be more faithful, the stubbornness to try and tackle our problems without trusting God, and the fact that God has been around a **lot** longer than we have and he ultimately knows what is right for us. While I thought this was a negative at first, I found some songs stuck in my head throughout the past few weeks, and they always seemed to pop up when I was in a situation where I was on my way to sin. Maybe God knows that a subtle slap to the face is exactly what I need at some points.

If you enjoy music from the early 2000's and can handle the direct, no-room-for-other-interpretation messages of the lyrics, I highly recommend "Declaration."



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The Riches of Grace

Devotional Authors Who Ministered to Me

By Rose Therese

After leaving an abusive church situation, I had no idea where to turn. The world I'd grown up in was nothing but rules, everyone talked about grace and how wonderful it was, but all I'd seen was rules and hypocrisy. I had seen and heard very little true grace, and as a creative person, I also found myself outside the world I was "supposed" to inhabit. There was no place for a girl who wanted to write fairy tales in that world. To top it all off, I was struggling with what I now know to be intrusive thoughts, and I was running scared. There seemed to be no place that was safe.

One night, I was wide awake, trapped in a cycle of intrusive thoughts, when a desperate Google search led me to net-burst.net. And there, I met Grantley...

Grantley Morris is a man gifted with a mighty pen and a big heart for those who suffer with mental illness. Out of the dozens of pages in his website, many were dedicated to ensuring people with religiously-oriented intrusive thoughts (known as Scrupulosity) have the tools they need to fight back against their malfunctioning brains. It had a name. I wasn't crazy!

Grantley also spoke boldly for grace, and how God loves us so much that he showered his grace down on us. He explained it in a way I'd never known, or had not been explained well, of Jesus as the heroic character who laid down his life for his bride, and how insulting it was to think there was anything he couldn't forgive. Now armed with Grantley's advice, I was better able to defend myself from the frightening thoughts.

Secondly, a man who I'd known of for years came to my aid. Pastor Charles Swindoll, the founder of Insight for Living Ministries, offered me his sage and grandfatherly advice from across my computer screen. His comforting words about grace and truth, gleaned from years and years of Bible study and practice helped me overcome even more mental blocks. His daughter Colleen's ministry for those most overlooked, the disabled and the mentally ill, also spoke to my own heart for "the least of these" and assured me that I wasn't alone there, either. If a great pastor's daughter cared so much, certainly I could too.

Finally, a third voice spoke to me, though she has been dead for many, many, years. This voice belonged to a sweet-faced little French nun, Therese of Lisieux. I was introduced to her formally by a Catholic friend, Joe, who is particularly devoted to her. He sent me a novena, which to my recently opened mind felt deliciously naughty to read; in a "what would they say," sort of manner as I had previously been told that



Catholic books were off limits... except Tolkien of course. This novena was written by a priest who gave a very narrow look at Therese and her work and life, but it was enough to get me started.

I felt a kinship to Therese: like me, she loved flowers and writing, often writing poems and even plays for her sister nuns. And like me she struggled mightily with stubbornness and wanting things to be "just so." She even struggled with scrupulosity, and wrote about it at length in her autobiography, "The Story of a Soul". In the novena, the author spoke much of her sufferings, which is true, she did suffer greatly from illness, but she hardly ever spoke of such things in her biography. Instead, she happily talked about her beloved friend Jesus and how good he had been to her. Her words of grace filled me with a new zest for doing everything for God's glory, even the littlest thing.

It may sound like the setup to a bad joke: "An Aussie, a Texas Pastor, and a Nun walk into a brain" but it's the honest truth. These three strange ministers of grace just go to show what Paul said in his First Letter to the Corinthians is true:

"Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important." (1 Cor. 1: 26-28, NLT)



Author/Crossover Queen
Aurora Mandeville
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Do This In Memory of Me

By Amanda Pizzolatto



The priest mumbles something and kneels down. He rises, and there is a slight pause. Then, amid the ringing of bells, he raises the host to the feet of Jesus upon the cross. He does it again, this time with a chalice. This is the moment when the bread and wine stationed at the altar changes into the Body and Blood of Christ, but not its outward signs. It still looks, feels, smells, and tastes like bread and wine, but its essence is now the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our dearly beloved Lord, Jesus Christ. This is one of the greatest miracles of all time, granted to the priest by God through the words, “This is My Body, this is My Blood, do this in memory of Me”. However, not everyone believes in the Presence of Jesus in the Host, even though He says in the Bible that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood indeed (John 6:52-59). There are several people who did believe it, and believed it so much that they willingly died for the Eucharist. Two such prime examples, the two commonly thought of by most who know of them, are Saint Tarcisius and Blessed Imelda Lambertini.

Saint Tarcisius was a young boy, twelve to fourteen by some accounts, who lived in the third century and was an altar server at the underground Masses that were going on under the continued Roman persecution of Christians. One day, the priest he was serving Mass for - many think it was Pope Damasus - wanted to get the Holy Eucharist to some Christians in a prison who were to be executed later that day. Tarcisius offered to take the Eucharist as it would seem reasonable that the guards wouldn't question a young boy, probably thinking that a young boy wouldn't try to break anyone out of jail. The priest agreed and gave the Eucharist to Tarcisius. Tarcisius hid it under his tunic

and made off for the prisons. Along the way, a group of people noticed him and asked him what he was hiding under his shirt. He refused to answer, and the crowd turned on him. They started pelting him with rocks, but they didn't stop when he fell, only once he was dead. They approached him to find out what he had been holding, but it seemed that Tarcisius's hands had become like iron and refused to budge. They rushed away when a Roman soldier came upon the scene. Being himself a Christian, the soldier recognized Tarcisius from the underground Masses and brought the body back to the priest. Only then did Tarcisius's hands fall away from his precious cargo. The priest removed the Eucharist, and Tarcisius was buried and venerated as a martyr.

Blessed Imelda Lambertini also died for the Holy Eucharist, but her death was a far less gruesome one. In her time, children were not allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist until they were fourteen years old. But Imelda wanted to receive our Lord in Holy Communion as early as five years old. She loved Him so much that she didn't want to wait much longer. But her family and friends made her wait, and as the years passed, the yearning only grew. She joined the Dominican convent of St. Agnes at the young age of nine, hoping it would give her a foot in the door towards receiving Holy Communion early. Her hopes were dashed as the Mother Superior wanted to follow the laws. But God Himself came to her rescue as He caused a miracle to show that He wanted to be received by this beautiful soul. Imelda was eleven years old, and it was after the Easter Mass when the Host began to shine and floated out of the tabernacle towards

Imelda! When the Mother Superior saw the miracle, she sent for the priest. He understood right away that God Himself wanted this little girl to receive Him in Holy Communion and gave the Host to her right away. After everyone had offered up a thanksgiving for the miracle, the Mother Superior let Imelda stay in the chapel for as long as she wanted to say her thanksgiving. The others went about their daily routines, checking in on her from time to time. Hours had passed before the Mother Superior decided that Imelda needed to return to her duties. But when she went to rouse Imelda from her prayers, she found that Imelda had died of sheer joy. Ever since, both she and St. Tarcisius are considered the patrons of First Communicants. But that wasn't the only miracle concerning the Holy Eucharist.

There have been reports in recent years of a few but monumental miracles relating to the Holy Eucharist. The best known one of these is the miracle of Lanciano. In the 8th century, a monk saying Mass in Lanciano, Italy had doubts as to whether the bread and wine actually turned into the Body and Blood of Christ. But as he raised the Host and said the words "this is My Body", they became the Body and Blood in form as well as in essence. This is the only time this has ever happened. The majority of Eucharistic miracles fall under one of three categories - either the Host bleeds, or people can be sustained on the Eucharist alone, or the Eucharist moves from a place back to the church.

Why do I bring this up? What's the point of talking about all of these miracles and the two young saints in regards to grace? Well, it was just one of many ways to prove my point. I'm no eloquent speaker like GK Chesterton or St. Dominic de

Guzman, but I hope I've made sense. Anyways, with all of these miracles, with people wanting to die for the Eucharist, one has to stop and wonder *why that is if it's just bread and wine, right? Or is there more to it?* If people are willing to die on the belief that the Eucharist is in fact the Body and Blood of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then what greater means of grace can we find than this, for Christ to come into us physically as well as spiritually? Yes, Christ can and will use other means of getting grace to us, including the help of the saints, the angels, and His beloved Mother, and we are free to utilize those means, but when He has given us such a wonderful gift as this Sacrament, we should receive it as frequently as possible. What better way to receive grace than through the Source of grace Himself? Of course, we cannot be in a state of mortal sin and must have been baptized in order to receive it, but what are these requirements in comparison to what God is giving us, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in the form of food and drink so that, one day, we will be with Him for real in Heaven.



Mary, Full of Grace

By Sarah Levesque

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!’” Luke 1:26-28.

We’re all probably familiar with these verses that come not long before the description of the Nativity in the Gospel of Luke. But what did the angel mean by calling Mary ‘full of grace’? The original Greek word is also used in Ephesians 1:6 (1). Starting from verse 5, it’s translated, “He [God] destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious *grace* which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” But what is grace? The Catholic Church has this to say: “Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life” (2).

When the angel came to Mary, she was already full of this grace, though Jesus had not yet come into the world. But most of us don’t accept this grace like Mary – it is there to fill us, but I suspect we only accept so much, being sinful and full of our own concerns. But Mary didn’t just have some of this grace like you and I, she was *full of it*.

What does God’s grace help us to do? It helps us to keep our hearts and minds on God, to do His will. This is why Mary could say “yes” to God without batting an eye, though He asked her to be the Mother of His Son while she was yet unmarried, though she must have been well aware that she would face ridicule and scorn and perhaps stoning for being pregnant and unwed. Later, when she and Joseph and baby Jesus were in Bethlehem and Joseph was told by an angel to go to Egypt, she accepted the will of God (Matthew 13-14). I don’t know about you, but I’d probably be rather disbelieving if someone told me they

dreamed I had to leave the country because some politician that doesn’t know I exist is going to kill my child. Seems far out there. But there is no record of her complaining, because she understood this was the will of God and she followed it. Why? Because she was full of grace.

It is the Roman Catholic belief that Mary was conceived without sin. This would explain why she was full of grace – if by God’s grace she was conceived without sin, and never fell to the temptation of sin, never choosing herself above God’s will, then she would continue to be full of grace. This understanding of the Catholic Church is derived from the idea of Mary as the New Eve as Jesus is the New Adam.

The Apostle Paul calls Jesus the New Adam in 1 Corinthians: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive... Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit...” (1 Cor 15:22, 45). But if there is a new

Adam, surely there must be a new Eve. But Eve was the wife of Adam, and Jesus was unmarried. However, had Jesus taken up the earthly throne of David, His mother would have been His queen in the tradition of Solomon (1 Kgs. 2:19–20, Jer. 13:18, 20). If this is too tenuous of a connection, consider that Eve’s ‘No’ to God’s command that she and Adam not eat from the Tree of Life brought about death, while Mary’s ‘Yes’ to God’s command that she conceive and bear His Son brought about eternal life through Jesus. And if the New Adam was born without sin as was the Old Adam, surely the New Eve would also be born without sin as was the Old Eve.

The idea that Mary was immaculately conceived has been debated throughout history. Thomas Aquinas seemed to disagree, but in actuality he denied eight ways the term “immaculate conception” could be used in regard to Mary, but none of these included the way defined in the



dogma (3) proclaimed by Pope Pious IX on December 8, 1854 (4). Those who spoke in favor of Mary's immaculate conception include but are not limited to Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine and Martin Luther (5, 6).

Whether or not you agree that Mary was immaculately conceived, there is no doubt that she was full of grace. May we emulate her in saying 'yes' to God, that we may put aside ourselves and better receive the outpouring of God's grace.

Footnotes:

1. Pope John Paul II - General Audience - May 8, 1996, from cin.org/jp96058b.html
2. Catechism of the Catholic Church, para.1996, from vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a2.htm
3. Dogma are the only precepts of Catholic teaching that are explicitly defined as divinely revealed and unquestionable by faithful Catholics.
4. "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful." (Pope Pius IX, Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*)
5. taylormarshall.com/2011/12/church-fathers-on-immaculate-conception.html
6. Luther, Martin (1996). John Nicholas Lenker (ed.). *Sermons of Martin Luther. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House p291*



Bible Quiz!

Answers on the following page

1. Who was sold to slavery by his brothers?
 - A. Moses
 - B. David
 - C. Joseph
 - D. Noah
2. Who led the Israelites between the time of Moses and the time of the Kings?
 - A. Nobody
 - B. Judges
 - C. Prophets
 - D. Angels
3. Who was the first King of Israel?
 - A. David
 - B. Jesus
 - C. Solomon
 - D. Saul
4. Who foretold the coming of the Messiah?
 - A. Isaiah
 - B. Jeremiah
 - C. Zechariah
 - D. All of the above
5. John the Baptist's parents were...?
 - A. Elizabeth & Zechariah
 - B. Mary & Joseph
 - C. Bathsheba & David
 - D. Unknown
6. St Paul wrote all the epistles in the New Testament
 - A. True
 - B. False
7. Jesus did not start his ministry until he was 33 years old
 - A. True
 - B. False

The answers are listed on the following page

Bible Quiz Answers!

Questions on the previous page

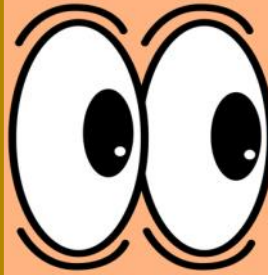
- 1) C - Joseph was sold to slavery by his brothers and he ended up in Egypt, but God made good come out of evil, as Joseph gained the favor of the Egyptian king and saved Egypt and his family from a great famine (see Genesis 47).
- 2) B - The Judges led the Israelites between the time of Moses and the time of the Kings. These included Deborah, Gideon, Samson and others. Their stories can be found in the book of Judges.
- 3) D - Saul was the first King of Israel (see 1 Samuel 10). He was chosen out of all Israel, because the people asked the Lord for a king (see 1 Samuel 8), but he sinned against the Lord (1 Samuel 13) and was eventually replaced by David.
- 4) D - Nearly all the prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, including Isaiah (various chapters), Jeremiah (chapter 23), and Zechariah (chapters 9 and 12).
- 5) A - John the Baptist's parents were Elizabeth & Zechariah. Elizabeth was the cousin of the Virgin Mary, and Zechariah was a priest (see Luke 1). At the time of John's conception, both were old and nobody expected them to have children.
- 6) B - False: St Paul did not write all the epistles in the New Testament. He wrote 13, Peter wrote two, and James and Jude each wrote one.
- 7) A - True: Jesus did not start his ministry until he was 33 years old

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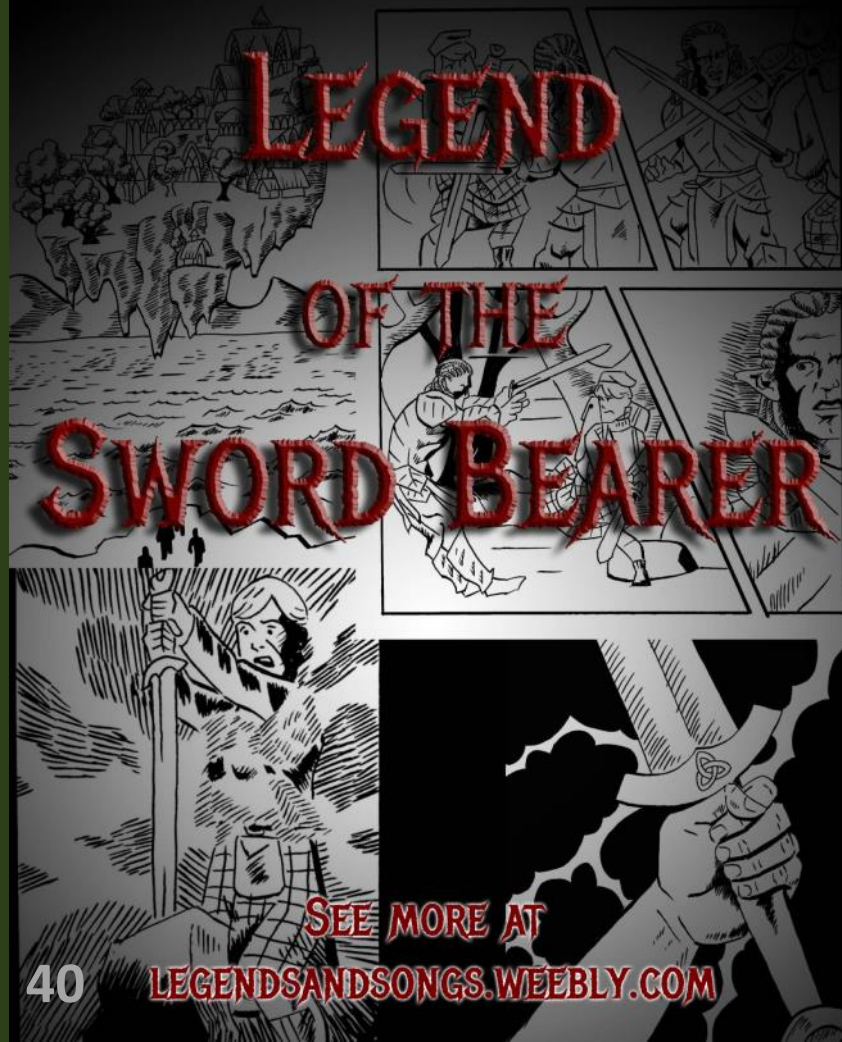
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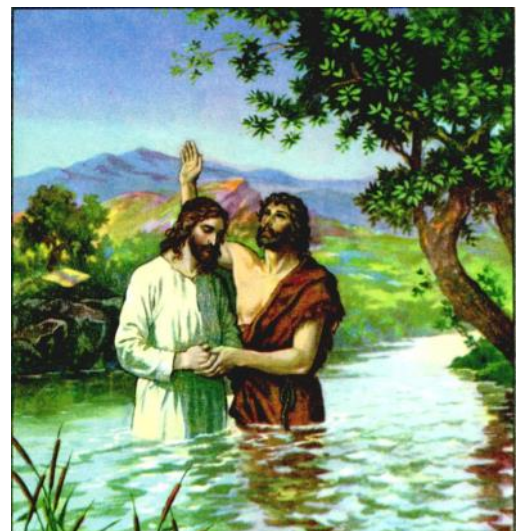
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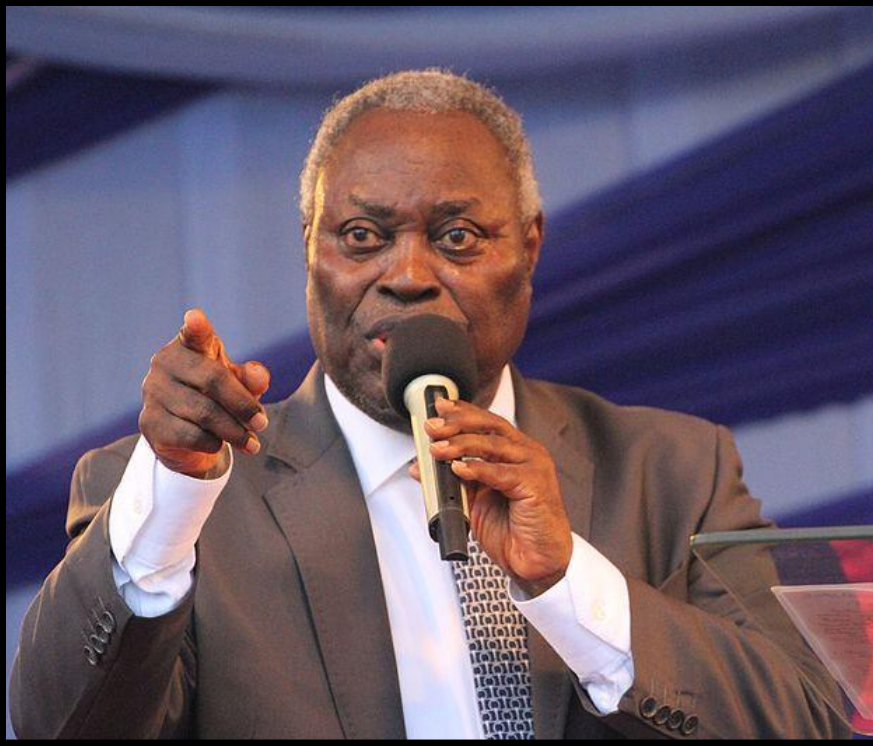


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