

*RUNNING
THE RACE*

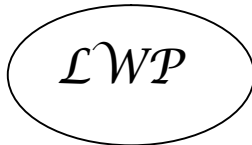
by

ERIK LINGELSER

CAROL ANN BEEMAN, M.A., Ed.D.

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For Our Lady, Mother of All Mankind

“When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he said to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he said to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own. John’s Gospel 19:26-27 (Douay-Rheims)”

Our Blessed Mother Mary is Mother to each one of us. She acts on each of our behalf’s as only an extremely wonderful mother would. She loves each with the care of her all-encompassing Mother’s Heart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
MY BACKGROUND- ERIK	17
MY BACKGROUND- CAROL ANN	19
CHAPTER ONE: Crisis in Leadership	22
CHAPTER TWO: Why the Latin Mass?	30
CHAPTER THREE: Our Living the Liturgy	49
CHAPTER FOUR: Living the Gospel	66
CHAPTER FIVE: Defending the Gospel	88
CHAPTER SIX: More Defending the Gospel	107
CHAPTER SEVEN: Walking the Walk— An Easy Discernment	130
CHAPTER EIGHT: Beginning Phase IV Discernment, Still Working On It	170

INTRODUCTION

RUNNING THE RACE- HEBREWS 12

“Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before Him, He endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken His seat at the right of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:1-2 (New American Bible, St. Joseph Edition)

Writing this book began on Wednesday, August 20, 2014.

Erik is abbreviated to E.

Carol Ann is abbreviated to CA.

ERIK: We have been finding that sitting in a Catholic pew does not automatically mean hearing things Catholic. Our religious journey has required a lot of leaving. What we have left is an apathy towards God and His revealed Truth. We see ourselves as regular Catholics trying to stay Catholic. The need to question what was presented to us began our journey of discernment. Do you expect a football game at the baseball stadium?

I looked at my email the evening of August 14 and found this email:

“Hello, everyone, sorry for such late notice—I have been out of town for a few days. This Friday, August 15, mass will be at 2 PM.”

I emailed a reply: “Is it the 12:15 PM Latin Mass that is being moved to 2 PM for Friday Assumption?”

I then re-checked the Latin Mass webpage. No change. Wondering about the differing information, I checked a third source, the Cathedral website and bulletin. No help there. I looked at the 6:30 PM time on the computer-- so the parish office was closed-- had called previously only to get an answering machine. Trying a fourth source, I decided to check the diocesan website. There, a different confusion came from how the Assumption was presented—it wasn't. A big deal was made about the 15th of August. It was the starting date of a long tour of the diocese by the Bishop. No mention of Assumption or of Friday being a Holy Day of Obligation. Nor was the Obligation stated in the Cathedral bulletin or on the Latin Mass webpage. More confused, I let my godmother know I couldn't verify (for sure) when Mass was.

CAROL ANN: When Erik told me he could not verify exactly when the Mass for Assumption the next day was scheduled, I was flabbergasted. What could he be talking about? I had just checked both the Cathedral website and the Latin Mass webpage on Tuesday to

make certain when Mass would be. When I said this, he answered, “I got an email.”

What email? Answer: “From the lady who sends out any changes or cancellations of the Latin Mass. These changes have happened before.”

How’d she get your email address? Answer: “A friend of ours who goes there regularly gave it to her so we could get notices if the Mass was changed. She warned me to be on the lookout. They’d even had a Sunday Latin Mass cancelled.”

Now I was both confused and overwhelmed. Erik added, “It’s too late to call and we can’t call tomorrow—the office is closed at the Cathedral.”

E. We definitely considered not going because it wasn’t a ‘sure’ sure thing. I guess our minds were a little blown by something so simple and necessary becoming in any way complicated. How many times a week do you have to find out when Mass is? In a different diocese, other parish websites, bulletins, had the notice at the top, mentioning it’s a Holy Day of Obligation, and the Mass times for that day, including offering Vigil Masses that Thursday evening, the common, expected practice as we know it. But we didn’t know this diocese or parish.

This was only our second time to the Latin Mass there.

CA. Now, I was feeling not only confused, but a little angry. We decided to say our Rosary and Vespers, hoping to feel some confidence about the 120-mile drive the next day. After prayers, we decided we would go and trust the email. We decided if we missed the Latin Mass for Assumption because we trusted the wrong information, we would offer it up as a sacrifice. We also decided to write a letter suggesting that updates or Mass changes be posted on the Latin Mass webpage along with the email system to make it more official.

E. We did keep hoping for an email reply; I checked my email and the Latin Mass page at the end of the evening. In the morning, I continued to check for an email because the Latin Mass page had been updated at 7:30 AM that morning. If someone is right there changing the webpage, and it's so handy, wouldn't they also announce the different mass time, especially for something as important as the Assumption, a Holy Day of Obligation? They didn't. So, I was even less sure the email I got referred to the Latin Mass.

CA. On the drive, we tried to process the experience. We compared this incident to others similar. That's when the idea of writing this book presented itself. Erik had already expressed his concept before, that arbitrariness happens when there is no leader at all. So, arbitrariness from a supposed

leadership source, is it leadership? Why was there no mention of the Holy Day of Obligation and for the Novus Ordo, why no Vigil Masses, listed as such, to fulfill the obligation?

My personal experience has been of a lack of shepherding except from the Popes, a couple of guiding priests and a few other functional priests. My experience since I've been Catholic has included priests who did not teach Catholic doctrine, others who did not impart or exude Catholicism, and some who were plain bizarre.

E. We seemed to be making a mountain out of a molehill. But I, as a little more analytical, broached the topic with a little scenario, putting a priest on the stoop at the front of the church, looking at the empty parking lot and sidewalk. Finally, he goes in, says a private Mass and leaves. Later, the parking lot fills up, parishioners mill on the sidewalk and before the doors, knocking and calling. They, too, finally leave. It returns to as the priest saw it, empty. And that becomes the official liturgy of the day all because of a simple time discrepancy.

My concept, assigning arbitrariness as a leading sign of vacuum in leadership was new. I had only mulled it over for about a week. The cathedral bulletin was arbitrary and confusing, not mentioning Vigil Mass to fulfill the obligation, not mentioning the obligation period, yet shifting the regular mass schedule to an earlier 7:00 AM start time and adding a highly unusual

third Novus Ordo Mass for the day at 8:00 AM. These changes weren't referenced whatsoever-- all this in a 10-page bulletin of announcements, none of which approaches the importance of the Holy Day of Obligation on Friday—for Catholics.

CA. My frustration was long-standing. Over 2½ years ago, several incidents and examples of lack of shepherding or even oppressing parishioners in our geographical diocese had led me to tell a priest, “Shepherds don't beat the sheep!” The Bishop in our diocese jumped on a pretext not supported by any other source (as a matter of fact denied by all the closer sources as having any weight) and took away a Latin Mass priest's faculties. He abandoned the canonically-established community—no priest, no Latin Masses. His next action six months later was to canonically extinguish the community, “There is no canonically established *Name of Community*, which is now extinguished.” This effectively eliminated a Latin Mass community well on its way to becoming a parish on its own. There were daily Latin Masses and Feast days with a schola that had produced a CD of chant and hymns, religious education, plus a building fund for their own church building, and everything else associated with parish life. This community had been established for 13 years or so with its own full-time priest.

The Bishop reduced the Latin Mass there to two Sundays a month with no other Sacraments available.

“Persons attending Mass in the Extraordinary Form remain parishioners of their territorial parishes, they simply attend Mass in Latin much like other parishioners attend in Spanish. Those living where there is no Latin Mass (for example *city named*) still register in that parish and enroll their children in PRE there even though they drive elsewhere (say *city named*) for Mass. In this example they would put *first city named* envelopes in the *other city named* collection, which would be forwarded to the *first city named* from *second city named* and serve as proof of Mass attendance for purposes of the *first city named* PRE program.”

The Latin Mass is the Extraordinary Form, using the Liturgical books of 1962 for the sacraments and the official liturgies of the Church. Spanish Mass is the current books in use in Spanish. The Latin Mass is a different liturgy, not the same liturgy in a different language.

A year later, the Bishop eliminated one of the Latin Mass locations based on his evaluation that they had not jumped through his hoops. These actions and more were what prompted my conversation with the priest and my comment. Taking away a full-time priest, community, and dissolving a Latin Mass were, as Erik said, arbitrary. My frustration was summed up by saying then and now, “Why would a Bishop punish people for coming to Mass?”

Our drive completed, my godson spent a few moments walking our dog. I went ahead a little anxious about what might or might not be, but seeing a note

posted on the door to the Chapel of the cathedral, I was relieved. It said, “Latin Mass at 2 PM today.”

E. Driving home after Mass, both of us wondered why that simple note could not have been posted on the Latin Mass webpage. If it seemed like a good idea there, why wouldn't it be a good idea on the webpage? It also specified Latin Mass, unlike the email which simply said, “Mass time is changed.” The difference is, it's not a heads-up on the door when you are already there. We have since written a letter suggesting giving notice on the official website.

MY BACKGROUND- ERIK

The general teachings given to me were the ordinary stuff. Having money was a very good thing. Working hard was a good thing. Having a nice house was a very good thing. Having good working vehicles was a good thing. Getting set for retirement was a very good thing. Learning was a very good thing.

I also understood that a regular normal person is OK, just as is. Decency is a given, good people are the norm. Stratification among people is perfectly acceptable as talents vary, and besides, it is the hard work using your talents that gets you ahead. So, in competition and hard work, success is rightfully earned.

Religion was not a subject in my family. We didn't actually have talks. I established an atheistic premise that satisfied me, so I believed that when a person died, they dumped into being-no-more, winked out of existence. I was too young, still, to worry about that over-much. Yet, I believed in a higher meaning to life, something more than going through the everyday motions.

What that higher meaning was, I didn't know. I did really try to figure that out. Unfortunately, I had to ignore the loudest voices in society because they cancelled each other out. I have a knee-jerk reaction to this day to voiced certitude clearly not backed by solid logic and knowledge. I was left stumbling, and kept hitting a brick wall trying to figure out a higher meaning all on my own.

The 12-Step program and my future godmother and a certain Canadian really helped me out on this. One evening in 1991, I was really trying, and being able to be a lot of help to this certain Canadian, I thought, when she said to my future godmother, “Oh, he’s not co-dependent, is he?” I went back to my place with those words sticking to me. From then on, I embraced the 12-Step program as something *I* needed, not just others. Catholicism also teaches that one’s entire life is and should be a growing experience. This is very different from my upbringing from which I understood that there were normal people who didn’t need fixing and therefore there was no changing within themselves as they moved through life-- the one goal is what you do in life. By itself, this one change in understanding led to a much richer life experience. I was well on my way to becoming Catholic as well, even though I didn’t know it.

MY BACKGROUND- CAROL ANN

Just as I do not remember learning how to swim or walk, I do not remember how I learned so much about God and the Bible. I was taken to church by my parents and grandparents since I was an infant. I grew up hearing and knowing that God is real and true and that He loves me. My paternal grandfather, my dad and his brother, my uncle, were all Deacons in the Baptist church. We were Southern Baptists. Life for all my immediate family and friends revolved around going to Church—twice on Sundays, sometimes for Dad on Monday evening if there was a Deacon’s meeting, then Wednesday night prayer service, Thursday nights was church visitation and evangelization. My grandmothers went to Women’s Missionary Union, my mother played the piano for a Sunday School department and sang in the choir and my Dad always taught Sunday School (boys when he was younger and in a nursing home when he felt he did not relate to kids any more). Sunday morning Worship Service after Sunday School was more formal. On Sunday evenings we went back to church for Training Union and Evening Worship Service that was less formal and more evangelistic. As a teenager, I was a member of the Girl’s Auxiliary of the W.M.U. We had “steps” to climb that included Bible study, essays, service projects and learning to walk in faith. In summer, there was Vacation Bible School which usually lasted two weeks. As a teenager, there were youth activities and service projects, and youth choir.

I was immersed in the Bible, so much so that to this day, if something someone says does not line up with Scriptural truth, a verse usually comes to mind and I know I can find the truth in the Scripture passage and usually can find that passage. You would think from this that I would be fortified to live a solid Baptist life as an adult, but that did not happen.

College years taught me to question and examine more closely the reality I had been brought up in. Although I went to a state university only 100 miles away from my home, it was an entirely new world for me. I did not “go wild” like some kids from conservative religious homes do, but I began to drift. I also began to realize some troubling things. How could someone preach a sermon from the Scriptures one Sunday and then, on another occasion, someone else use that same Scripture with an interpretation that was mutually exclusive from the first view.

I had never known a Catholic in my life, but I had been raised on anti-Catholic doctrines. However, when I read the Scriptures and pondered their meaning, confusion now set in. When our Lord told Peter, “Thou art the rock and on this rock I will build my church,” didn’t that mean the Pope?

Why was I so scared all the time? I loved God. I tried to walk by faith, but I kept falling down spiritually and morally, living a life that as a Christian, I was not proud of. I was the “black sheep” of my family. What was the source of the conflict within and the

disobedience without? I struggled in my relationship to God and to others.

I felt drawn to the Catholic Church. For years I had pondered the Scriptures and felt the Catholic interpretations were truer than the alternatives I had been taught, since leaders often prefaced lessons with “Catholics teach this..., but we believe...”. I had always thought that since I had been divorced, I could not be a Catholic since Catholics do not believe in divorce.

In the mountain village where I later lived, there were a few Catholics who attended a mission church in a nearby town. I went several times with them, and finally had the courage to ask the priest about converting. For almost a year, after Mass on Wednesday evenings, the elderly priest instructed me for almost 2 hours, guiding me through the catechism and answering my often child-like questions thoroughly. After all my years of struggle and pain, here was the truth that set me free. I was not alone. Our Precious Lord was here in the Eucharist, in the Blessed Sacrament. He had given Sacraments that are avenues of grace to help my faltering soul. And, there was the communion of saints—the martyrs and holy ones of the past 2000 years, and from the Old Testament, who were watching and on whose help I could call as I ran the race. I was received into the Church on the Sunday after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 10th, 1989.

CHAPTER ONE: CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP

“Participation in Christ’s prophetic office...

907 ‘In accord with the knowledge, competence, and preeminence which they possess, [lay people] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons.’ ”
Codex Iuris Canonici, Canon 22, paragraph 3 as cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 239 (United States Conference Edition, 1994)

CA. How was it that we wound up looking for a Latin Mass in another diocese in the first place? There was an insert in the bulletin of the Latin Mass we attended in our also 120-mile away parish on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. I did not find it until we got home that evening. The insert was a flyer from a state advocate group promoting the Affordable Care Act individual mandate sign-up.

E. This is the basic scenario that happens in a martyrdom—the carrot and the stick. The Christian martyr can recant, possibly choosing to sneak his Christianity back into his life unseen by the aggressors.

This is not always possible or the choice made. The martyr refuses to call the Emperor “god,” as it is well not true, and sticks to the truth. Down comes the stick, the martyrdom. That person is immediately in Heaven. So, when someone stronger forces a confrontation and gives the carrot or stick choice, your faith is likely on the line. The bulletin insert contained these two elements.

CA. I was looking over the insert when it dawned on me that this was what the bishops had been fighting against for almost three years. Weren’t we in the middle of our third annual Fortnight for Freedom? Who had changed sides? The issues had not changed. I began to try to process what I was looking at. Now, in this diocese or at least in our parish, we were being urged to sign up?

E. The carrots were these: A significant segment (of the state’s population) did not have health insurance which now could be easily obtained, getting preventive care, screenings, and treatments; preventing bankruptcy as 60% of U.S. bankruptcies are caused by medical bills; and, for a sizable group, getting it free with Medicaid paying—that’s six carrots. The one-page hurry-and-sign-up, and you get your wrist slapped if you don’t, so sign up today Affordable Healthcare flyer included this stick: “If you don’t sign up, you might have to pay a penalty.”

My own assessment, because I would qualify for sign-up, was that this was not a remote action for me, but a direct cooperation in grave matter, my own hand would be signing. The thing is I am not automatically signed up. *I* have to sign up. Actually, there is no difficulty in being automatically signed up. This is the Roman Emperor once again, telling me while holding a carrot and a stick, “Do what I say!” At stake is adhering to my Christian faith—not the country’s healthcare system. As I said, I could easily be automatically signed up. The IRS has my tax statements and income level. My file is under a Social Security number-- not a complex software program.

CA. As we discussed the issue, I asked my godson, what could we do? He responded that we should alert the pastor to our concerns. Erik’s email asked, “Fr. Blank, why are you putting this insert promoting sign-up of Affordable Healthcare in your bulletin? I’m not signed up. If I actively sign up, I imply my acceptance of it, or even agreement with all it represents. Rather than presenting or witnessing to the truth, I scandalize others by my action which is not according to truth as laid out by the Church. Erik. Carol Ann is disturbed by this also.” The response we got the next morning was:

“Erik, The Bishop asked us to make this information available to our people. Fr. Blank”

Not the response we expected. We had even hoped the inserts might be pulled before Saturday Vigil.

E. I was pretty comfortable with my analysis. But, I thought a second opinion would be good, none-the-less. Turns out, this wasn't one of those easy searches. Carol Ann, the next day found the best we could find. The best authoritative source I found online was one diocese promoting the individual mandate, as was ours, and an adjoining diocese, asked about it, responding their policy decision was silence on the subject.

CA. I am signed up for text alerts from the U.S.C.C.B. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) that advise on political action to change laws. I went to their website first looking for the same roaring declarations as in 2012 when the Supreme Court was deliberating about the AFC Law. They seemed to say at that time, paraphrasing, "No way could we in conscience be a part of any law that mandated such things as universal coverage for abortion, sterilization, and contraception." They were even suggesting civil disobedience if the Supreme Court did not strike down the objectionable coverage.

In June, 2014, things seemed different. Yes, we were still fasting and praying for religious liberty, as before. But now the appeal was more that we defend our religious rights and our faith in God, some pointers on taking political action, and prayer cards, especially to St. Thomas More.

E. The bishops of the U.S. definitely did not get together and list the various situations that people would find themselves in with their health care. They didn't give a listing of guidance-- in this case, don't do it, in that case, go ahead with remonstrance, and in this case, you're not in any moral bind. The Bishops' Conference has been known to give specific guidance before, but not now.

CA. I kept searching, and wondering what had happened. I remembered hearing on a Catholic national radio apologist broadcast that there was a Catholic bioethics group. I googled to find them and went to their website (National Catholic Bioethics Center, the NCBC). This is what was on the website concerning the AFC implementation in the February, 2014, Vol. 39, No. 2 Publication:

“Health Insurance Options and the Ethics of the HHS Mandate.”

“Moral Obligation to Oppose...

“The NCBC continues to maintain that there is a moral obligation to oppose the unjust HHS mandate through practical efforts appropriate to the circumstances of each person and organization, including legal opposition. This obligation becomes greater if the individual or organization is cooperating materially with evil even if in a temporary and licit manner... The moral

imperative is that objectionable coverage must be excluded as soon as reasonable, and that every appropriate effort must be made to fight the unjust provisions of the law until their repeal or modification restores respect for religious liberty and conscience rights.”

The statement summarizes its position by quoting John Paul II writing in *Evangelium vitae* (March 25, 1995):

“Only the elimination of the injustice in the law can resolve this moral affront. In the words of Pope John Paul II,

‘From the very beginnings of the Church, the apostolic preaching reminded Christians of their duty to obey legitimately constituted public authorities (cf. Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–14), but at the same time it firmly warned that “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). . . . It is precisely from obedience to God—to Whom alone is due that fear which is acknowledgment of his absolute sovereignty—that the strength and the courage to resist unjust human laws are born. It is the strength and the courage of those prepared even to be imprisoned or put to the sword, in the certainty that this is what makes for ‘the endurance and faith of the saints.’ ”

(and the NCBC again)...By the grace of God, we are not yet facing these extremes. Yet, if the concrete moral obligation to oppose the injustice is underemphasized...”

If your Bishop is handing out flyers urging you to sign up, I think that qualifies as “underemphasized.”

E. The words *moral imperative* and the words *moral obligation* and the Pope’s words “we must obey God, rather than man,” pulled from Scripture, indicate there is no set of choices when it is a direct request to you to sign up for the gravely immoral insurance, otherwise what would imperative and obligation mean? This is from the Bioethics Center which counsels the Bishops on bioethics every other year at a conference that has been attended twice by Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI).

This seems to me to be a pretty good and straight-forward second opinion. An individual signing themselves up for this insurance, isn’t it direct, willing, and material cooperation? The Church herself is the source that teaches me that contraception, abortion, sterilization is grave matter and acting in concert with such is mortal sin.

CA. So, there we were—stuck between a Bishop and conscience. I felt pretty low as I went to Meditatio and Prayer on the Saturday morning after the Feast of the Sacred Heart after our sobering research online. Somewhere in the middle of prayers (Erik joined me for Lauds), I felt lighter and thought about the nearby diocese and wondered what stance their Bishop might have taken. After prayers, Erik searched the website

and found out they not only had a Sunday Latin Mass, but daily Latin Masses, Tuesday through Friday. This would enable us to meet some holy days of obligation and special feast days. There were no references to the Affordable Care jungle, and we assumed this Bishop was choosing silence. Well, that would be better than staying with a Bishop that promotes it. We made plans to attend Tuesday's Mass for the Feast of the Precious Blood. We were cautiously optimistic.

E. We no longer considered ourselves members of this diocese. We were no longer going to go to the Mass and receive communion from a priest who had been pastor of a parish at the time that they were told to hand out the pro-health insurance flyers. If we attended anything, it would be like visitors from out of the diocese, except that we were specifically no longer putting anything in the collection.

CHAPTER TWO: WHY THE LATIN MASS?

“Lex orandi; lex credendi; lex vivendi (Law of praying; law of believing; law of living).”

Or: As one worships or prays, so one believes and lives.

E. My beginning experience in the Novus Ordo Mass, even before I was baptized, was a reminder of a conclusion I had made about myself—that I don’t memorize very well. As a novice Mass goer, I remained rather uncertain what was coming next. Each Mass had variable parts and no priest or parish was stodgy enough to just keep to one choice over and over again. I don’t believe I had an idea what Mass was, beyond that it is what religious people do. However, in one parish in the Washington, D.C. area (Carol Ann was attending school there.), they all stood during prayers when other parishes knelt. We regularly went there, kneeling during those prayers, which helped me a lot because it brought out the reason why we were kneeling—to worship God, as they do in the Book of Revelation, throwing their crowns off and kneeling during times of vocally praising God.

At a different town in the general D.C. area, the parish and priests seemed pretty solid. I went there for instruction and became Catholic. Also at another town was 24-hour Adoration. They didn’t even seem to dust or vacuum so as not to disturb the Adoration. The reverence toward God was really felt there.

Back in our home state, the Novus Ordo Mass was OK. The priest wasn't intrusive, which was OK by me. I was still a wet-behind-the-ears Catholic. I got a little more familiar with the variable parts of the Mass, but I also remained confused and unsure of what was coming next. Looking back, I would wish that priest, as every priest, would have been more emphatic about the Catholic gifts, the faith gifts and, what they were about. Quoting our exceptional Latin Mass priest we met later, "It's hard to live as a Catholic, but easy to die a Catholic." He brought out that Catholicism was the richest gift in this life, and you would both want therefore, of course, to incorporate these faith gifts into your life, and must, despite hardship, make them part of your life.

One thing the Novus Ordo priest did point out to us of great and lasting value, was *The Marian Movement of Priests*. The book has a consistent voice, always calmly trusting in God, in God's plan, in God prevailing. The holy and simple things are what endure. We, likewise, are to trust God in simplicity.

Then, Carol Ann ran across the Latin Mass community run by the priest mentioned above who extolled the Catholic faith as the pre-eminent thing on this earth and the Mass as the pinnacle of all things Catholic on this earth. Other priests may have thought or believed this, but they hadn't managed to transfer this level of faith of theirs to me previous to this priest, or since this priest.

This priest had a low opinion of the Novus Ordo Mass. Before going further on this line, I want to make the point that a choice in the Novus Ordo variableness includes one choice of Canon of the Mass as in the Old Mass, except that it is in the vernacular. Outside of the Canon, the differences are substantial. Since this is my perspective, I would say that $\frac{3}{4}$'s of what might be held cautionary is alleviated by this choice of Eucharistic Prayer I.

The biggest critique that this priest had of the Novus Ordo was that it changed vertical worship to horizontal. I agree, except it's not as bad during the use of Eucharistic Prayer I. The horizontal rather than vertical means that your attention is more focused on what's around you, available to your five senses, than on the invisible God. Since the official liturgy, and all prayer, is supposed to be God-focused, why bother if it isn't?

Now I do believe the Church's correct right, of course, is to oversee the official liturgy, including changes. It is His official sanctioned Church. The Church is free of error in faith and morals.

The first cause of the Liturgy is not the Church. It is God. Revelation is what we can't know by our own powers. God had to instruct us. We have no idea, we can't think and figure out what worship pleases God.

In hindsight, the Catholic peoples of the world easily and readily left behind, with hardly a murmur of remonstrance, what was supposed to be "the most beautiful thing this side of Heaven." What took its

place was shorter, easier, less taxing. In other words, it's a historical fact that the Catholic world was quick to shuck it. If they were quick to shuck it, underneath, no matter what the surface representation was, they weren't very enamored or appreciative of it. The lack of response among the older Catholics to the return of the Latin Mass confirms their attitude toward attending Mass in the 1960's and probably earlier.

My hypothesis (which I have purposely kept to myself for roughly 15 years) is that man was no longer sufficiently deserving of the Old Mass. Yet, God responded in a way which retained man's relationship with Himself. The New Mass is Mass, yet it is not an independent entity. It is a re-write. As an independent entity, the absence of "holy and venerable hands" would be a non-issue. But as it is a re-write, specifically and boldly taking that out, is a slight to Christ. The New Mass leaves out God's due, leaves out our unworthiness, without replacing these elements in some other manner in the re-writes.

Mass is an elevated avenue of approach to God. Placing one's own feet on that avenue is highly beneficial to one's own self. In my hypothesis, I am saying that man fell off the avenue. God had a new lower one built. It might not be as worshipful of Himself, yet man has fallen before, and God lowered the relationship bar.

When Adam and Eve fell, God provided a less-good option for them, but an option never-the-less. They could go on with a much lower level of living,

now sinful before His eyes, but hope was actually increased for them as the chance arose to gain supernatural life, albeit via struggles they had never before experienced. In our individual lives, we have a more pleasing life course which we don't take, except the Blessed Virgin Mary. God castigates, accommodates Himself by His mercy to the lowered life course we run. The continuing important fact is this relationship between man and God is retained. God does not abandon us.

Since Jesus resurrected and ascended, is that the end to all offense against God? Well, no. Billions and billions of offenses ascend before him every second in our modern world. But, what about the Liturgy? Is that an offense-free zone? Where did God promise that? The New Mass holds the line with Catholic faith and correct moral teaching. But then comes the issue of Man as creature and as limited. Whatever level of worship he offers to God of himself from this earth falls short of God's due. The history of man's relationship to God not only falls short, it is also far less than the worship man is capable of giving to God. God's will is not done on earth, yet, as in Heaven.

This withdrawal of reverence constitutes, once again, Christ's willingness to suffer some more for us in order to preserve the relationship. We have no idea of the enormity of the good will that God extends to us.

CA. My experience of conversion and transition was very different from Erik's. In my case, the Novus

Ordo Mass format was a big help. To me, it looked like the First Baptist Church service on Sunday morning with the Consecration tacked on at the end. I wondered what all the fuss among Protestants had been and their vicious attacks on the Catholic Mass. Of course, they did not accept the miracle of transubstantiation, so for this reason, I supposed, they condemned the whole Mass. After all, they had left off that part of the Catholic worship of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament in their services.

The elderly priest who instructed me had told me the Mass was the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary extending through every age. As Jesus had instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper in an unbloody manner, so we continued in that same manner. The priest carefully explained that the sacrifice of the Mass is still offered by Jesus, just as it was offered on Thursday evening and Friday afternoon. The priest on the altar acts “in persona Christi” as he speaks the same words of consecration Jesus spoke at the Last Supper and willingly offered on Calvary—“This is my Body; This is my Blood. Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s Death until He comes. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

Having grown up in the Baptist Church steeped in the Passion of Jesus and its power of remission of sins, I was in awe of the Mass and the teachings of the Catholic Church about the Mass. Imagine that at every Mass Calvary is literally, not figuratively, present before us. In John 6:53, we read (Douay-Rheims edition): “Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you:

Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.”

I cannot say that I understood then or even now, almost 25 years later, how this miracle occurs, but by faith I know it does. This faith has been life-transforming for me. It is worth dying for.

In my Baptist upbringing, we were taught that there were no sacraments, no grace-imparting, life-empowering acts, through which we gain Heaven. In my Protestant Christian world, there were only faith and the Scriptures, and nothing could be added to these, on pain of eternal damnation. As my paternal grandfather, a deacon, would often say, “Catholics (and others not Baptist) are saved in spite of all they do, not because of it.”

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were called Ordinances. They were outward signs of your inner transformation by faith. You did them because you believed, not to gain grace or any merit. You did not have to do these to be saved, but you were not enrolled as a Southern Baptist unless you were baptized. In like manner, attending church services and assisting in missionary activities were outward signs that you were a true believer in Jesus Christ and His work on earth. The rationale went something like this—you must be a believer or why would you do these things. The concept of authority in a human institution or being subservient to man’s spiritual decrees, i.e. Catholic canon laws and such, were abhorrent.

Summarizing the Baptist faith: one is saved by faith, not by works. These and only these three things are required: accepting the grace of seeing oneself as a sinner, repenting of sins, and making a public profession of that faith in Jesus Christ as one's Savior. In practice, however, to be a Baptist in good standing, one had to have a letter certifying baptism to transfer from one independent associating Baptist church to another. So, human authority does determine what is considered "in good standing" and what is one "in good standing with" if not a human institution?

Baptists also subscribe to the doctrine of the "priesthood of every believer." It was taught to me as the reason for no sacraments and certainly no priesthood. Instead, according to this doctrine, each of us, endowed with the Holy Spirit at Baptism is fully capable of reading and understanding Scripture and perfecting oneself into the image of Christ. No one else is needed.

It was a scary and lonely existence. And, I had fallen down so many times that I thought I was an almost hopeless sinner, weak and not much worth saving. Certainly, not worthy of the enormous price God paid on Calvary for me and my sinful ways. I felt on a treadmill that could not go anywhere but up and down and the down's became more and more frequent and deeper than any up's. To me, personally, something was missing in my church experience. My daily struggle was a search for peace and for direction in my life for which I found no answers through my faith.

My experience when I volunteered with the Missionaries of Charity in 1987, before I converted, helped me enormously. Their piety and openness, and their generosity in sharing with me, was new. They even allowed me to come into the convent and join them for daily Mass. I did not understand what was happening at the Mass, but I felt a new sensation of love and joy and longing unlike anything I had ever known before. When I asked the Superior about this, she smiled and said, “That’s Jesus! He always comes in the Mass.” I did not understand it, but I began to believe it.

When I told the Mother Superior that I had trouble remembering the Rosary and could not pray it well, she told me, “God is pleased that you are turning your thoughts to Him. Don’t worry about it.” I had never ever before thought God could be pleased with me in any way.

When I asked about how to convert, the Superior told me to talk to a priest. It seemed I had been waiting for this all my life. But, to talk to a priest was frightening. I had been told so many awful stories about priests. Also, my divorces were a barrier. I thought I would be condemned since Catholics do not believe in divorce. But, God opened the doors and gave me the courage to walk through them. I am still walking through whatever doors He places before me.

So, how did I get from the Novus Ordo into the Tridentine or Latin Mass. I spent six years faithfully attending Mass and learning more about my Catholic

heritage and Catholic faith. I even walked through R.C.I.A. classes with Erik in the D.C. area and became his godmother on Pentecost of 1994. I told my two sons—both still Southern Baptist—that they should receive Erik as a brother since we had to be his Christian family. They agreed.

Like Erik, I was very grateful for the Marian Movement of Priests and its emphasis on prayer and devotion to Our Lady. I began to read more. It was during this time that *my* godmother told me about the Latin Mass. I knew the Mass used to be in Latin. She encouraged me to attend a Latin Mass if I got an opportunity because it would help me understand the Mass better and help me to pray better during Mass. I was hungry to learn more. I was so joyful and grateful for all I had been given—the Mass, the Sacraments, Our Lady, the saints and their help. No longer did I feel all alone and just struggling to hold on to the faith I had. There was so much help. The idea of going even deeper in understanding was very appealing.

I was at the Diocese Center during Lent and saw a flyer about a Latin Mass Retreat. I told my godmother and she encouraged me to go. It was a Saturday morning. Something had happened and the priest did not even have an altar server. It was what was called a “Low Mass.” It was in Latin, except the priest read the Scriptures in English from the pulpit before he gave a short Lenten homily. I was overwhelmed. The reverence, the spiritual uplift, the kneeling and receiving communion on the tongue, without exception by everyone, were all new to me. The quiet after

Communion and the peace among the gathered worshippers was something I had not yet experienced in my Catholic journey.

I went back to my godmother and said, “Where have they been keeping this Mass? It is wonderful! Why don’t we have it every Sunday and every Holy Day? What has happened?”

She smiled and tried to explain that the Tridentine Mass had been *the Mass* until after Vatican II, when the Novus Ordo had been promulgated to assist modern worshippers and converts like me-- to make the Mass more accessible. But, *I* had thought the Mass I was attending was the same Mass as always from the early centuries. Weren’t there documents proving that? For six years, I had thought the only change since Vatican II was translating the Mass into the vernacular.

Well, she was right in one way. During my conversion, I had been attracted by the similarity of the Novus Ordo Mass to what I already knew in my Protestant upbringing. But, this hardly compensated for the sense of awe and wonder I experienced when I attended my first Tridentine Mass. I was astonished that the Mass I had been attending was not THE Mass of the ages. In some ways, I felt I had been betrayed.

I could not get enough of the Latin Mass and still continue to have the same response as in that first Low Mass in the Diocese Center Chapel on a Saturday morning during Lent. I have also been amazed and at times appalled by the hostility and deprecations of so-

called “cradle” Catholics toward the Tridentine Mass. As one older Catholic lady said to me,

“When I go to a Latin Mass, I don’t even feel I have been to Mass.”

I have attended both Masses since 1995, and have observed the most incredible sacrileges in the Novus Ordo-- some not possible under the old Latin Mass rubrics. And, Novus Ordo music....I am assailed with old Protestant camp revival songs that would never have been used for Sunday morning worship service at the Baptist church I grew up in. But, my poor, ignorant fellow Catholics do not know this-- so enamored are they with anything Protestant that does not remind them of the Church they left behind in the 1970’s. Or so it seems to me.

The altar has been replaced with a table and the Sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary has become a meal. What is so different from my Protestant upbringing, I wonder. And yet, Jesus is there. He does come when the rightfully ordained Catholic priest, descendant of the Apostles from the first century, leans over a piece of unleavened bread, says the words of Consecration, and lifts up a consecrated host. When the priest, acting “in persona Christi,” lifts up the Host and then the Chalice, Jesus is there under both species, whole and complete—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. This I believe. For this, I am willing to die. For this, I am willing to live a life that I could never have even imagined before my conversion. God is good—all the time!

E. I firmly believe Pope Paul VI was supposed to authorize the re-write of the Mass. The people that think that he was not following God in this action don't understand that from within the Church God can be less than 100% perfectly worshipped and followed. Those thinking that their personal participation at the wonderful, beautiful Mass they attend is 100% giving God His due are mistaken. Jesus said, "Only God is good."

If you are Catholic, Peter is the head of the Church, its institutional beginning. That institutional beginning denied Christ three times. That institutional beginning was told, "When you have turned (obviously back to God), strengthen the brethren." That institutional beginning of the Church needed a lot of help from Paul to lead it in a new direction accepting censored foods. Paul himself talks about lousy church liturgical gatherings which sound more like parties with unworthy communions. This right from the get-go.

In my hypothesis, I think people were offensively ungrateful for the gift of the Mass in the time leading up to Vatican II. We have certainly observed people being ungrateful for the gift of the Mass during a lot of the time period after Vatican II. What says that God cannot partly remove from man what man is ungrateful for. I think Pope Paul VI did exactly what he was supposed to do, as charged by God. The old Mass for quite awhile now has been made completely available. Millions of requests have *not*

come from a billion Catholics, proving by historical fact the lack of wanting it. There was not, and is not any great attachment to the Church's Mass of the Ages.

Daniel 12:11, "When the continual sacrifice is taken away and the abomination unto desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days."

The re-write was supposed to happen. This cross, also, God was going to allow. Not because the authors were right, the people were right, but because God, once again, is taking this wrong, like the injustice to Him on the cross, and is making good come out of it. So, it's mysterious, and we can't very well see the good of it by our senses. So what. Faith attests, so very often, "Deride what you think you know."

As you can see, we both supported the Novus Ordo Mass. We both support its legitimacy. We both have attended, Carol Ann much more than I. I've walked out more; I've not gone up to Communion more. I've been there but not participated interiorly more (so much for fulfilling Sunday obligation) as I saw so much unnecessary re-crucifying going on. I sin and I offend God regularly, unable to help myself. I have chosen to not deliberately offend God when I *can* help it. I have withheld my interior participation, but not my acknowledgment of the Novus Ordo Mass in God's Plan. Sure, God suffers. Of course we know this. We cause it.

Everything I've said above is a hypothesis that takes a look at it from what might be God's

perspective. Now, here is one example of what man thought was going on.

Historically, the desire to re-write the Offertory is very nearly the eclipsing (humanly motivated) reason for contemplating instituting major changes to the *text* of the Mass. Female altar servers, priest orientation, good language translations, quiet or reverberating recitations of the text passages, even reducing a repetition to quote “once-said,” are inappropriate, but not a substantial change to the Mass. Following the text, allowing oneself to be moved along by what it says and by what it means, THIS—THIS is assisting at Mass, THIS is the offering of THE ONE Sacrifice, THIS is a person being present at Calvary.

The Offertory was changed because erroneous human thinking reasoned that the Offertory passages offered the elements in likeness to the manner as they are offered after the Consecration. And, clearly, they should be referred to substantially differently before and after Consecration, so asserts human reasoning.

In fact, really, truly, an unconsecrated host and chalice located at Calvary is completely different than when their presence is in some unremarkable location. Mass has begun. Even the Liturgy of the Eucharist has begun. Are we not, by now, present at Calvary?

Standing at Calvary, the efficacy, the redemptive power of the Holy Cross extends to all times. Standing there, presenting unconsecrated host and chalice, this power passes by us, reaching into the past, making

efficacious, for atonement and remission of sins: slaughtered animals, burning wax and oil.

Under these circumstances, the host and chalice need not be treated as nothing yet, as unworthy yet. Rather, because they are within the realm of the Paschal Mystery, because they are presented at Mass, therefore at Calvary, human time orientation is merely that—human time orientation.

This notion forgets the fact that we are present in the Mystery and in the Power of God at Mass. Time and space do not exist for God. Carol Ann has heard somewhere that there is no time or distance in the Spirit.

As often happens, the initial premise ought not be accepted so presumptively or lightly.

We were going to end the chapter here, but it leaves a vacuum that could be filled by superstition. Superstition is thinking that if you do *this* it causes God to do *that*. Even if unintentionally, essentially this makes God out to be a puppet at the end of the strings that you are manipulating.

It has to be kept in mind that you bring yourself, and all the baggage that pertains to you, into the act of prayer. What you bring does make an immense difference to your praying, therefore your believing, therefore your living.

For example, if you are very proud, then your perspective as you pray, and of whatever prayer you are

praying, is that you don't need much of anything, is possibly even that God is lucky to have you, and that you are thankful to God, but your thankfulness is that He made you so great, and your life so wonderful. This puts an entirely different spin on the same prayer that is being prayed by the person next to you who does not think they are doing very well, thinks they need a lot of outside help, and wishes to turn their life around. The same liturgical prayer is actually two very different prayers ascending to God.

The result is that these two very different prayers have two very different impacts upon the two parties praying them. God does, and can do much more for the one than the other. We have free will. Therefore, in His Plan, God deals with us in a manner, according to where we are, not where He wishes us to be. The Seven Sacraments are unique in that we know the specific grace and benefit being imparted by God. Yet, even here it is not so simple as that. An adult is baptized, and all of a sudden is now accountable for the baptismal promises. A couple is married and all of a sudden is accountable to their union. A priest is ordained and all of a sudden is accountable to his priestly functions. God is never a puppet on a string in relation to us. Rather, remember the first wise act is to "fear God."

The praying, the believing, the living, for it to mean or amount to much of anything requires first that these acts need to be known and understood as acts within a relationship. Then, the participants in the relationship need to be known correctly. God is

Everything. God is the only entity that Self-exists. We are creatures of God. In and of ourselves, we are NOT. It is as if we don't exist, because we don't. We only exist because of God causing us to exist.

Quoting from St. Faustina's *Diary*:

“If I were to reveal to you the whole misery that you are, you would die of terror. However, be aware of what you are. Because you are such great misery, I have revealed to you the whole ocean of my mercy... (p. 291, #718)

Oh, how the greatness of God overwhelms me! I then come to know the whole depth of my nothingness... the two loves come face-to-face: the Creator and the creature; one little drop seeks to measure itself with the ocean.” (p. 287, #702)

So, what should be the relationship between us and God? Obviously, we are suppliants to God. We need Him for every moment of our existence to continue. He is always gracious towards us; we are always lousy toward Him (see even more from St. Faustina's *Diary*). I am dependent and mired in the dung. Lift me out, God. This is why you and I are at Mass: atonement for our countless sins, offenses, and negligences. We should always be apologetic towards Him, and thankful, and praising Him for His constancy and fidelity (undeserved) towards us.

The last prayer in the Latin Mass before moving into the action of receiving communion, highlights that our actions absolutely need God's grace supplementing

them: the prayer asks God to turn our action from a condemnation and judgment, into a healing remedy, a safety for our mind and body.

The prayer before that: God, keep me clinging to your commandments; deliver me from my iniquities. The prayer before that one: God, don't inspect my sins. This is the relationship.

CHAPTER THREE: OUR LIVING THE LITURGY

Pope Benedict XVI Wednesday Audience-October 4th, 2012: “ In this we must be aware of and accept the logic of the Incarnation of God: He has drawn near, present, entering into history and human nature, becoming one of us. And this presence continues in the Church, his Body. The liturgy then is not the memory of past events, but it is the living presence of Christ's Paschal Mystery that transcends and unites all times and spaces. If the centrality of Christ does not emerge in the celebration, then it is not a Christian liturgy...

It is not the individual - priest or layman - or the group that celebrates the liturgy, but it is primarily God's action through the Church, which has its own history, its rich tradition and creativity. This universality and fundamental openness, which is characteristic of the entire liturgy is one of the reasons why it cannot be created or amended by the individual community or by experts, but must be faithful to the forms of the universal Church...

So when in the reflections on the liturgy we concentrate all our attention on how to make it attractive, interesting and beautiful, we risk forgetting the essential: the liturgy is celebrated for God and not for ourselves, it is His work, He is the subject, and we must open ourselves to Him and be guided by Him and His Body which is the Church.

Let us ask the Lord to learn every day to live the sacred liturgy, especially the Eucharistic celebration, praying in the ‘we’ of the Church, that directs its gaze not in on itself, but to God, and feeling part of the living Church of all places and of all time.”

E. As I have already said before, as a wet-behind-the-ears Catholic, I showed up on Sunday and was more struck than anything by the variations which threw me off. At least confession was a more straightforwardly understood action. Confessing sins, getting absolution along with the penance, doing the penance, then definitively being forgiven, is a very direct path and self-explanatory. The goal of confession, what it’s about, and the act of confessing are practically one and the same—it’s that self-explanatory.

However, Mass is more intricate. It is not clear that every act is directly praising God, thanking God, petitioning God. It is not clear that every movement of the Mass puts us at Calvary. It’s definitely not clear to lots and lots of people that going up and consuming the Host or the Chalice is Communion with a sacrifice. It most (to the senses) resembles a very, very tiny meal, but a regular meal we digest. In this, Christ works on us, the opposite of us digesting a regular meal. So I don’t feel bad or uncomfortable about being clueless, even had I studied up, so much of the Reality of the Mass is invisible to the five senses that I don’t think I

would have made much connection between what I participated in and what that studying would have told was going on.

As a practiced atheist, my automatic and only way of thinking was according to visible facts, not according to faith, which at times opposes the course of action indicated by those visible facts. Not being practiced at thinking along faith lines, and with Mass not explicitly and clearly telling me what was proceeding, I just didn't have enough on board to get it. Throw in the variables throwing me for a loop, I made no headway in comprehension, not even incrementally.

CA. Early on I saw the Mass, as I have already said, as similar to the Sunday morning "high" Baptist church service of my youth with the Consecration tacked on after the homily. The Reality of Christ's Sacrifice and the sacrifice occurring on the altar were beyond me. I believed it was and is the sacrifice of Calvary because I had been told that was what it is, but my attitude for worship was still steeped more in my Baptist habits than in Catholic theology. It was my godmother who began to talk to me simply and directly about the Mass and how to "pray the Mass." She told me that I still was Protestant in my thinking and needed to pray for conversion in my mind to Catholic thought and understanding. It was and still is awesome to me to know that I am receiving into my body and soul during Communion, the very Body, Blood, Soul

and Divinity of My Savior Jesus Christ. This intimacy with Christ was the focus of my Mass participation and all that I could absorb in the early days of my conversion. At least that part was Catholic.

E. I understood it to be Jesus, even at Adoration, even before being Catholic, but I didn't know what Jesus was about doing in this manner of being with us, except generally as help-- and as an opportunity to honor Him, which is actually a little more straightforwardly understood at Adoration than at Mass.

CA. Everything began to change for me once I started attending the Tridentine Mass under a fervent priest who stated unequivocally from the pulpit, "My only job is to get you to Heaven." His fervor and zeal led me first into an awareness of my own sinfulness. Even as a novice Catholic, I still did not realize my failings, even in following the 10 Commandments. My need for general confession of my sins led me into a path of penance and healing. As I began this journey, I found a thirst for a deeper walk that is still growing in me to this day. As a Baptist Christian, I had sung the words of an old hymn, "Nothing between my soul and the Savior" without a clue as to what was between or how to get rid of whatever was blocking me off from Christ. I did not know it was sin. Now, as the priest led me through several weeks of general confessions, I saw not only my sin, but began to understand how sin

blocks one off from God. I cannot say I was understanding the Mass yet, but I was able to be more clear in my thoughts and prayers during Mass.

E. In the Latin Mass the prayers stay the same. This meant also that they were consecutively there on the page with the exception of skipping over the incense prayers at a Low Mass. The thing about the Novus Ordo choices is the zero lack of warning. It's like a car facing you that is going to turn, but does not put a signal on and might turn right or left and you're left guessing, except there are more choices than the two left or right turn choices. Then there are pages that have to be flipped to. Apparently, my ability is less than others in these circumstances. I easily picked up the Latin Mass with its no surprises and consecutiveness. I memorized the Latin, and with familiarity, found its emphases more understandable than the English translation. The Latin quite often through the Mass seemed more directly stating the relationship between God and us and more direct about what we were presently doing within that relationship. The priest spoke Spanish, English, Italian and Latin easily and fluidly so that with an easy and correct Latin accent, it was easy to distinguish Latin words upon hearing them. It was really a great boost that this was the avenue of our introduction to the Latin Mass.

CA. We became immersed in the small Latin Mass Community that was 100 miles away from the

rural town where we lived. I joined the choir and began to learn Gregorian chant. We began to attend Mass several times a week, despite the distance, not just on Sundays or Holy Days. It was a help that many of our fellow Catholics were struggling like we were, having been away from the Tridentine Mass and the Latin and music for over two decades. It became a spiritual adventure, not just a journey or a path. The choir often fell down and were not able to accomplish the music of the Liturgy smoothly and gracefully. I had learned Latin in high school and was still fairly able to follow it. I had also had a background in music and experience in choir, and I read music, so this helped me to learn the music. But, despite the difficulties of learning new music and the transition to High Mass, there was an enormous joy in this Liturgy, a sense of community, a sense of participation in the mystery of what the priest was accomplishing on the altar. The sense of living the faith of the ages seemed to come alive.

E. Understanding the 2000-year-old faith had a whole lot to do with the priest placing paramount importance on the Mass all the time. He expressed that it was because of the Mass and it was because of the Catholic Church, because Christ chose via the Church to continue interceding for the world before the Father that the world could continue. He naturally held this faith. It was not an intellectual exercise for him. Leading by example and witness is a lot better than being instructed in “do as I say, not as I do.” We spent

a little time with him outside Mass assisting in other ways; he was real and he was open.

CA. The Latin Mass chaplain was also a teacher. Having studied in Rome and having been ordained there, having said his first Mass in front of Pope John Paul II, he was able to impart to us an immediacy and a connection with what was the Universal Church. This is the Church that is truly a “Mother.”

The chaplain began adult education classes. These were weekly and were well-attended. We first studied the documents of Vatican II. We learned from the Conciliar Bishops that Latin and Gregorian Chant were to be preserved. So, we were doing our part to follow the Council, not iconoclasts or nostalgic miscreants as some in the Catholic press had indicated. We explored the actual teachings of the Council and focused on how they could be applied in our lives, especially as the living Church in the modern age. Through the newly published *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we studied the Sacraments and their Biblical basis which was a great help for me. We discussed the thesis that “there is no salvation outside the Church.” I remember the awe I felt when I realized that through the ages monks and nuns had prayed the Divine Office and assisted at Mass for the salvation of the world. These obtained graces that extended Christ’s ministry to everyone of good will. The reality of the Church and what Christ had instituted on the rock of Peter began

to take shape before my eyes and in my heart. It was truly huge; it is humbling to be part of it.

E. For a brief span of a couple of months, I was in another country without ready access to the Latin Mass. I was in the period of not going at all to Novus Ordo Masses and hadn't needed to at all. I tried going, thinking that it might well be different in a different country, despite not knowing the language. It was eerily the same as English and I walked out during the offertory where now I might hold on and see if Eucharistic Prayer I gets used or just interiorly refrain from participating when it isn't.

Then, one other time I took a long trek by train and by walking to an isolated monastery that friends told me had a beautiful Latin Mass. I got there easily in time. Someone there who spoke English answered my simplistic question about "Old Mass," the 1962 Mass. They knew the issue exactly, responding in English, "This is the Mass of Pope Paul VI in Latin." So, I left and had not intended to make a round-trip exactly of it, but pushed hard and went back to where I was staying. I sat down. I think I even made it back in time for dinner, explaining as best I could to my friends. Afterwards, standing up, my legs almost gave out, so it was a bit of a trip.

Back in this country, I once again didn't have, at all, the issue of attending Novus Ordo Mass because Latin Mass was handily available. I even spent a couple of years studying in a seminary with daily Latin Mass

down the hall. At the same time, Pope John Paul II seemed comfortable with the New Mass and able to embrace and guide the people in it as he celebrated Mass with a strong sense of community emanating from it. This inclusiveness did help me to become Catholic also, not that I studied enough to have any real reservations. I've just coasted along, picking up stuff as I went. Also, Pope John Paul II wrote an analysis of the New Mass, verifying that it had all the necessary elements to be a Mass. He didn't say this; it's my take away from his words that he was saying this is the bare-bones skeleton of a Mass. He didn't guarantee that it was a wonderful Mass, just that it had the necessary elements to make it Mass. It has always seemed to me that Bishops needed to be OK with both the old and the new Masses, that is to say, it's not really a time for a priest who really puts his foot down against saying the New Mass to be made a Bishop. This is something that's just got to be done, I think, and something that the Church has to go through at this time.

CA. A few months before I "discovered" the Latin Mass, I had been discerning a vocation with the Carmelite sisters at their monastery in the diocese where I lived. Since I had been divorced, the Bishop required that I go through the process of having my marriages examined by the Marriage Tribunal for the annulment process. I had not been Catholic, nor had I ever married a Catholic, so I found the requirement confusing at the time. I was given a Benedictine nun as

my Advocate, and she was an enormous help through the process. She told me that she believed the Holy Spirit wanted me to walk through these relationships and understand why they did not last. And she was right. After 30 or more pages of questions documenting the relationships from beginning through end for each “marriage,” with testimony from other family members who knew us both and who also filled out the same documents, submitting them directly to the Tribunal, my lack and my partners lack of discernment as to what spiritually constituted a marriage became obvious. I am grateful to that sister and to the Marriage Tribunal and even to that Bishop who required this process. It was an enormous healing time for me. The marriages were annulled, i.e. they never existed, despite what I had thought.

Since I was not permitted to enter the enclosure of Carmelite nuns during the marriage reviews, it was suggested by the Mother Superior that I attend the Third Order meetings each month held at the nun’s monastery. I began corresponding with some of the sisters, especially one who was in the Novitiate and later became a professed nun in the community. She recommended the Carmelite priest to be my spiritual director who was her spiritual director. After meeting him while on a retreat at a Carmelite center, I did just that and he agreed to be my spiritual director.

After coming to the Latin Mass, I also felt that the Novus Ordo Mass was somehow lacking something, mainly the reverence and contemplative focus of the Tridentine Mass. However, as a teacher in

Catholic schools and later a principal of a Catholic school, I was still required to attend the Novus Ordo Mass regularly. I adapted to wearing a chapel veil or chaplet veil from the Latin Mass and felt this a way of humility and submission before God. After all, the nuns in the Carmel monastery all covered their heads. I had long pondered those passages from St. Paul's writings in which he admonishes women to cover their heads when they pray and be discreet in their demeanor in public worship. The children at school were always full of questions about why I covered my head for Mass, and, in the Third Order, they were curious. I would briefly explain that it was a personal choice. I attended the Third Order meetings for almost 3 years. I remember one of the older members actually came back from a visit to the Vatican at which she was required to wear a chapel veil for Mass and said she had decided to wear the veil for Novus Ordo Mass at Carmel. She reasoned, "If I have to wear a chapel veil at the Vatican, then why shouldn't I wear one here?"

Several new members were added during the three years, but it was never suggested that I become a member. Finally, I was actually called and told that I was to meet with the Carmelite priest who was the chaplain and with the Third Order Novice Director after the next meeting.

And so I did. The whole week approaching the Saturday meeting, I was so excited because I just knew I was going to be admitted to the Third Order. At the private meeting after the group session, I was told that I was "not appropriate" for the Third Order of Carmel

and that I should not come back. When I asked why they had come to that conclusion, it seemed to come down to the fact that I attended the Latin Mass, wore a chapel veil, and did not go up for Communion with everyone else. If I were allowed to stay, I would have to stop wearing a chapel veil, go to Communion every time the rest of the group did, and, although she did not say this, I discerned from what she did say that she thought I should not attend the Latin Mass or talk about it with other Third Order Carmelites. She told me I was “sowing division” in the Third Order and did not belong there. I looked at the priest and asked for his clarification. He said he agreed with the Novice Director, but also stated that she could not tell me when to go to Communion, that that decision was between God and me. I thanked them and told them I loved them both and that God must mean for me to look for my vocation elsewhere. I left crying and somewhat devastated. What did this mean? Were there 2 Roman Rite Catholic Churches now?

Most of the school Masses were reverent. The older children gave the readings and led in the prayers before the Canon, and of course, there was singing which they enjoyed. I don't have any particular memories of unusual things happening, except that it was very informal by the priests I served under, and they talked down to the children in their homilies. There was one thing that stood out, and that was a Mass on Assumption at one school. It was before school opened and Erik had come down to help with the usual chores associated with cleaning up and getting the school grounds and building ready. At that time, he

was volunteering to help a few times through the school year.

On this Assumption Day, since it fell on a Saturday, in our diocese, it was not a holy day of obligation. So, the Mass was held in the Chapel of the convent and there were the usual Saturday morning attendees, and a few others. The priest read his homily from what appeared to be several yellowed sheets that could have been an old paper from his seminary days. His thoughts about why the dogma of the Assumption had been declared by Pope Pius XII were disturbing.

E. He had one thought. The sole reason for declaring the dogma was political and timed for that political reason. What the reason was I can't remember, except that it was purely worldly. It starkly had zero faith basis or God-given direction. That's the only way I looked at the world for years and years and years. This priest was old, was past retirement age and wasn't too concerned with appearances anyway.

The only other time in this period that I went to a Novus Ordo Mass was a Bishop's Ordination. We both definitely thought it would be a good idea to go and assist with the new Bishop being ordained who we had high hopes for, especially considering that we thought he had an awfully small pair of shoes to fill. Seating was very limited. Only a small fraction from each parish would be able definitely to attend. So we took on the obligation of attending all the choir rehearsals for the ordination and earned our way in. I

tried. I guess I did OK. At least it was all only low notes. But don't expect me to be able to sight-read music.

Now, we didn't sit together because we were in different sections of the choir, obviously. I don't really remember, but I don't think I was locked in to not receiving communion. This was a whole special Mass for the specific purpose of ordaining a Bishop. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know how the Mass went, but I figured it would be pretty serious, focused, and high-minded. That's a different tenor from my experience of your average Novus Ordo Mass.

I was sitting fairly high up. There were a few Bishops down there. I remember the Master of Ceremonies not unobtrusively, but plainly holding paper or papers to know what to do next. It was complex enough. But then, despite all those Bishops and priests on the altar, the atmosphere changed at Communion. From numerous scattered positions at a quick pace, people with purpose dispersed through the crowd. Then I realized they were passing out Communion, but the style, however they did it, I don't exactly remember, reminded me of stadium concessionaires who move quickly, calling their wares and when they stop, hand their product to be passed along from hand-to-hand, as the money comes to them in the same way in the opposite direction.

It struck me that all these Communion passers-outers started racing off at exactly the same moment and that the second before they had been unnoticed by

me and that they pushed with determination to go about this in this way. Again, I can't exactly remember, but I think I might have been intending to receive Communion. That plan went out the window. We haven't wanted to go to another Bishop's consecration.

CA. The ordination of the Bishop was held in a civic center auditorium because the Cathedral was too small to hold all who needed to be invited. For this reason, the choir was placed in a mezzanine section. It was a large choir, maybe 100 voices, all volunteers like Erik and me. We had rehearsed for several months at least once a week. Everything seemed to go well, even if the place was not a church or the Cathedral. They had set up an altar on the auditorium stage. The atmosphere seemed too casual for a Mass, but the ordination took place so everyone could see. Then, at the end of the concelebrated Novus Ordo Mass, came the distribution of Communion.

What does one do when one is hemmed in all around and finds oneself engulfed in what seems to one's heart and mind to be a sacrilege? I could not have been more shocked or overwhelmed with emotion than I was during the Communion part of the Bishop's ordination. I watched in horror as bowls of the Blessed Sacrament and goblets of the Precious Blood were passed down the rows of the choir with everyone sticking hands in to grab a host or slurping a swallow from the goblet and then passing it on. I literally could not breathe. I stood up and made my way to the aisle

and climbed up a few steps above the last row and sat down on a step in what was almost a stupor. I was mentally and emotionally unprepared for this scene. Spiritually, I felt devastated.

Even in the Baptist Church in which I grew up, no one would have treated a piece of cracker and a cup of grape juice with such irreverence and disrespect, which we did not declare nor believe, had any sacrificial or mystical Presence of Our Lord in them. We were admonished through the Scripture which was read out loud from St. Paul and the Gospels (I Corinthians 11:23-32; Matthew 26:28-30; Mark 14:23-26) and by our Baptist pastor to examine our hearts and minds and to be very careful not to profane our communion by careless or disrespectful reception. After all, what we were doing was “in remembrance of Me,” remembering what our Lord and Savior did on Calvary for us. “This is My Body. This is my Blood of the New Testament.”

It was for us, as Baptists, the sealing of our covenant with God through Christ. It was a solemn ceremony, and although we did not usually kneel and “the elements,” as they were called, were passed one at a time down the rows slowly and carefully, we received with bowed heads in silence and in awe of what we were doing. When everyone had partaken, we stood in silence and the Scripture read out loud, “And they sang a hymn and went out.” We sang and left in silence. Most often where I went to church, this was observed once a month on a Sunday evening. It was called the

Lord's Supper and was observed as a memorial to our Lord's sacrifice of Himself for us.

I felt I was immersed in blasphemy here at the Bishop's consecration Mass. I took refuge in praying the "Hail Mary" over and over in my mind. Finally, I realized the choir was standing to sing the last hymn for the Recessional. I couldn't sing. I could still only barely breathe. I could not in any way comprehend what I had just experienced. That was the worst of the worst. I had experienced a broken heart when my husband died literally in my arms of a heart attack. In many ways, this was worse. How could I live with seeing my God desecrated in such fashion at the ordination of a Bishop? Truly, God is gracious. God is merciful. His mercy is everlasting. Only His mercy can explain why those of us there survived this event. We certainly did not deserve to. But, God sees our weaknesses and knows what is in man. He was allowing Himself to be immolated once more for our sins of ingratitude and disrespect.

This became a turning point for me. Never again did I want to be in a position to experience this kind of desecration. I certainly have never had any desire to attend a Bishop's ordination again. But, I have wondered and still wonder, was the visible disrespect for the Sacrament only an outward sign of the inner condition of apostasy in those who perpetrated this communion? I can't know, but I can pray. As St. Teresa of Avila taught her sisters about their contemplation, "Go looking for a Friend. Jesus has so few friends to console Him."

CHAPTER FOUR: LIVING THE GOSPEL

“Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore as wise as serpents and simple as doves.”
St. Matthew’s Gospel 10:16 (Douay-Rheims)

CA. Discernment. What is it? How does one acquire it? How is it helpful in spiritual growth and walking the path of faithfulness to one’s baptismal promises?

E. If there is only one thing, there is no discernment. However, there are many things in this existence and discernment is deciding the relationship to carry on with each thing that impinges on us. Thus, discernment involves two acts: one act involves unraveling what exactly is this thing that is in or has entered into our lives; the other act is the decision of what kind of relationship to make with this thing. Incomplete discernment stems either from not figuring out what the best relationship to have is, or not working hard enough at getting to the essence of what the thing is that has entered into our lives or is in our lives.

Complete discernment of the best relationship requires the assistance of revelation. It is not our opinion but God’s opinion that counts as to what is best for us. Incomplete discernment is not good enough. For instance, we could think an opportunity

has knocked at our door, but from God's perspective, it's a distraction or a temptation, a test, a blind alley, a misadventure, a falling off the path. This list could be longer. Discernment, at times, can be hard work, taking time and energy.

Given this, should we, can we skip discernment? You want to eat apples when you think you are eating oranges? You want to go to hell when you think you are going to heaven? You still want to skip discernment? As an adult we are required to hold up for inspection what we know, or what we are aware of. There is a certain amount of discernment for which we are accountable.

“His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” St. Matthew's Gospel 25:23 (Douay-Rheims)

CA. PHASE I - A real beginning, because you actually make a change in your life.

Coming from a Christian, but non-Catholic background, I thought I knew a lot about how to follow God's will: read the Bible, pray, make your choices as you believe you are led in prayer. As I once told my mother, “I am not always sure when I am right, but I surely do know when I am wrong.” This meant that sometimes the decisions were disastrous and I had to admit, I had not been as discerning as I thought I

was. I trusted God, but did not really have the tools on board to understand His guidance or use the resources He placed within my means. I lacked both training in discernment and the spiritual growth to reflect on my mistakes and learn from them. By God's amazing grace, I was kept from reaping a lot of bad consequences from my bad choices, but my growth resembled more baby steps rather than true learning from experience. Hindsight is not discernment.

As I reflected on what had changed for me as I became Catholic, Erik insisted I was getting the cart before the horse. He kept asking me how and why did I become Catholic, my conversion. It was a definite "moment." I was leaving a doctor's appointment and was having some medical issues for which a couple of months later I was hospitalized for a week. I was desperate for some help. Spiritually, I felt I was at rock bottom. Stopped at a red light, I saw a vanload of sisters go through the green light. They were dressed in the habit of Mother Teresa of Calcutta's Order. I recognized the habit from the news. I chased the van following them through about 10 blocks of city traffic and praying out loud that they would stop so I could talk to them. They pulled into a gas station and the driver got out to pump gas. I pulled in behind them and jumped out of my car and ran over to where the sister was next to the gas pumps.

I said, "You are Sisters of Charity, aren't you?"

The sister looked puzzled and I found out later her English was not fluent. She was from Yugoslavia

like Mother Teresa. She shook her head, No. I raised my voice and said, “You ARE Sisters of Charity, aren’t you?” Again she said, “No.” Grabbing the sleeve of her habit I practically shouted at her, “Mother Teresa.”

Looking a little shocked, she smiled and said, “Missionaries of Charity. Sisters of Charity are nurses.”

Almost ten years before, a friend of mine who was from Calcutta, a high Brahmin in the Hindu religion, had remarked to me that if he ever became a Christian it would be because of Mother Teresa. This was before her Nobel Prize and world-wide recognition. Not being a Catholic, I had understandably never heard of her. I asked him why. His answer stunned me.

“Because she does what I cannot do. She goes into the streets of Calcutta and lifts up dying untouchables and brings them in and helps them die. My religion and rank forbid me to even look at them, much less touch them. When anyone asks her why she does what she does, she simply answers, “It’s Jesus! I am helping them because they are Jesus.”

I later read the book by Malcolm Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God*. The book described her work in Calcutta and her order and the history of her call from God. Sometime during that period Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Prize and there were many news stories about her and her work in Calcutta and other places with the “poorest of the poor.” This was how I recognized the habit of the nuns in the van.

The Superior, the nun I spoke to at the gas station, took me back to their mission and I became a volunteer that day. After a couple of months of volunteering, I asked her how I could become a Catholic. I thought for years I could not convert because I had been divorced. She told me to talk to a priest and he would help me. This was in the Spring of 1987. I began instruction one-on-one with my local parish priest in January, 1989 and was received into the Church on December 10, 1989.

In the Fall, 1975, I had registered my children for Catholic school and knew then I should become Catholic. I hoped my children would be converted, but I was personally afraid because I had been taught I would go to hell if I left the Baptist church. But, I had wanted to become Catholic since the late sixties after meeting a lady from Central America who was a devout Catholic. She had come to volunteer for the public school Spanish class I was teaching.

E. Carol Ann's story of conversion from Baptist to Catholic illustrates the difference between knowing something and discerning it. Her *knowing* she wanted to be Catholic didn't actually amount to a change in her life. She basically knew that Catholicism was probably a good thing and probably would be good for her. However, she hadn't investigated enough to really know what Catholicism was and, therefore, what it could mean in her life.

Based on her quick and decisive actions, she had fully known everything she needed to know about Mother Teresa. She had done the discernment process. Mother Teresa is one of the easier discernments. Mother Teresa and her life are rather straight-forward and simple-- not much room for an ulterior motive within what she was doing. Carol Ann knew she would like to be like Mother Teresa. So, Carol Ann had discerned the appropriate relationship between her and Mother Teresa. Mother Teresa was an unquestionable role model for her.

Pivotal points in a person's life ought to include a process of discernment. To live fully, or in reality, to be *leading* our own lives, we need to purposefully direct all those aspects under our control for which, as adults, we should take responsibility. Lacking that, someone else is leading our lives for us, or a circumstance leads it for us. Or, ignorance misdirects us.

With discernment, Carol Ann's life course shifted immediately from Baptist toward becoming Catholic. Earlier, Carol Ann knew some facts about Catholicism, but, the point at which you meaningfully know something, happens when you understand its relevance to yourself. We live in relation to everything, so what are our relationships with everything?

Carol Ann and I talked about our first major discernment and how it was pivotal in our lives. We decided that there was an initial period of openness for something more, an intending. My intending period began in an out-patient waiting room. A "code blue"

was called; my girlfriend of sorts was having surgery. Not knowing that it wasn't her really brought the issue of life-and-death to the forefront. I had thrust aside considering the meaning of life. The topic was still sitting on a burner on low. Probably a year or more later, I was walking up the stairs fully intending to assuage my girlfriend with the usual concession as to her complete rightness and my complete wrongness. When I approached her crying on the bed, instead I said, "Do you want to talk about this?" I surprised myself and her.

Instantly, she was up. We both knew we were going to have nothing more to do with each other. That didn't even take any more words. The acquiescence I had skipped was a requirement to that relationship. Her crying was the signal; I had mutinied. It was over. Just that fast. But what I had done was a test for any actuality of relationship. This pseudo-relationship flat ended in under a second. I was not even slightly surprised by the result or the speed of the result concluded from the test. Even though it was my own action, when I opened my mouth, I didn't expect to say those words, they just came out —no premeditation.

Like Mother Teresa, this was a rather easy discernment. I only needed to confirm that she was not available for a relationship with me. She had always been rather specific and blunt about the fact that I was not worthy to be her peer. In hindsight, it is easy to discern that the best relationship in this case was the "no relationship" it already was. We both knew where

we both stood. This had been a constant. So after my practically unnecessary test, I knew what I should have already known. In other words, there is now a “level zero” for discernments that are still yet life-changing, pivotal moments. God had reached down to my level of ability.

We don't always do what we know we should do. I correctly discerned in high school that school wasn't for me and left. I ended up starting to go to college three different times after that. My relationship with school had been to pass tests with flying colors, but I didn't really have the information permanently retained. Also, I figure out things better on my own, using my own take on something in order to understand it. Often, following somebody else's train of thought is difficult for me. I also didn't know what learning I should focus on. So school was an exercise without much meaning. So, discernment doesn't cure knowing what's right, but doing what's wrong.

CA. Life-affirming changes do not happen often, but when they do, they are most likely the result of a long-time inner discomfort and disturbance. At least, this is how it seems to me when I am led into new growth and change. There is an old proverb that “when the student is ready, the teacher appears.” When I saw the vanload of nuns in the habit of Mother Teresa's order, I was the student who was ready, and knew I had to know more about their life and mission. I

wanted a change to be more like Mother Teresa. And if her nuns can't tell me, who can?

E. The path followed, upon discernment, is omittive or inclusive. An example of an omittive discernment is to stop trying to have a relationship with someone who isn't having a relationship with you. I made an inclusive discernment in accepting Carol Ann as my teacher, which I didn't consciously recognize, but did accept by never denying or thwarting that path. And I did recognize that Carol Ann was unveiling aspects of life completely foreign to my previous world view.

CA. PHASE II: Now, applying discernment to uncover wolves in sheep's clothing and find pathways to spiritual growth.

My own southern social up-bringing and my Southern Baptist background had led me to discount my own discernment and to blindly accept everyone as who they said they were. We are supposed to "love everybody," right? How is it loving to doubt an authority figure who claims to be a bastion of the truth? Or, how loving is it to doubt a friend? On and on. Why did I do that? I trusted more in man than in God's revelation or in my own gut-level reaction and reasoning.

E. I think I also received a cultural message inhibiting me from discerning. I've already said that my understanding from my upbringing is that normal people are just fine, as is. I am also aware of discounting experiences of the sort that usually cause an eyebrow to raise. In these circumstances, I stopped any further train of thought. I categorized these instances as the other person's business, not mine. I considered that these other people would know themselves better than I knew them and therefore I should go by their word, not what I thought I read between the lines. This also has been a personal self-confidence issue, alongside the cultural messages.

Neither Carol Ann nor I considered that people might be displaying a portrait of themselves that they wanted people to believe. We did not consider that their appearances might be a lie. Are there no longer wolves in sheep's clothing? Getting ahead of myself, a more recent answer than the period in time we are writing about here, I describe these wolves in sheep's clothing by a more modern term—the bullshitters: politicians, people trying to get advancement in their careers not based on merit, litigious people trying to make a buck off of somebody else with no justifiable cause, lobbyists portraying their narrow interests as a common good cause, advertising that hypes a product rather than reveals its worth, on and on and on and on.

Phase II discernment is about needing a “ton of bricks” falling on one's head because of cultural or personal inhibition causing constraints. Therefore, one gets very little actual practice at discerning in the

moment. Hindsight investigation of earlier signs that should have been discerned is recommended to get that practice.

CA. What contributed most to my growing awareness of the need for discernment is a series of experiences in which I found myself avoiding the truth or reality of a situation. It was impossible to avoid the negative consequences of my own inactions. How could I do that? It was easy. I followed the crowd and listened to the people around me rather than my own inner reflection and troubling at things that were being said or done around me.

After having a wonderful pastor in my early years as a Catholic and then having another wonderful pastor when I became part of a Latin Mass community, I was gliding along on Easy Street—regular confession, Mass attendance as often as possible each week, living with Catholic Benedictine sisters while I taught in Catholic schools, reading the lives of the saints, and working consciously to enlarge my prayer life with the Rosary and other devotions. Then a transition happened. The Latin Mass I attended now had a fairly rapid turnover of priests, many of them young and new from their order's seminary, actually eight priests in six years.

None of these were good homilists. Most had not much of a point to make and could make an error now and then. Some were fairly frequent with their errors. Instead of truly examining or entering into a

dialogue even within myself, I began to drift during their sermons. When I did listen, I heard things that did not reconcile with Church teaching or Biblical passages. Sometimes I wrote these down to talk about them with the Sisters or Erik. After several of these priests and experiences, I was feeling frustrated in my spiritual growth. My spiritual director, a Carmelite priest, was now the Provincial of his Order's Province, so I did not get to see him very often. No one else in the parish community seemed to have a problem, as in:

“They’re just young; they will improve as they settle into the priesthood.”

“It’s a growth in ministry problem.”

Or “Oh well, you shouldn’t doubt an ordained priest; he has all the graces of his office.”

For six years, I sat under this kind of “ministry” and either read Scripture during the homilies or some other spiritual reading trying to grow.

E. There’s a prequel to discerning in Phase II. It consists of “going with the flow.” Carol Ann gave an instance of this above. Not going with the flow requires a rather apparent need not to. The going with the flow in reality means staying in something longer than you should have. With Phase III discernment, you would have already been gone. There was a problem, but the smaller, tell-tale clues were not picked up on.

For another example, I was in a seminary which is a 24-hour a day immersion, night and day, sleeping and studying, talking and listening, eating, drinking, taking breaks, working, cleaning, attending events, keeping community schedules. In that given situation, it's pretty hard not to have some idea of the seminary and what it's about and the people in it. The seminary is supposed to form you and test you, and that was very specifically stated. This is solid Catholic tradition, and so, going with the flow, I ran with it. I seemed to think that it was a mutually exclusive action for me to also be testing the seminary. General Catholic teaching on vocation tells the individual they must discern their path. People in my class left of their own accord as the year went on. So, even though this seminary presented a more one-way street, one-up, one-down relationship, I should have known that thinking for yourself was not excluded. But, because I was in what we are calling Phase II, not going with the flow required a pretty defining event.

The second year started. Not too far into it, the Rector of the seminary thought about making a change. Along with being tonsured, he thought about adding more degrees for those in the second year, consequently, and before changing his mind, he gave us a model of a letter of request for the next degree. It was very brief and said something along the lines of "I request the office of _____ and I believe unreservedly and unquestionably in every aspect of this society and am 100% behind the Superiors with zero reservations." This is not verbatim, just what it said. This was my distinctive event. I most certainly didn't

agree with everything sourced in the seminary. There never is that type of perfection in this world. But I didn't write any sort of letter because the idea was dropped. To myself, however, I said, "Last year, the seminary tested me; now I'm going to test the seminary."

At least I was paying attention in the way we should always be paying attention. I mean we are not in heaven. So, when the Rector, at another time, said he was always right because he had the active graces from God for the Office of Rector flowing down upon him, I thought about his criticism of some Bishop or Bishops' action or other and thought, "Hmm. That doesn't jive too well with the concept that the graces of the Office keep a Bishop 100% on track. It's one or the other! Either these Bishops are perfect, or he's actually not perfect."

Another time I happened to be sitting at a table for dinner with seminarians who were a year or couple of years ahead of me and they were talking about the Rector's conference we'd just had. They were talking about having been online, coming across the same information as that presented by the Rector. Then, they agreed that it would have been all right or at least so-so if only he had not added in that hesitation as if the original thinking had come to him just then, his idea. They shook their heads. My case to leave was building.

The Rector wasn't the only person. I came to the conclusion that a lot of the people in the seminary were highly judgmental. They also seemed to weight their

judgment by appearance. I decided I was going to quit at the end of the year.

Another notable pronouncement made by the Rector later that year was that all rock-and-roll music was evil and would not be listened to by anyone at the seminary. I specifically drove my car during breaks to listen to rock-and-roll. I was not staying. I found a station with a playlist better for my taste than I have ever come across. There were some really great songs and oh, so not evil in my opinion! But it was that overbearingly emphatic judgmental tone that made me start to get nervous to the point of being physically shaky and I don't have a nervous personality. I left there and went back to staying with Carol Ann.

CA. I was working as Director of a small non-profit organization that helped families in crisis. The non-profit was one that Erik and I had started—state charter, IRS exemption, etc. We established a hotline and a network of contacts with other organizations to provide resources for those in need. Our partnering matched up needs with resources—food, clothing, transportation to services and medical appointments and domestic violence shelters in our area, mentoring women recovering from domestic violence or other family disruptions in order to change their situations, gain education and improve economic status for themselves and their children.

I was working sometimes 16 hours a day either on the hotline or giving direct services to people in

crisis in the office or from my home. I trusted people. I did not have on my radar any concept that I should keep a power base or insure that I was in charge. I was focused on providing services and building avenues of resources to meet the range of problems presented.

There were changes in the Board of Directors and unexpectedly I was no longer supported. The services we were giving were obstructed and nobody with the power to stop it could be bothered. So, all that work didn't matter. Things fell apart to the extent that clients were no longer receiving the help they needed from me. Files and paperwork were misplaced daily. That person was supported and I wasn't. I literally couldn't find the things I needed to operate. The large grant that had been paying salaries and providing funds for services ran out. I had worked without pay before, but this time, I was effectively pushed out and later resigned at a board meeting.

The Phase II “ton of bricks”, in this case, was that I had trusted and helped put in positions of power untrustworthy people, without doing any discerning. This was hard to acknowledge and painful to admit. The organization shut down and families were left without resources that for over 10 years had been made available to them. My not-discerning had allowed this to happen.

E. We assumed that we had one option for Mass attendance. This as we mentioned earlier was nearly a hundred miles away. I separated it into a Mass and the

homily. The Mass itself was always fine and the homily varied from so-so to “I wish I could skip the homily and just have Mass.” I gave up on hoping for an occasional or rare solid homily, i.e. having something in it you wouldn’t want to miss; i.e. something you couldn’t just get yourself, out of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* or *Catechism*. In other words, we stopped looking for insights from the priests. So, the issue became only getting past the homily, and for me, the theological question was, could the homily “destroy” the rest of the Mass. I assumed not. I think we’ve already mentioned the lack of fun driving back nearly a hundred miles, angry in my case, most of the time because of the homily. As far as I knew—at this level of discernment—we **were** receiving the sacramental grace and that was the one parameter.

So, this is Phase II discernment. You go with the flow. You don’t discover anything via small or medium presenting evidence. You need the mountain to impose itself upon you. I was asleep for the first large indicator, but Carol Ann heard the Easter Vigil homily and the priest tell the congregation to skip Easter joy. The important thing was the penances you do. It is the most basic Catholic theology that the Resurrection of Christ is not only the central tenet of the faith, it is also the essential reason to want to follow Christian faith. It establishes hope. It establishes a victory that is permanent. That Victory is over death, our nemesis in this life.

The opposite is true. If there is no Easter joy, there is no purpose to any kind of penance or even

being Christian. Easter Resurrection and the joy, therefrom, is the crux of the matter. What truly and everlastingly churns us, truly animates our lives is Easter joy! False, short-lived, temporary impetuses don't lead to true meaning, like a Stoic who lives austere and penitentially, and for what reason? I've lived life with difficulty, and then I died. What is that?

CA. That wasn't enough of a shake-up for us. We continued to attend that Mass under that priest. Fast-forward about six weeks through the Easter season, which I resolutely sang and praised through with joy in my home and work. Then one Sunday in mid-May, Erik and I arrived slightly later than usual and the pew where we usually sat in the center section of the church was filled, so we slid over to the side and wound up sitting on the third or fourth row, almost directly in front of the podium. We did not think much about this until the time for the homily. The deacon assigned to our parish, a relative of the priest, gave the homily that morning. Incensed by a recent movie that had come out that was blatantly anti-Catholic, as well as anti-Christian, he began to preach from a written text in a forceful and obviously rehearsed manner and advocate for the condemnation and death of those acting in or in any way responsible for the production of the movie and all those who were showing it and/or attending it. He continued to advocate the re-establishment of The Inquisition and that Catholics should go after those who perpetrate such blasphemy, pronouncing that those responsible were all

condemned to hell and should be executed. He ranted on while I sat in shock wondering about this use of a Sunday homily to advocate what I called “Christian jihad.” I left the church shaking and violated by this clearly un-Catholic sermon and teaching.

E. The deacon used the names of the well-known people in the production. He spit out their names. His preferred penalty, since it’s what he mentioned, seemed to be burning until dead. Interestingly, we stopped to talk to a couple of young parishioners before going in the church. I asked what one of them was doing. She said writing a check for the collection. And I said, “I’d wait until after the homily to decide.” We didn’t stand up and leave after the homily or during it. We very specifically did not put anything in the collection and I wondered if the young parishioners in the choir loft above noted that. Anyway, we stopped going and were very clear about that. Again, this phase is about discernment because a ton of bricks falls on you and you’ve been going with the flow when you shouldn’t have been.

All of the above are rather weak discernments. However, the difference between a very weak discernment and no discernment is comparable to the difference between life and death. This is because a discernment is a personal following of the truth. This is a definition of discernment: Perceiving truth, but then additionally, following up with appropriate action based

upon truth. Live the truth, rather than being led by lies—walk in the Light.

Discernment also includes a not-limiting of God's means of Providence. So often our minds expect God's Providence to come in the manner that we expect—the direct way. Open-mindedness is the key. Dying on a cross is a waste of a life, and useless. Wrong. That idea is simply our minds not comprehending God's action, because we are so limited. We don't know or see the good wrought until later. Being open to the unexpected ways of God ultimately bringing good from evil circumstances paves the way for better discerning.

CA. Speaking of a ton of bricks falling on one's head, we could give more examples of this often painful and disturbing process of discernment or lack thereof until the "moment of truth." However, it would only provide more data, not more information. There is the cascading diminishing of Catholic presence in our country-- the imposition of un-Constitutional limitations on our freedoms of Religion and Speech. The legislation of obvious immorality and decadence has become the Law of the secular realm. There was the 2012 election process and result, the ongoing Supreme Court "legislation by decision" and the arbitrary decisions of judges at all levels of jurisprudence across this country. But, this is a story of our spiritual journey within the Catholic faith and not so much about the external imposition of trials and

tribulations. But, you don't turn discernment on and off. It's important for discernment to always be on.

One other period of the past 25 years yields alarming lack of discernment for me. I was hired as principal of a predominantly African-American Catholic school that had been meeting the needs of the poor and disenfranchised since 1889. The Order of nuns that had been administrating the school became too old to continue providing the school leadership, so a more modern and secular solution was sought. I remember the morning I got the call from the Superintendent of Schools in our diocese. I was sitting down to my bowl of cereal. It was before 8 o'clock. Early. The Superintendent asked would I meet with the School Board at the school I mentioned. It was in a city and part of the state I had never visited and had no desire to visit. The location was considered a dangerous area. My head said, No, but my heart said, Yes! I told her I would pray about it and she said the Board was meeting on Thursday evening and I needed to be there. I later discovered they had tried to hire 2 different nuns as principal before me, but one had a wreck and the other became seriously ill. The Board offered me the job and I accepted.

Never once did I allow myself to discern the reality that, although the parish community and the larger community wanted to keep the school running, the diocese and the Bishop really didn't. The Superintendent told me on numerous occasions that if I left, she would close the school. When ill health intervened and I had no choice but to go on sick leave,

she tried to close the school one month later. Despite the fact that it was a foregone conclusion that the diocese and the bishop would close the school, I threw all I had and could manage into the fight to run this little school that, though small and struggling, was the source of so much good in an underprivileged community. I fully expected the school to continue. I was not thinking.

CHAPTER FIVE- DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

“He that is not with Me is against Me; he who does not gather with Me, scatters.” Matthew 12:30

PHASE III: Appropriate Discernment.

E. Very much so, people can appear to be with Jesus and to be gathering with Jesus, because that is exactly what it looks like they are doing, and what they are doing doesn't look like anything other than that. The Legion of Mary is the largest lay Catholic organization in the world. It generally meets at Catholic churches. It generally has a priest as director for the individual groups. It is parish-affiliated. It's been around for almost a hundred years. A rosary is prayed at each weekly meeting. The active members are supported by non-active prayer support members who have specified daily prayers to pray for the active members. We began attending meetings.

I liked the way the Legion of Mary meeting ran. I wondered about saying the rosary out in front of the Tabernacle instead of in the meeting room, but that was my only thoughtful suggestion after months of attending, and I actually never vocalized my thoughtful suggestion. I have been known to be extremely helpful in advising people how to run their lives, even people I hardly knew. Part of my personal “work in progress” is to gather facts and figures, and in the meantime keep my mouth shut. Carol Ann says, “No comment, but it's a worthy goal.”

CA. I had been attracted to the Legion of Mary for some years, but had never had an opportunity to attend meetings or find out much more about it. There had been a large event at our parish before one Sunday Mass in the early 90's, but we moved from that parish after I completed graduate school and I had not found another group. I liked the fervor and intensity of the members, their devotion to Our Lord through His Mother Mary.

Following our path to the Tridentine Mass, I forgot about it. In 1999, I followed as best I could the design of St. Louis de Montfort for giving oneself to Jesus through Mary. I have kept up this devotion in my own stumbling way since then. When I discovered that the parish 45 miles away had a group of Legion of Mary I was intrigued and began to pray about joining them.

Erik and I began attending meetings every week and were given the *Handbook*. I confess the reading of it was rather dry and pedantic and I did not make much effort. A few pages were read aloud at the meeting each week and I just listened then. The Legion spirituality was supposed to be based on the spirituality of St. Louis de Montfort. There were precise directions given in the *Handbook* for every aspect of one's life and participation in the group—prayers, including the rosary, assignments for doing good deeds each week and reporting on them and handing in a written report about them, attending enough meetings to determine if

one should follow the Legion's outline for daily Christian living and make a Promise to such an end and join.

The focus of the group we attended was on following the *Handbook* to the letter. Looking back, I think I was very impressed with the devotion and dedication of the ladies that participated in the group. The priest never attended in the nine months we did, but the ladies were all Eucharistic Ministers and visited the sick and took Communion and assisted the priest whenever he asked for their help. One new member had only been a Catholic for a month and she was made a Eucharistic Minister and was "in training" to visit the sick and give Communion, which disturbed me at the time. I remembered when I was first Catholic and I hardly knew anything. That's not very many communions before becoming a Eucharistic Minister.

Erik and I actually assisted on one such visit to the sick. It was a lady in our county who we found out when we arrived was actually dying. She had cancer. She died several days later. The priest had given the Legion leader instructions to carry seven hosts to the family to last the week. Erik and I had known the lady from our earliest times with the Latin Mass. They had moved to our county to retire to a farm that was far out in the country. I was grateful we were able to visit her, because we had seen her and her husband in the grocery store several months before, and she was in good health. We would not have known she was sick without the active participation which is the mainstay of the Legion of Mary.

E. I have only a slightly different take from Carol Ann on the first few months, some of which is just remembering different things. For instance, our group, while highly even reverently devoted to the Legion of Mary structure and details, actually read only about a page out of the *Handbook* per meeting, which amused me. We read in the *Handbook* about the vital need for punctuality in the Legion of Mary. Our leader habitually started the meetings 30 minutes late, plus or minus. She gestured vaguely with her hand at this disparity, said, “Well, I don’t know, maybe we could try.” She didn’t present the least concern over this failure. That amused me. She got hit at another meeting with a command in the reading to clearly enunciate and speak with a strong voice during meetings. She had a light, low voice and her speaking style was to, more often than not, drop off in volume and trail off as she moved through a thought. She waved her hand vaguely this time also and said, “Well, something or other...” Again not the least bit disturbed or concerned. This amused me also. I found the meetings to be fine, but the *Handbook* to be high on the anal retentive scale.

CA. After awhile, the rigidity of the meetings began to bother me. We rushed through the rosary and then there was much of the meeting devoted to the minutes—very detailed—and the “giving of reports.” The members were required to give oral and written reports at the meeting each week. We did not give

reports at first because we were considered visitors, but as our tenure lagged on, they began to ask us for some report each week. Their activities were mostly parish-based—youth library work, visiting the sick, providing programs and assistance at nursing homes, other parish support work and other Legion meetings in the area. We didn't seem really to fit in. We weren't close enough to participate in any parish activities anywhere, and my lifestyle was more on the contemplative side, so activity was not really a focus for me and had not been since the mid-90's. Even when working, I lived with nuns in convents or alone.

E. We were actually aiming at visitor status. Broaching the subject early on with Carol Ann, she didn't hesitate at all to say that we were already in Our Lady's cohort. Comparing this handbook to the Marian Movement of Priests book... there was no comparison. To me the *Handbook* was amusing. The Messages to My Priests of the Marian Movement were wow, incredible, supportive, Catholic, and believable. There is one consistent voice in the messages. There is beyond human power clarity of exposition on God's Revelation. It's always foundationally front and center Catholic. It never once deviates from solid humility and doing good in love. This is not to say that I don't think it's a worthwhile idea to contrive a structure in which the ordinary works of mercy can be facilitated, and I do think I learned a few things of value as I had hoped. We were, after all, driving 45 miles to get there.

CA. My experience of the Marian Movement of Priests had led me into a more meditative way of saying the rosary. But, I had lost consistency with daily praying the rosary. I did keep up my daily decade of the Living Rosary Association commitment, but struggled to pray the whole rosary daily. One of my desires in attending the Legion was to become more regular and committed to praying the rosary with devotion to Our Lady. We had been praying the rosary daily for some time, but had fallen off schedule due to work and other commitments. Erik and I were more consistent praying together than when we were separated by work or other situations. I began to see that the Legion's way of praying and activity was not what I was called to. Still, I respected the ladies and their works, and the meetings were OK. We kept going.

E. We did the Luminous Mysteries at the Thursday meeting and also filled a time slot of an hour of Adoration before the meeting. So we learned the Luminous Mysteries instituted by Pope John Paul II in the 1990's. We worked at getting to the Latin Mass on Sunday early enough for Confession and the Rosary before Mass, so that was two days a week saying the rosary. That Lent one of our mutual Lenten offerings was to obligate ourselves to say the rosary daily. This kick-started us back into the habit. So the meetings and Lent helped lead us back to the daily Rosary.

We were lousy at the work assignments. I liked the practice of being the failing student since it was something I avoided by going to the other end of the spectrum in school via a heavy work ethic. Carol Ann wanted to present a little better than that. She wrote the list of what we had done each week, and came up with most everything on the list. Our list was fairly pathetic compared to theirs. But, neither of us were too worried about it except that Carol Ann didn't want to look like a slob at the meeting.

CA. The work requirement did cause us to stretch a little into new areas. We visited the local nursing home at Christmas and took cards and spread cheer. One of our elderly neighbors was there and we made a special point to visit with her. Then, the Legion decided we should visit the nursing home every week and bring activities and other things for them to do. I felt a lot of pressure to do this from the group. It made me again very uncomfortable. We were involved in Right-To-Life meetings and their activities and this was more our focus-- and prayer. We also volunteered to help out in the parish youth library that one member was setting up. But, this was only one day, I think, and although we were going to go back, we did not have a chance. I also cleaned and re-painted plaques of the Sacred Heart and Immaculate Heart for the leader to give to invalids. She had found them in a second-hand store. That was about it for our nine months.

E. I went to a City Meeting to support it against unjust bullying by the State. That could go on the list. We had an evangelizing encounter at a Wal-Mart. That could go on the list. Looking back at the nursing home visit, it seemed to be forced and awkward, just as it had felt during the visit. Ours is a “you’re not from around here” county. We weren’t born here, and we don’t have extended family raised here, so we’re not from around here. We could have visited the nursing home regularly and, gained an acceptable standing as nursing home visitors. Neither of us felt it was something we should be doing. So, we deflected their suggestions to re-visit the nursing home.

They did say several times in the course of our attending that they were so glad we were there, but we were rather space-fillers. They were very much the inner circle or part of the inner circle in the parish. We have a long history of usually being so much the bystanders that we are way out-of-the-loop. All this is to say, we were never an important part of this Legion of Mary group.

Besides the anal retentiveness in the *Handbook*, there was an overbearing tone. The use of your vocal cords had to be the way he said. The detrimental effects of starting late were what he said they were. The detrimental effects of not having each meeting exactly like his meeting layout **would** cause the harm he said it would cause. Falling below a robust delivery during report giving, or by the leader giving directions, even for a moment during the meeting, would cause the harm he said it would cause. Leaving, untouched, the

folk in the rural areas from the invigorating effect of the city folk **would** cause a downward spiral of those poor rural folk left to themselves. Reading the *Handbook* only 7 or 8 times **would leave unplumbed** the depths and riches yet waiting to be tapped by the reader, so he says of his own writing. If I had any problem with this Legion of Mary group up to this point in our meeting-going, it would be their lack of serious response to the defects in the *Handbook*. Did it not indicate a need to adjust the strictness with which someone needed to adhere to this program after having found some real flaws in it?

CA. As we continued attending meetings, I became more uncomfortable about even trying to fit the mold that was required to be a member of the Legion of Mary. For example, it was apparent that our declining to pursue the nursing home visiting path—we said we would pray about it—was not well-received at all by the leader or in the group. After all, in the Legion of Mary group, one is supposed to follow the directions of the Leader. When I said that I had worked with children all of my adult life and felt that that was how God wanted me to minister—children and families—I was asked a number of questions about how I proposed to do that. I shared that I had been working on an educational plan for a new kind of school for over 15 years and had continued research into learning methods through my doctorate in education. The leader began to grill me about what kind of school and where and how it would be funded and so on. It felt a

little invasive. She had no degree in education. I said in response to this that I would share a binder with my business plan and educational groundwork with the leader. She moved on in the meeting.

I did bring the binder that I use for planning to the next meeting. This was all a defensive response to why I felt I should not dump years of work to visit the nursing home each week just to fit in with the Legion of Mary format. I don't know if the leader ever actually read the binder, but she held on to it for a month and then passed it on to another member without asking me. When I asked for it back, the other member kept forgetting to bring it. It took about 2 months to have my work returned to me. When the binder was returned there was another grilling at a meeting about who I had talked to in my county to get started, what financing I had procured, etc. The leader said she did social work in my county and knew for a fact that everyone in the county was "crazy," and how did I expect to be able to start a school there. This made me very uncomfortable. I was ready to quit going at this point, but it was Lent and Erik and I had decided to stick it out until Easter. Then, we could also continue our Holy Hours as part of our Lenten devotion. Then some things happened that made our departure from the group definite and sooner than we expected.

E. This was our first foray into circumspect Phase III discerning. This time, functionally and appropriately, we thoroughly inspected first-hand data.

Opposite to our previous *modus operandi*, we gave it prominence, even if the first-hand observation was slight and only lasted a split-second. Instead of the starting point being “take everything at face value,” we more confidently trusted our sensory input which seemed at odds with how people presented themselves. I John, Chapter 4 says “Try the spirits.” His directive is to begin with “everything is questionable.”

I specifically remember the thought processes in which I discounted these little heads-up snippets. I discounted my ability to ferret out something that was not in the light in which someone presented themselves.

Carol Ann and I both observed that the leader of this group took a take-charge, one-up stance with people. I had decided that it was defensiveness in her in order to look capable to others, and it rather amused me. But then we observed some times when her mannerisms caused observable harm. For example, when I talked about the way in which I understood, as miraculous, God’s presentation of the Real Presence in the Host to us, she stopped me with, “Well, we know all that already, Erik.” However, their faces had looked a little blank while I was talking. As an aside and just briefly, the miracle as you look at a Host is not Jesus’ Real Presence. That miracle is a *fait accompli* after the Consecration, and becomes the physical reality, so the continuing Real Presence is not an ongoing miracle. The ongoing miracle presented continuously to us by God’s Power is that it’s still looking like a little piece of unleavened bread. Because, It isn’t.

CA. Since Erik and I were already involved and had been for a long time with Right-to-Life, the leader decided this was our permanent assignment. The upcoming March for Life was brought up. A member of the group said that our diocese always planned a dance for the youth at a local hotel the night before the March. When I expressed my dismay, no one at the meeting seemed to see anything wrong with that. I said something like, “So, for the Catholic youth attending the March-- it’s 40 million dead... let’s party?”

The member in charge of some youth-focused activities said in response, “Well, I don’t think they look at it like that!”

“How do you look at it when our young people are partying while a few blocks away there is all-night Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament at the Cathedral with parishes in the state taking turns? I think it is a travesty and demeaning to our youth that the leadership do not think they can pray.”

Blank stares. Then someone said, “I never knew there was all-night Adoration before the March for Life.” Everyone agreed that they had never heard of it before. I personally knew about it for almost 20 years and had attended some years. With parishes around the diocese assigned hours for Adoration each year, how could active parishioners not be aware this is going on?

E. A major activity this group did was taking communion to the elderly and the sick. One of the members was talking about taking communion to a wife whose husband wouldn't allow her to go to Sunday Mass. She mentioned he wasn't Catholic and basically disapproving of Catholic and the woman had married him outside the Church. The fact that this group member knew her status as married outside the Church and not reconciled gave me pause. Once again there was no ripple of dismay in the group.

That next week, she was the only other member able to attend besides us. So after the meeting, I talked to her about it. At first I got misunderstanding because a new member was married and that had happened outside the Church. So I explained that that husband and wife pair, neither being Catholic, had not broken the Church edict that Catholics, and only Catholics, had to marry in the Catholic Church. Protestant Christian marriages are assumed valid, just as are most Protestant Baptisms. Then, she wanted to leave it to the priest, to refer to him and go by whatever he said. I responded that, in fact, we are adults, baptized and confirmed, and supposedly formed. We are expected to know, all on our own, right from wrong. But, she demurred. As I had talked to her for maybe as long as 15 minutes, I figured I'd done as much as I was supposed to.

Less than a month later, a new member, who started coming after we began, officially joined the Legion of Mary group. There was a Promise to be read aloud to the group found in the *Handbook*. It was a bright moment for her. I noticed a couple of "I-don't-

think so's" in the Promise to the Legion of Mary as it was read by the member, and I consciously mulled over pointing them out, but chose not to spoil her spotlight moment. The next week, I was very glad not to have brought up praying in front of the Tabernacle because the *Handbook* itself brought up the subject. This paragraph on the subject of why not to pray in front of the Tabernacle was another "I-don't-think-so."

Five days later, and a couple of days before the next meeting, I sent an email to four of the Legion of Mary members: "How about praying the rosary in the church-- that is, when the choir is not practicing."

Here are the emails exchanged:

Member 1: "We can do that either before or after the meeting but not for the meeting. Reference page 121 section 14 of the Legion handbook. "

Erik: "That was exactly the reference why I thought we should pray before the tabernacle (when possible). One, Frank Duff is no authority able to say when it's not allowable to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Two, the logic of why not to is false, because the reason given is to preserve 'eminent fruits of heroism and effort.' Anything heroic, by self-definition would not be dislodged by moving a few paces. Third, the end of the argument is gravely misleading, having reduced the subject from praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament to praying 'elsewhere.'"

Member 2: “The authority is legitimate, when it comes to how the meeting is run. The rosary recitation is part of the meeting, printed in the prayer booklet. Thus we say it as part of the meeting. Has to do with the meeting. You seem to be misconstruing the format of the Legion of Mary meeting with where in general a rosary may be recited. This only has to do with the meeting format. Meetings take place in one place, before the Blessed Mother statue, with our set-up.

There ya go...”

Erik: “Sorry, I wasn't clear enough. The authority Frank Duff doesn't have is to 'Define' (which is reserved to the Magisterium of the Church) a reason that has enough weight such that it could be said to be higher and better than praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Then second, just with amateur and only a first look at the reasoning, his statement of why it is higher and better not to, is wrong, centered around his specific use of the Catholic understanding of heroic. Which, if his reasoning is quickly discoverable as flawed, and, it is not his place to ascertain what prayer is higher and more uplifting than another prayer, yet he does, he can't hold my allegiance, most especially by coming up against the core Catholic belief that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church-- it pits him against the Church. I'd go with the Church. And, in conscience, I would not follow this specific directive, as, in light of what he said, it gives tacit complicity to his

reasoning of why it is higher and better to shun the Blessed Sacrament, which I think is specious. And, third, I find the use of the word, elsewhere, by its usage and placement, as a direct slur against the Blessed Sacrament. For what, to make a better case with the goal to win a point of contention. You could make a case for 'abomination of desolation' in this equating of 'before the Blessed Sacrament' with 'elsewhere'. I'm saying he's gone beyond the subject of the meeting itself, by asserting a 'better than' statement. Am I clearer now?"

Member 1: "Erik, I think we quite understand the points you make. To make it more clear to you from the Legion meeting point of view, praying the rosary within the circle of the Blessed Mother NEVER takes away from the Blessed Sacrament itself. The Legion is an intensely ordered system (reference handbook page 68, section 2) so that worldwide uniformity will be continued just as it is with our Mass. The handbook teaches us the principles and dynamics of the organization of the Legion that we are to follow. Obedience to these principles and dynamics is part of the humility that is required for the Legion. The prayers are invariable (reference handbook beginning on page 135, section 23) and the structure is complete. There will be more on this in tomorrow night's Allocutio.

It is good to know that we all contemplate the Legion even when not present within a meeting."

Here is the paragraph from the *Handbook*, the subject of these emails:

“14. Prayers to be one with the meeting.

From time to time it has been suggested that the rosary might be recited before the Blessed Sacrament, the members then proceeding to their meeting-room. This proposal is not allowable on the general principle that the unity of the meeting is essential to the whole Legion system. With the meeting one, all the business takes a distinctively prayerful character (producing eminent fruits of heroism and effort), which it would lose were the bulk of the prayers to be said elsewhere. Such a change would alter the whole character of the meeting, and hence of the Legion itself which is built upon the meeting. In fact, the resulting organisation, however great its merits, would not be the Legion of Mary at all. Having said this, presumably it is unnecessary to state that the actual omission of the rosary or any other part of the prayers is—no matter what the circumstances may be—still less admissible. What the breathing is to the human body, the rosary is to the Legion meetings.” (P. 120, Chapter 19)

The second half of this paragraph is a good example of the tone throughout the *Handbook*. You can see the anal retentiveness, but more relevant is the superiority complex of this one person. He definitely wants to be Caesar with a submissive following. Not only telling how it is, i.e. what he wants, but he apparently also knows all peoples and the future, as like this example, he constantly gives 100 % predictions of

the level of success doing it his way and prognosticating the exact detrimental outcomes when not adhering exactly to his plan. This is one guy 95 years ago. He most certainly is powerful, at least in his handbook

When you go along with something sourced in humility, your chances are greater of following the truth, closer to the narrow path, more enlightened, following Jesus. Jesus is humility. Whereas, to follow after something sourced in pride makes one vulnerable to the author of pride. It's a risky position to be in. We are weak. We have fallen nature.

Immediately, upon the reading of the paragraph in the meeting, I was aware of the major slight to the Real Presence, and I wasn't going to stand by. I actually said to Carol Ann that I was certainly benefitting from God's Providence because I should have taken umbrage the week before with the errors in the Promise. I was accountable for that inaction, in placing a person over God and His Truth. I was, however, providentially, going to be stirred to action concerning the deficiencies of the *Handbook* the very next week.

A fundamental Catholic Church teaching is the hierarchical nature of God's creation, and of creation's subordination and complete dependency upon God. For example, Angels are above man. Man is above beast. Mortal sin is worse than venial sin... and... being before the Real Presence is NOT just like being anywhere else on the planet's surface.

CA. So, we never went back and none of the group ever contacted us after this email exchange.

E. As an aside, above, I focused on the word “heroic.” It provided an easy argument to show one piece of flawed logic in Frank Duff’s paragraph. Had that not been in the paragraph, there is another visible flaw. He presents an argument that taking a little walk messes up your prayer life and the organization you belong to. So, it was wrong of the blessed Mother to say to St. Bernadette, “Let Processions come hither.” So it is wrong to have Palm Sunday Processions, Corpus Christi Processions, Entrance Processions into Mass. All of these Processions ruin the public liturgy of the Church. And, the organization gets messed up, i.e., the Catholic Church. That’s what Frank Duff’s reasoning says. Hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...

CHAPTER SIX: MORE DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Gospel of St. Matthew 7:15 (Douay-Rheims)

E. Actually four years earlier, we did a little Phase III discerning. We went back to the priests of my seminary at our “home” community. We were, therefore, going with little hope and little expectation. Sure this was a different priest, but from the same group of priests, and I observed some common trends throughout the seminary: superiority, self-assuredness, expecting to be pampered, and not to be questioned.

I have another hypothesis, like the one about the institution of the Novus Ordo Mass. It also hasn’t changed in fifteen years. There are Latin Mass goers who eschew the Novus Ordo Sacraments and think something has gone terribly wrong. I agree, but I think what went wrong happened before the Mass was dumped, as I have already pointed out.

Here’s this other hypothesis. Traditional Latin Mass people can very easily fall into the trap of thinking themselves superior to the rest of the world. You have the Mass as, prominently, the most important thing in the world. You have essentially the whole world turning its back on what underpins it. As Catholics, you should know this. You see all these other Catholics having casually left the “most Beautiful

Thing This Side of Heaven” and wonder why they would do that? You see the New Mass as a shadow of the former Mass. It’s understandably an easy pitfall to fall into the perspective that you must be special, but it is ruinous to being Catholic.

To be Catholic is to be a sinner, just like everybody else. To be Catholic is to be here on this earth making your choices for good or evil, and therefore Heaven or hell, just like everybody else. St. Paul said, “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway. (I Corinthians 9:27, Douay-Rheims)” While everybody is different, and there is hierarchy, the great equalizer is that any one of us, even if we’re not now, can turn onto some very common paths that don’t earn us Heaven, i.e. we’re going to hell. Given this, who is better than whom? In my opinion the one-up perspective significantly reduces your chances of getting to Heaven. You might get there, but the “harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle” Scripture comes to mind (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25).

So, sure, this was a different priest from the Society, but cut from the same bolt of cloth? Actually, he should be. I would expect like I said before, 24 hours a day in that seminary, for around seven years, you really think you can escape unscathed from the persistent attitudes around you? From May to October, we made a tentative trial of it. Carol Ann wound up in a rental within easy walking distance. I wasn’t there,

except for visits. I was running a low-power Catholic radio station, six days a week, a hundred miles away.

CA. I have always had a deep desire to attend daily Mass, but it has never been possible in my Catholic journey so far. I moved 2 blocks from the only daily Latin Mass in our state and by doing this, incurred an hour-and-a-half commute to work. I had an Assistant Principal that year and thought she could start school on the mornings I was late, and if there was no board meeting or PTO or other parish council meeting, then I could also attend the Masses that were scheduled in the evening. Erik would drive down for the Sunday Mass after broadcasting all week on the Catholic radio station that was a part-time affiliate of EWTN.

The priest at that time seemed off-putting and a little aloof, but his sermons seemed OK, and he was very active in working for the community. He seemed OK. But, in July he went on a month vacation. Another priest filled in and he seemed a little more humble and approachable, but his sermons were pretty dry and pedantic. When the regular priest returned from his vacation, I was eager to get into daily Mass attendance. That would not be possible with all the events and requirements of school start-up in August and September, but by October, I should be able to attend most daily Masses. I was excited and looking forward to this.

However, his return proved to be another “adventure” into discernment. Now, in more than one

sermon he referred to the “sin of Abraham” that had caused all the problems with the Muslims today. This seemed pretty non-orthodox and screwy to me. I tried to find any references about this, but came up with nothing. I don’t know where the priest got these ideas. Scripture does not support this; neither does the Catholic Magisterium. I started talking to Erik about it and what should I do? I still held onto my dream of daily Mass.

Then, on a Sunday in early October, we came into the Church and I noticed there was black on the Tabernacle. I was bewildered. What could that mean? Black never is placed on the Tabernacle. The Chalice was draped with a black veil. What could this mean? Then, the priest entered wearing black vestments under a cope that was lined with red satin. He looked like a vampire or Count Dracula. Erik and I looked at each other. We didn’t leave that time, but were not really sure if we should stay or go. During the week I checked with other members and found out the vestments were new and a gift and was told that the priest felt obligated to wear them. They were supposed to be green. Later, a friend whose son was in the Confirmation class, told me that she was allowed to take the vestment out into the sunlight and in full sunlight it did have a slight green sheen. When I asked about the red satin linings, I was told, “It’s just another liturgical color.” But, in the Church and on the priest, the vestments were for all apparent examination, purely black—and so were the Tabernacle and Chalice veils. The combination with the red satin linings looked something other than Catholic and other than Catholic priestly.

E. As I recall, he wore the black vestments on Sunday three or four times that we attended. There was the slightest green sheen that flickered into view with the right angle and the right angle of light and immediately disappeared from view. 99.9% of the time, the color was solid black to view.

This is the priest's Abraham opinion. Abraham is a fool, because he thought he could get Hagar pregnant, and have Hagar's child running around without his wife Sara going ballistic. Obviously, Abraham is a fool, so lectured this priest. He made Abraham and this action the cause of all the conflicts between Muslim and Christian. However, Mohammed, and therefore the Muslims, didn't arrive on the scene for another thousand or two thousand years.

The Scriptural presentation of Abraham is that he's trying to do God's will-- God Who told him he would have a son, and conceiving a son wasn't working with Sara. So, for him to accept Sara's suggestion to conceive through Hagar in order to accomplish God's will, specifically, because the motive is to accomplish God's will, is neither foolish nor sinful.

We didn't permanently stop going to the priest's Masses after the first Sunday of black vestments because the person who wanted to address the vestment color issue with the priest didn't get to it right away. Then, the liturgical season changed to Advent and Christmas in which no 'theoretically green' vestments are worn. However, when the short ordinary

time returned between Christmas Season and Lent, the black vestments for Sunday were back. He had other actually-green vestments. We got up and left before Mass even started that January Sunday, 2011, and that was that.

This was a highly competent priest. He effortlessly sang, used Latin, followed the rubrics, performed his liturgical functions. Possibly, someone highly incompetent, or just not with it, would not be aware of the significance of the liturgical colors. Stained glass windows and statues are another part of the efforts of the Church to use visuals to teach congregations. Black is used only for Masses of the Dead to represent the sorrow of the broken connection for those left behind on the earth. Black is the antithesis of the Easter Sunday joy which fulfills the long awaited rescue of humanity, a humanity otherwise condemned to hell. This is a big, big reason for joy—a real shot at Heaven and eternal bliss instead of eternal super suffering. Each Sunday represents the Resurrection, even when it's not Easter Sunday.

Color, non-scientifically, is what it looks like. When it doesn't appear to be that color, it isn't. There is a time or two during Mass when the priest turns and faces the people and raises his arms to about shoulder height. The red inner lining really works with the black then, because there, in the sanctuary, Hollywood's standard Dracula image presented itself to the congregation. I can't say the intention of the priest. However, as the vestment color directly mocks the Sunday liturgical meaning, there was no way to

completely rule out the possibility that his intention was to mock the Mass. We could no longer go.

Church teaching on Abraham is that he's the "Father of Faith." Abraham is the beginning of the turn-around from Adam and Eve. Abraham sets the path towards Christ's coming. Abraham represents God the Father in Heaven, willing to sacrifice his son. Was the priest trying to deride the Patriarch of our Judeo-Christian faith lineage?

Like I said, this Phase III discernment was an aberration. We'd already had "in your face" evidence about this same group of priests, so we were "pre-disastered." The decision-making process was seeing the black vestments, getting up and leaving. We weren't that disappointed because we expected so little from this group of priests. The first full Phase III discernment without a "heads-up" was the Legion of Mary. During this discernment, we spent long hours of dialoguing to not only obtain the discernment, but also to process our reacting. We didn't go in with super-high expectations, although we did not expect the "low" to go that low, so we still had some disappointment to deal with.

CA. When we left this same Latin Mass community in 2006 after we had been assailed by the Deacon's "Christian jihad" homily on a Sunday morning in May (Phase II discernment of the "ton of bricks" sort), we were adrift for a couple of months, still trying to discern this new path and how to regularly

attend Sunday Mass. We went to the Novus Ordo parish 45 miles away, but found the distractions and lack of reverence still a problem, as well as the same difficulties with the Mass itself that we have documented already. But, we began to go to the Novus Ordo Vigil Mass on Saturday evening at this parish, then, in our little home chapel on Sunday, we would read the 1962 Latin Missal and pray the Mass prayers and make a spiritual communion. Erik rarely participated in the Novus Ordo Mass or received Communion, but he would go to Confession regularly there. We had known the priest for many years from another parish, so we trusted more in the intentions he had as a priest administering the Sacraments.

There was a monastery about 200 miles away from us in another state and diocese where the Latin Mass and Gregorian chant were used with the traditional Divine Office. They seemed an alternative, but they were 4 hours away, and we had been burned pretty badly by our recent experience with our former Latin Mass community. I decided to take my usual Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (July 16) retreat and go to the monastery. They were using a converted horse barn for their Church and monks and liturgy seemed more humble and more pure than what we had experienced recently in our journey of faith. I came back from my 3-day retreat convinced it was an option. Since sometimes we had been getting up at 4:30 to make the earlier 7 AM Mass, 100 miles away on Sunday, we could still get up at 4:30 and reach the monastery for High Mass at 10:00 AM.

Erik wasn't so sure. It was a lot of driving—8 hours for a 2-hour Mass on Sunday. But, he had no other suggestion, so we tried it one Sunday, and he was as impressed as I had been.

For the next 8 years, we tried to regularly attend on Feast days and at least one Sunday a month, whenever possible, weather and physical schedules permitting. It became a little more difficult after I was principal in a town 150 miles away from home in the opposite direction. I became friends with the sisters associated with the monastery. It was a time of learning as well as perseverance. The drive itself was grueling to make. Sometimes we would camp out at a nearby state park; other times for holidays, we would rent a cabin at the state park. The rhythm and routine became our “new normal.” However, this was to change. In 2014, during the Lent that saw our Phase III discernment and leaving of the Legion of Mary, we found ourselves in a similar situation at the monastery.

E. Carol Ann didn't want me to start with, “*Blankety-blank*, not this again!” We had been on the same page, so it seemed, with those at the monastery. Not that we knew the monks that well, as there was limited interaction. A major liking I had at this monastery was their Sunday homily routine. It could last as long as it took for all the monks to make a Procession. Men and boys were invited, if they so chose. I really liked this not making a big deal of their homilies. Sometimes the priest would speed up his

delivery as you could hear the Procession returning; sometimes they just cut it off. Sometimes they just kept the homily short because they did not have that much time anyway. I joined the Procession occasionally. The homilies I heard were basic, not too surprising, given the time constraint. Given our past experience, this set-up made me happy.

However, rules and regs, habits and daily schedules are not invincible. The Constitution of this country does not cause people to be a certain way—no guideline can. The essential make-up is the people. The building blocks are good or they're not. The building blocks are the people. They set the tone.

I thought this group of monks was protected from getting uppity, or changing. Daily, they got grungy. They got hot and sweaty. They were busy with their work. They fed themselves a fair bit from their own food: cheese, milk, mutton, beef, etc. They were building up their grape vineyard and vegetable garden. They switched to wood heat for part of the buildings because of the fossil fuel costs, and the wood they hauled in themselves. They started the day with a marathon Matins, Lauds, private Masses which took from 5 AM to about 7:30 AM, then there was a short break, and they had Prime at 8 AM.

Most of the time, most of the community joined in for the High Mass at 10 AM. The schedule and the day were grueling enough that nobody would join the community for a lark. There was a lot of different Gregorian chant, not easy to learn, not easy to sing.

Even in the extra-long liturgies, they kept the routine of singing some of the prayers all the way through twice. So I thought the make-up of the group, weeded out by the difficulty of the life, would not get off-track.

CA. My close association with the sisters gave me a close-up view of their life and the life of the monks. The sisters washed and ironed linens, arranged flowers, kept their own prayer schedule and had their own community events and outreach. It was a separate establishment, but they were associated with the monastery. Conflict is inevitable in human relationships—communication issues, disagreements, differences of opinion prevail in any sort of relationship. In most communities that I have been in some way associated with, these very problems become the grist of perfecting the members in the virtues needed to sustain religious life. So, I was not surprised when the sisters shared sometimes their conflicts with me. After all, I was a “safe” person, outside the sphere of their daily life who could listen and be a sounding board. I also prayed for them and with them.

Then a major issue arose that began to wear on them and wear down the relationship they had with the Prior, which involved the postulancy and religious vocation of one of the women who entered the sisters’ community. There were several major obvious revelations that this woman was not a candidate for the religious life. The first time she left in the middle of the night by calling her sister who lived nearby and packing

all her things despite the fact that lights out had already begun. She gave no explanation. She had asked me a few weeks before to pray for her because she did not think she could stay. I prayed for her without any understanding of her situation, although she seemed very nervous. Her flight from the convent after 9 or 10 months and after being clothed as a Novice happened almost on the eve of the solemn professions of the 2 older sisters who asked her to stay at least until after that event.

She re-applied to enter again about a year later. The sisters didn't let her back in the convent. Then, the Prior of the monastery began a campaign of constant pressure for her re-admittance. As her spiritual director, he maintained that she had grown and needed another opportunity to try her vocation. At least, this is what was reported to me. The relationship with the Prior became chilly and more and more difficult.

Finally, the sisters agreed to a short visit. During this visit, the "aspiring postulant" proved herself to be unable to follow obedience in the convent and religious life. This time she was more aggressive and demanding and presented a back problem and other difficulties that she claimed should relieve her of chores and regular duties. However, the Superior noted that during prayers, she could bend and turn and sit and stand with no apparent difficulties.

After the visit, the sisters again communicated to the Prior that she did not have a vocation with them. Within a year, the Prior-now-Abbot forced the sisters

to take the "aspiring postulant" back in, this time as a novice, as if she had not left before, which is not the Rule. Once again, the aspiring sister was rude and aggressive in community life. She wanted to choose her own cell and communicated this through the Abbot. She constantly complained about another novice, and even had a paranoia about her. The Superior tried to assign them work in different locations. The novice sister was a meek and obedient much-younger woman who was a very non-threatening person. I knew her for 2 years and spent at least 10 full days and nights at the convent when she was there. They wanted this novice to stay, but after all the conflicts, she left. At one point with visitors in the parlor, the Abbot's choice novice was screaming at the Superior. That was the straw. The Superior asked her to leave. But this was not the end of it.

The woman left for about six months or so, travelling Europe and the U.S. to apply for admission to other communities. Of course, she gave the sisters as a reference. I was asked to help type a reply to one of the communities where she applied. Since she was not admitted elsewhere, she returned and got a job in a city near the monastery so she could attend Masses at the monastery as often as possible, and lived with an elderly lady nearby. After more than a year like this, the Abbot asked one of the sisters about taking the woman back as a novice. The sister told me she gave him the same reasons and examples from the other attempts at religious life and the conclusion she was not a candidate for their community. Then, she found out from the Superior that the Abbot had already set the

date for her re-entry, and the woman had already given two-week's notice to quit her job. Her entry was in 3 weeks. But the Abbot had clearly phrased it as soliciting advice, not as something already accomplished. This same sister found out from the Superior of a different community around this time that the Superior had asked for the sister to come to her community years ago. The reason she didn't know this was because the Abbot told her that she was **not** granted entrance to that community.

Not only did the Abbot get the woman back in the convent, he expressed his desire that this woman become the Superior at some point. For 15 years, the sister whose advice he claimed to be asking had been told she would succeed the Superior. She was the founder of the community and the Abbot had been her long-time spiritual director even before that.

E. I'm glad we remembered and put down the interference that the sisters experienced in their choices for postulants, otherwise what we have to say about the monastery as a whole, which we knew so little of, would seem petty. Canon 643 says that any forcing in the entry into religious life makes it invalid. Canon 643: "The following are admitted invalidly: #4. One who enters the Institute induced by force, grave fear, or malice, or the one whom a Superior, induced in the same way, has received." That sister is not a sister. Any vows she's taken haven't actually been taken, just like an annulment proclamation of a marriage. It never was.

A more serene, centered, life pattern is more conducive for us distractible humans in order to focus in on God. So this list of glitches in governing at the monastery is not earth-shaking, just revealing. The prior moved out of the temporary quarters into the permanent ones before they were ready. Generally, orders that are going to do some penance reserve it for themselves. A visitor from Canada said of the public, part-built chapel, "That's the coldest building I've ever been in."

Their first new construction was a little highly arched heavy concrete bridge over a creek. That's nice, but it doesn't extend far enough. On one side where the arch lands is fine, it's high ground; on the other side, the arch drops you back down into the creek, which, when it's high, regularly washes out the gravel road at that end of the bridge.

The part of the chapel already built, the crypt, is a massive use of concrete structure. You could probably set a skyscraper on top of that instead of just one more tall story. But with all that conservative overbuilding, rebar protruding from this massive concrete edifice was left to rust for more than five years. The floor above the yet-to-be-built chapel was, temporarily, the roof for the crypt. It wasn't waterproofed. It leaked. Then, they built part of the chapel above. The finished ceiling of the crypt was installed. The weather-sheltering above was not quite finished. It leaked a few more times onto the finished ceiling.

Some fancy and expensive plaques, carvings, and woodwork have been built and installed before completing the basic structure. By the way, that still cold part-chapel, mentioned by the Canadian, is also, still, very hot in the summer. And, there is still some temporary quartering of monks.

The Abbot also put their land under a federal use program to make some money-- not a partner I would voluntarily align with—fifty dollar toilet seats, etc. Since we regularly visited over the course of 8 years, we did manage to hear a few of his homilies, although these were reserved only to the biggest feasts of the year. As he moved from Prior to Abbot, his homilies also changed. They became somewhat insipid, heavy into his role as Father of his monks.

Everybody gets to be not-good at some things. The Prior-Abbot made mistakes that we all make. Still, his job is to smoothly run the monastery. If it is not running smoothly, he's not doing his job. The monks had the opportunity to make a change because there was a vote for abbot and they stuck with the prior. The intrusion into the sisters' postulant decisions was known to at least some other monks.

The whole group of monks got their own particular and unexpected test from the Abbot. The monks don't give input or interact with the world, except as the Rule and Abbot and duties dictate. The Abbot set up a meeting, such that the presence of the monks could be construed as an attempt to put pressure on the meeting attendees. The meeting

attendees were the lay people who had moved to the vicinity of the monastery. This meeting was to tell those lay people to ante up for the building fund.

Now a monastery is not a parish whose local population is its primary support. And as this is the case, the monks chose a site in an extremely rural setting—no Catholics around and not many people, period. The Catholics who are now in the vicinity had recently re-located at significant expense. This is the make-up of the surrounding Catholic population.

The sisters invited us to the meeting. We quickly discerned that this was very much an unjust request. Once again, just as I felt pastors of parishes in the diocese here should not have handed out the sign-up for healthcare flyers, so I also felt the monks shouldn't have gone along with the Abbot in this “what-have-you-done-for-me-lately” move against the people they see regularly. If the Bishop's request is scandalous, the parish priests shouldn't hand out his flyers. If the Abbot is trying to unfairly pressure the surrounding community, the monks shouldn't attend. These are exactly the situations when your adult Confirmation, strengthening you to defend the faith and the right, should impel you to take a stand. Obedience to something wrong is wrong.

We stopped going to the monastery within a month after parting ways with the Legion of Mary. With the Legion of Mary, when the email confrontation happened, we were already close to leaving. Still, we were shocked by the email responses. The Real

Presence is so much the center of the active faith-- Jesus present, like nowhere else, centered in the Church, in the Tabernacle. When you bring up a big subject-- a tornado is headed this way-- you expect a little attention to be given to that subject. When it's not given, it's just weird.

A repeat of this happened at the monastery. We didn't leave because of the poor running of the monastery, or even the un-canonical intrusion into the sisters' postulant choices. We left because of the action of my spiritual director. This is Phase III. In Phase IV we might have already left.

CA. Erik decided he wanted to run some things about the Legion of Mary by his spiritual director, one of the older priests at the monastery. Mainly, he was concerned about one member taking communion to a woman who was not coming to Mass, and in an irregular marriage not reconciled with the Church. He had talked to her the week before when she was the only member at the meeting. It seemed providential at the time that he had this opportunity to talk with her alone.

His talk with her was simple and fairly short. I did not say anything, but prayed for him in my mind as he was trying to explain the problem with her taking communion to someone known to not be in right standing with the Church. The woman had acknowledged to the Legion of Mary member that she was in a marriage in which her husband was anti-

Catholic and would not even let her come to Mass-- much less receive the blessing of the Church on their marriage. The woman, according to the Legion of Mary member, had also not been to confession for quite a long time. Everything had been very cordial and peaceful and the Legion of Mary member had said she would talk to the priest before taking the communion. That was all. But, Erik wanted to see if there was anything else he should have done by way of instruction or exhortation. That's why we drove over the next Sunday to the monastery for High Mass. He had arranged for spiritual direction that afternoon.

I was looking at books in the bookstore when he came out of spiritual direction. He was not smiling or relaxed as usual when he left a session with his director. He nodded toward the door and said, "Let's go!" We quickly shuffled out to the car where he told me briefly he wanted to leave right then. He drove down to the bridge and we got out and sat on a rock by the creek to talk about what had happened. He seemed shocked, angry, frustrated. He said he never wanted to come back to the monastery again. I was bewildered. Never in the 8 years he had been going for regular spiritual direction with this same priest had he ever left in such an emotional state.

E. I'm an American male. I don't remember any emotion other than being unhappy. This is probably a form of Carol Ann anthropomorphizing the male gender to be just like the female. When I was

confronted as having done something wrong by the spiritual director, I was not set for it. I was caught off-guard. It felt like a back-peddling action to get my feet back under me. I don't remember never wanting to return to the monastery, but I just don't remember. I was unhappy and I remember not wanting to hang around, at all.

Carol Ann, having been present for the talk with the Legion of Mary member, unlike the spiritual director, was able to reassure me that I had been clear, not over-long, and basically soft-spoken. As we write this, I continue to believe that telling an older life-long Catholic, some Catholic marriage do's and don't's, which she didn't know, is no big deal. I did a little more than that, but spiritual direction is a good place to make sure that I had done enough. I hadn't expected to be told I shouldn't have done any of it.

This was March 9th. April 1st & 2nd is when the emailing occurred concerning praying the rosary in front of the Tabernacle with the Legion members. We went back to the monastery on April 11th, Passion Friday, for Carol Ann to renew private vows.

I brought the *Handbook* of the Legion of Mary to this next spiritual direction session. I was disagreed with once again, but apparently, I wasn't going to let it go so easily this time, because I kept talking about the *Handbook* in the bookstore after spiritual direction. I relented that the Blessed Virgin Mary is touted in other places with wondrous actions. However, in the Legion Promise she seems a little more directive and in charge,

relative to God, than usual. Relenting on that issue, I moved on to the end of the Promise in the *Handbook* and the use of the phrase, “renew the face of the earth.” I pointed out that I’ve only seen that used referring to the Holy Spirit’s actions and work, not a group of people.

I brought up the Tabernacle issue. I still was getting disagreement in that I was expressing these as real problematic issues, and the priest didn’t see anything as a big deal. I got one slight acquiescence as we began walking towards opposite doors. I, still trying to make a case, mentioned the seven or eight readings of this *Handbook* which would “not suffice to plumb its depths.” I said that that certainly has a different flavor than, for example, St. Thomas Aquinas’ take on **his** authorship-- he wanted to burn **his** writings.

CA. I walked up while Erik was talking at the bookstore window with the priest who was his spiritual director. I had used him as a confessor since my spiritual director was at a monastery some distance from where we lived and I was able to see him face-to-face only once a year or even every few years. Erik’s spiritual director was red in the face and obviously angry. He kept saying that it was the Legion’s author’s book and his meeting and it had an *Imprimatur*. He was pointedly angry about Erik even bringing up any disagreement with the text or the actions of the Legion, stating that they were worldwide and a long-standing organization in the Church. There was a how-dare-you-

question tone in his voice as he waved away Erik's arguments with one hand. At one point, I tried to explain that we had been discerning our membership in this organization and that the points were relevant to us. I said, "The author claims to base his group and program on the spirituality of St. Louis de Montfort, but in reality, it is almost 180° from de Montfort's consecration to Jesus through Mary."

About that time another priest showed up to help in the bookstore. Hearing the confrontation, he gave a quizzical glance toward Erik's spiritual director and toward us, as if to ask, "What's going on here?"

"They are claiming that the Legion of Mary is heretical," said the director. The other priest shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh well, the Bible is heretical!"

So that was it—"the Bible itself is heretical!" We were out the door and that door was closing on quite an era for us, not a 9-month journey like the Legion of Mary, but 8 years of what had seemed spiritual connectedness and prayer.

E. We stopped at the same spot by the bridge as we had a month before. I didn't want to be totally hasty, but I broached the subject of us being through with the monastery. I most certainly didn't want to come back. We did agree that I was done with that spiritual director and we went home.

We did decide we were through with the monastery after a few weeks of discerning. It was more difficult to discern about the entire monastery. But the monks had not very long ago chosen the same man again, the Prior, to become the Abbot. We got corroboration a couple of months later, when the sister told us about the Abbot telling her (a long time ago) a convent had denied her entry, and she had just found out from that Mother Superior that she had accepted her. The Abbot had directly lied to her.

And, by the way, the Bible isn't heretical. One of the authors being the Holy Spirit, being God, means that saying the Bible is heretical is saying that God, the Author, said an untruth. God is Truth. God is the One and only Source of Truth. As soon as the source of something is known to be God, it is known to be Truth. Scripture is God's revelation—God telling us what is His truth. It is, therefore, an impossibility that “The Bible is heretical.”

“All scripture, inspired by God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice. That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.” II Timothy 3:16-17 (Douay-Rheims)

CHAPTER SEVEN: WALKING THE WALK— An Easy Discernment

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth because he is a hireling: and he hath no care for the sheep.” St. John’s Gospel 10:11-13 (Douay-Rheims Bible)

Angels are one essence. We are two—body and soul. The soul animates the body. Sometimes you have to ask yourself, what does a soul think it’s doing?

E. That monastery of some 200 miles distance from us was not within the geographical lines of the diocese we lived in. That does not mean we had no Catholic contact within the diocese in which we were living. We did.

Someone we knew heard a previous local bishop say, “I only see the Pope once every four years for fifteen minutes. In this diocese, I’m the Pope.” However, that bishop didn’t seem to do whatever he wanted to do. Even if he were denying the Catholic faith, you weren’t going to outright catch him at it, I didn’t think. For example, he was set to have an existing hospital, newly acquired by a Catholic order, to

continue to have abortions. We heard rumors about “re-decorating, using different wallpaper, or something” to distinguish the two parts of the hospital—one being the area where you could do abortions, the other area, nominally Catholic, where you couldn’t. Some local Catholics, apparently, objected. Our priest told us that the bishop sent the issue to Rome, saying that he would do whatever Rome told him. Our priest’s comment was that the bishop had a doctorate in Theology and was Valedictorian of his class, so he could probably figure out the correctness of the plan, all on his own.

CA. I had concerns about the support listed in a parish bulletin in our diocese of a local African-American Masonic Lodge, and wrote to this same previous bishop with my concerns. He replied that it was being helped for charitable reasons and that was allowed. In his letter he stated that the Church had a different relationship to the Masonic Orders than it used to.

These are the Popes from Pope Clement XII in 1738 (1.*In eminenti apostolatus*) and dates of their renouncements and prohibitions against Catholic participation in Freemasonry up to the 1917 Code of Canon Law, Section 2335 which stated: “Those who join a Masonic sect or other societies of the same sort, which plot against the Church or against legitimate authority, incur ipso facto an excommunication simply reserved to the Holy See.”

2. Benedict XIV (1751)
3. Pius VII (1821)
4. Leo XII (1826)
5. Pius VIII (1829)
6. Gregory XVI (1832)
7. Pius IX (1846, 1849, 1864, 1865, 1869, 1873)
8. Leo XIII (*Humanum genus*, 1884)

After the Canon Law, Popes continued in the twentieth century to speak out against freemasonry, especially Pope Pius XII. After Vatican Council II and the revisions of Canon Law in 1983, some did believe that perhaps there was a lessening of opposition to freemasonry. The Canon Law 1374 replaced 2335 in 1983 and stated more simply: “A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict.”

On November 26, 1983, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (future Pope Benedict XVI and Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith) issued the following declaration with the signed approval of Pope John Paul II:

“*Declaration on Masonic Associations:* Therefore the Church’s negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since their principles

have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enroll in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive holy Communion.”

Most recently on July 28, 2013, Pope Francis in an interview returning from a mission trip stated that “Masonic lobbies... This is the most serious problem for me.” (Chapman, Michael W., *Catholic News Service* online report, 08/02/2013: www.cnsnews.com)

Our priest at the time warned us about obedience to someone who clearly is not following the Magisterium of the Church. He told us of a priests’ retreat under this same bishop in which there was regular bread used for the Eucharist. When it was his turn to receive he told us he held up the bread and said out loud, “What is this?” The priest distributing communion told him, “That’s the Host.” Our pastor replied, “No, it isn’t. It isn’t consecrated.” The priest who was our pastor at the time had graduated with a theology degree in Canon Law in Rome and had said his first Mass in front of Pope John Paul II.

All this to say, in our journeying in the faith, we have learned to pay attention to what is before us. With so many errors today, we have learned to seek guidance from the recent Popes, especially Pope John Paul II and his landmark *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. With the advent of the internet and easy access to Canon Law and the admonitions of papal encyclicals and documents, discerning Church matters has been put at

the fingertips of any Catholic interested in following his faith in obedience to the true Magisterial authority.

E. We have a Magisterium of the Church. But, for correctly following that Magisterium, it is necessary to distinguish its two parts: 1. The true teaching Magisterium. 2. Those who have excommunicated themselves by separating themselves from the deposit of faith, yet remain in their official positions and capacities within the hierarchical Magisterium, and make proclamations not to be trusted.

Whereas that previous local bishop seemed hard to pin down as not doing something Catholic-- he could parlay a questionable act into something not ostensibly against Catholicism-- the same could *not* be said about a successor of his. The successor seems bent on getting his own incriminating statements permanently recorded before the most widely public audience possible.

There was a Catholic columnist, probably syndicated, who was featured sometimes in the local diocesan newspaper. In October, 2008, this columnist blatantly twisted Pope John Paul II's words in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. The columnist transformed Pope John Paul II's subject from not knowing who in particular, like even Hitler, goes to hell, to not being sure that even one person goes to hell. That message is the opposite to the passage he cites by Pope John Paul II, which reiterates the early Councils' determination that hell is peopled.

The columnist refers the reader to page 186. It is actually the very top of page 186, and it starts at the end of page 185. On page 185 towards the bottom, Pope John Paul II wrote: “Can God Who has loved man so much permit the man who rejects Him to be condemned to eternal torment?” Although the columnist uses quote marks, he compresses the sentence to “Can God condemn anyone to eternal torment?” Then, he puts Pope John Paul II’s answer as: “The silence of the Church”-- the columnist then inserts in parenthesis (on this subject) -- “is, therefore, the only appropriate position for Christian faith. Even when Jesus says of Judas the traitor, ‘It would be better for that man if he had never been born.’ (Matthew 26:24), his words do not allude for certain to eternal damnation.” (p. 186)

The columnist leaves out these sentences that are in between his two excerpted quotes from Pope John Paul II: “And yet, the words of Christ are unequivocal. In Matthew’s Gospel He speaks clearly of those who will go to eternal punishment (cf. Mt. 25:46). Who will these be? The Church has never made any pronouncement in this regard. This is a mystery, truly inscrutable, which embraces the holiness of God and the conscience of man.”

So, “the silence of the Church,” refers to “Who will these be?” in a *definitely* peopled hell. In the same paragraph on page 185, above this, Pope John Paul II writes, “In point of fact, the ancient councils rejected the theory of the *‘final apocatastasis’*, “according to which the world would be regenerated after destruction, and

every creature would be saved; a theory which indirectly abolished hell.” So, you’ve got the Pope referring to Church Councils which denounce the concept of an unpeopled hell, and you’ve got the Pope himself turning to Matthew 25:46 to show that hell is most definitely peopled.

The columnist leads into his excerpted quotes from *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* with these words: “But is anyone at all ‘in hell’? We don’t know.”

So, I wrote to the bishop, ending the letter with “I wish for your intervention in your office as Shepherd to this Diocese.”

He wrote back, “Thank you for your recent letter, regarding the column in the October issue of the Diocesan paper. I appreciate you writing and expressing your views on these articles.

May God bless you and your loved ones with peace and good health and may the coming Advent season be filled with joy.

With every best wish and prayer, I am...”

So he sounds more like his predecessor here. The thing is, even in the response letter to me, he should have made some mention of the correct teaching. The fact is, an “unpeopled hell” is a get-out-of-jail-free card. I can do anything: murder, kill, steal, destroy. Anything. It won’t matter. I can do absolutely anything I can possibly imagine wantonly every second

of my life, and I will have bliss in paradise, because there is no one ever going to go to hell.

So much for his role as shepherd. That's why this chapter's Scripture verse is "the hireling," and, titled. "An Easy Discernment." We are doing Phase III-type discernment, not because we are in Phase III yet, but because this subject matter is easy. This bishop makes big, bad, humongous, totally anti-Catholic official bishop pronouncements and actions, and then makes sure they are widely disseminated on permanent public record.

Discernment is truly knowing the object or person to be discerned, from God's perspective, and then knowing the relationship to have with that object or person. As we go on, it will become increasingly obvious that relating to him as a Catholic Bishop is impossible.

In November, 2008, the bishop's newspaper carried an article with the bold headline: **CATHOLIC LEADERS CONGRATULATE** [Newly-Elected President's Name] **ON HISTORIC ELECTION.**

By the way, a much more recent Diocesan Newspaper issue spoke of the anticipated canonization of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. They included a photo, captioned—"A Photo of Mother Teresa taken in 2002." Neat trick, since she died in 1997.

It's not a sin to be superficial. It is, however, non-Catholic to place a skin color, which is meaningless and a big, fat, zero issue in Catholic

teaching, above abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, embryonic stem-cell research, fetal research, public lying, etc. All these are grave sins and therefore of uppermost importance to anyone who's actually formed in conscience and life direction by Catholic teaching. Bishops are not allowed to refer to the *Catechism*, they are supposed to have it memorized, know it by heart. He probably forgot the list of mortal sins, or the term mortal sin, or the words important and hierarchy, except as they refer to his position as a bishop.

Every event is actually historic. Within a minute it is no longer part of the present.

I cut out one of the bishop's columns (not including the issue or date in the clipping) from one of the bishop's diocesan newspapers: "The Bishop delivered the following homily on All Souls' Day, Oct. 2" (at a certain parish). As All Souls' Day is always November 2, we can assume it was probably that, and not October, and maybe 2008 since I seemed to be scoping the bishop's paper for errors that year—the only reason I would read it.

With a red pen on the bottom of his column, I had written: "Creatures finite. Not growth in purgatory. Souls in purgatory do intercede in fact." But now, re-reading the bishop's column, I noticed even another problem. First paragraph, second sentence: "It's obvious from Scripture that those who die never having committed any sins at all—babies, for instance—go straight to heaven..."

Catechism of the Catholic Church: “As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God... allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism.” (p. 321, #**1261**. United States Catholic Conference Edition, 1994: Washington, D.C.)

Now if the bishop had meant baptized babies, which he didn't specify, it is in the Deposit of Faith that baptized babies, with 100% certainty, do go to Heaven. It is no longer a matter of Scriptural interpretation by some person or other.

Now bear in mind that bishops are not allowed to look things up in the *Catechism*. They are supposed to have it memorized, know it by heart. So he might have forgotten.

Next oops: “...such that for us to be able to enjoy fully the infinite joy of heaven, God has to do something to remedy our limitations.” Just a note that we are limited creatures in heaven also and the fullness of our joy will be of the finite variety. Only God is Infinite.

Again: “Just as in this life, so also in purgatory, growth and healing...” The only verb used in the *Catechism's* three paragraphs on purgatory is *purify* (p. 268-269, # **1030., 1031., 1032**. United States Catholic Conference Edition, 1994: Washington, D.C.). The other descriptions are “cleansing fire”... “delivered from their sin.” The *Catechism* also describes what's going on in purgatory with the phrase “...they undergo

purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”

There is no mention of growth. In this life, physically we grow from 2 cells--one from a mother, one from a father. Through infancy, childhood, adulthood, and those darned declining years, we grow experientially, accrue abilities. We grow mentally and spiritually because, unlike animals, we are not born with the ingrained instincts. We have to learn everything.

After death, it much more seems that you take what you got with you at the time of death. The Psalm says, “Man’s plans turn to dust when he dies.” (Psalm 146:4) Catholic teaching doesn’t assume further growth, only the bishop’s column does.

Now to the words, “just as in this life, so also in purgatory...” I have never heard anybody in referencing purgatory say, “Oh, it’s a lot like here,” because I’ve never heard anybody ever say that there was any similitude between life on this earth and purgatory at all. One major big, big factor in nobody having thoughts of this sort could be that here on this earth we have a body, souls in purgatory—no body.

And now the last paragraph of the bishop’s column: “And once they get into heaven, they’ll surely reciprocate by interceding for us...” The *Catechism*: “*Communion with the dead...* Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.” (Souls in heaven don’t need any help. Obviously, these are the dead in Purgatory who could use a lot of help.) Bishops aren’t

allowed to refer to the *Catechism*. They are supposed to have it memorized, know it by heart. So, the bishop probably forgot that souls in purgatory don't have to wait until getting into heaven to intercede for us. They can do it right there in purgatory—such a short little bishop's column, so many mistakes. (p. 250, **958**. United States Catholic Conference Edition, 1994: Washington. D.C.)

And now for more incredibly easy discernment in the summer of 2009. Here are the bishop's words printed in the bishop's paper:

“This last Tuesday, Aug. 4, we received word that Fr. so-and-so, who has been the administrator of your parish for the last two years, is alleged to have engaged in sexual activity with an adult male between 3 and 5 AM in the parish rectory. This is not a case of child molestation because the alleged victim is over 18 years of age.

“It is also not clear yet whether criminal charges will be filed. But, what is clear is that Fr. so-and-so has violated our trust in him, the consequence of which should be no surprise to him or anyone else: immediate removal from ministry while the facts of the case are investigated, and permanent expulsion from ministry if the allegations are verified. In this regard, I would like to ask anyone else who may have an allegation of harm by Fr. so-and-so to please come forward. We have received only this one allegation, but if there are more incidents, we need to know it.” (Diocese newspaper, Online Version, August 15, 2009)

How can it be, “what is clear is that Fr. so-and-so has violated our trust in him,” and at the same time, “if the allegations are verified.” The time-frame of these two quoted passages are a mere few seconds apart. How has someone, definitely done it, and at the same time-- maybe, maybe not.

This was August 8. The bishop gave a homily August 10 at that parish where the supposed event occurred. In the meantime, the city police completed their investigation and no charges were filed. In the first part of the bishop’s delivered homily, he says, “Fr. so-and-so is alleged to have done irreparable damage...” Just about the end, he says, “We pray first and foremost for the young man whose person was allegedly...”

Writing some time later than all this, Fr. so-and-so says, “I am writing this to you to let you know that the absolute worst 3+ years of my life are nearly over. And thanks be to God! For those of you who are a bit in the dark, please be aware that I was accused in August of 2009 of a horrible thing—one that was so outrageous that it was totally unbelievable. And thanks to the internet, vestiges of the nasty story remain. For those of you who know me, the accusation is known to be a huge pile of male bovine excrement. Fortunately, the civil authorities so very quickly agreed; the whole thing was dismissed within a few hours.” (Forwarded email, September 12, 2012)

No other accusers came forward. Nothing came up to corroborate or make believable what this one

accuser had said, so the accusation never went beyond a one-time, one-person completely unverified accusation.

Yet, you gotta love the plain-spokenness of the bishop on this unverified freshly-made, quickly-dropped accusation. In his same homily with the words alleged in it, here's what else the bishop had to say about Fr. so-and-so:

“Our hearts go out in a special way to the members of Fr. so-and-so’s family, who are innocent victims as well and whose lives will never be the same again.” And, “Fr. so-and-so’s alleged deeds are not those of a happy man, and I can only begin to imagine the anguish of this sort of guilt, especially in one who had received so many advantages—a living faith, a seminary education, ordination, years of preaching the Gospel—as betrayed as we feel, can you imagine how betrayed he feels internally by his own actions? If in your anger you are finding it hard to feel compassion for him, it helps to remember that his having to live with the consequences of what he has done...” And, “You whom he has betrayed—how’s he ever going to face you again? He will truly have a millstone around his neck that he will never be able to shake off in this life and there will be days when he will want someone to just throw him into the sea and be done with it all...” And, “If the truth is out, we’ll at least all be on the same page. And so, I will also have my letter and this homily published in this edition of blanket-blank diocesan paper.” And, “...God in his infinite goodness provides us with the way to complete this process of

healing in purgatory prior to admitting us into heaven. I think it's fair to say that Fr. so-and-so's purgatory has already begun. We can help the poor souls in purgatory with our prayers and that's what we have gathered here to do today..." And, "We pray for Fr. so-and-so who is now very much a broken man." And, "...who are themselves innocent victims of this sin and must now find a way to live with the devastating consequences of what Fr. so-and-so has done and find the strength to go on with their lives." (Ibid)

"Of what Fr. so-and-so has done" "alleged"
"of what Fr. so-and-so has done" "alleged" "of
what Fr. so-and-so has done" "alleged" "alleged"
"alleged" "has done" "alleged" "has done"

Sound mind?

Maybe it is good that this person became a bishop which means he isn't a judge. The number of prisons needed in the state he'd reside in as judge to contain the innocent people he sent to the slammer (who'd only been accused), would probably break the bank for that state. You can see why we don't credit ourselves with being in Phase III discernment back then.

CA. Then, I was part of a gem that was lost.

I had been principal for a year at a small, struggling Catholic school in a town about 50 miles from the diocese center that had an average of 70 or so

students (80% African American, 18% Hispanic, and 2% white or other). The school served the poor with over 74% of the students qualifying for Free or Reduced lunches with the federal National School Lunch Program (NSLP) -- meaning the families were at or below the federal guidelines for poverty.

Canon Law states unequivocally the basis for Catholic Education and its importance in pastoral care:

Canon 794. (Book III. Title III.): “1. The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life. 2. Pastors of souls have the duty of arranging everything so that all the faithful have a Catholic education.”

Chapter I. Schools

Canon 796. “1. Among the means to foster education, the Christian faithful are to hold schools in esteem: schools are the principal assistance to parents in fulfilling the function of education.”

Canon 800. “1. The Church has the right to establish and direct schools of any discipline, type, and level. 2. The Christian faithful are to foster Catholic schools, assisting in their establishment and maintenance, according to their means.”

Canon 802. “1. If schools which offer an education imbued with a Christian spirit are not

available, it is for the diocesan bishop to take care that they are established.”

During the 70's, a former bishop of the diocese closed both Catholic elementary schools at the two parishes in the town where I was later principal. One school and parish was black, the other, white. I was told, he said it was an embarrassment. However, by that action, he dismissed the nuns from both schools who were the very instruments to help catechize the students and the parishioners on the equality between races.

While the schools were closed, the white Catholic parents sent their children to the handy Episcopal elementary school on “their” side of town. The black Catholic children went to the public schools. So, a few years later when that same bishop re-opened the elementary school at the site of the traditionally African- American school, most white Catholic parishioners continued their newly formed habit of sending their children to the Episcopal elementary school, not the Catholic school.

The bishop opened a junior high school in the facility of the traditionally white elementary school and parish. It was poorly attended. The junior high more or less failed as a separate entity. A new Catholic high school was built off the parish campus by that parish and local businessmen. The junior high was moved to that campus.

The Notre Dame School Sisters ran the re-opened elementary school for almost 20 years. The

elderly sisters had a supportive priest who had been running the parish. He died of a heart attack. About the same time, the sisters left, due to advanced age. Three years later, I accepted the job of principal at the elementary school.

The next priest was there for those three years and for four of the five years I was principal. He was a major problem. He was an older priest in his mid-70's and ignored things, even when they reached crisis stage. He acted as if his missionary assignment by his Order to the parish and school were a retirement situation. He did say Mass, hear confessions, and visit the local prisons. Outside these, he was not truly running anything (except into the ground), even though he was in charge of a school and a parish. The diocese had to know something since he had not even sent a financial report to them (or, I guess, anyone else?) during his tenure.

In these three years before I was hired, there had been two principals. The second-grade teacher was selected by the Catholic Superintendent of Schools to replace the retiring sister. She was the only Catholic teacher on the faculty, and the job of principal requires a practicing Catholic in good standing, according to Canon Law. The new principal spent money from the Endowment Fund on a high-tech computerized security system with cameras in every classroom and throughout the campus grounds. This was all still in place when I got there, but it did not work because the school was no longer paying the expensive monthly fees to the security company to run the system.

She also bought expensive furniture from a relative to outfit her office and the school office. When she couldn't make the payroll, the principal asked the Endowment Board members for more funds from the Endowment. They refused to authorize any more funds, even for the payroll. The pastor told me that he fired them. The members of the Endowment Board quit the parish after they were fired, taking their families and financial expertise with them. This principal then resigned.

The next principal, a local retired educator from the parish, was selected by the Superintendent to run the school. But, that first summer he was hired by the parish, he had a heart attack at the Annual Principal's Retreat—literally right in front of the Superintendent's eyes. The Superintendent did not follow up about his health. Although he took a full salary, this principal didn't actually run the school. The parish Order priest explained it this way to me, "I told him not to worry, to go fishing, and that the school secretary could run the school." So for almost 2 years before I got there, the secretary had basically been "running" the school, according to the priest.

This second principal not only hired a woman from the parish as secretary, he also hired his daughter to handle the finances. Twice, she missed paying the payroll taxes —June, 2005 and June, 2006. A third time, in January, 2007, according to IRS, there was an incorrect filing and underpayment. The principal and his daughter left the school with the IRS problem unresolved. When I got there, IRS penalties and

interest amounted to \$10,000 and they were still mounting up.

Also, in 2005-2006, the school roof was replaced. The roof replacement was botched. When I got there, rotting of the visible boards and beams continued in some of the classroom ceilings. The mistake made was that the soggy existing roof had not been allowed to dry out before being re-covered.

The year before I came, more than \$3000 was spent to set up a computer lab of out-dated computers and software. I tried every one of them and they did not work well enough for the children to use them. Still, we tried putting three or four of the best ones in the 5th and 6th classrooms, but they never worked well enough for regular classroom use. Besides, there was no internet connection, except for the two computers in the two offices.

The room where they were located was a safety nightmare. Wires ran from the fluorescent lights to scavenge power from them with the plates left off the end of the light fixtures. These wires coming down from above dangled about 3 feet off the ground. Power bars were plugged into these. There were numerous heavy extension cords running around the floor throughout the room. Young children were expected to use the computers in this setting?

We needed the room, so the whole set-up had to be cleaned out and the room fixed back as a classroom.

On the positive side of this very difficult equation, I inherited a core of teachers who were phenomenal. These teachers were hard-working and underpaid. They obtained amazing results, even though there were many children with special needs. This core group had all been trained by the sisters. Although not Catholic, they were devout Christians in the community and followed the daily prayers and discipline the sisters had taught them. These teachers created a very positive environment for the children.

I gave an In-service training before school started in August and began monthly faculty meetings. We took advantage of continuing teacher education seminars provided at the local university and the Education Co-op. I also continued teacher enrichment at the monthly faculty meetings. A science and math professor at the university allowed teachers to check out materials from his library and served as a consultant for our school. Teachers began to share concerns about student needs and consult me and each other, looking for ideas and intervention strategies.

The teachers shared early on that some children were coming to school hungry. I contacted the National School Lunch Program and added breakfast to our Lunch program. Also that first year, I added an Afterschool Program. A parish member who was the director of 4-H programs at the local Extension Office organized a 4-H Club on Wednesdays during Aftercare, and helped with guidelines for exercise and healthy snacks. I added a part-time physical education teacher

in the Spring, who used the President's Fitness Program to enhance their overall exercise.

School spirit was one of the items I felt was very much needed. Learning that the school had never had a school mascot, I held a month-long campaign. During the month, each class came up with and campaigned for their candidate for school mascot. We had a pep rally in the gym and then voted on secret ballots. The winning mascot was-- Golden Eagles, the 4th-grade class candidate! The students also elected cheerleaders and a Student Council that met monthly and had annual elections for officers and Room Representatives. The Student Council took on projects of their own to benefit the school and the students. With the PTO's help, they purchased a portable basketball goal and soccer balls and kick balls, funded by collecting boxtop coupons and labels.

In 2008, we overcame the IRS tax problems from the prior administration by over-paying to stop new charges and interest being added. We regained full accreditation in 2009 that was lost in 2006. That same year I pushed for a 120th Celebration of the School Founding on 09/09/1889 to help us locate alumni who might want to help support future programs. A parish member organized committees and spearheaded a week-long celebration with daily special events. It really snowballed. In 2010, we expanded the school by adding a 3-4 year-old Preschool class.

The school had been strung along by the local school district concerning Title I funding. A few

resources had been given --some workbooks or educational games amounting to a few hundred dollars. The Title I funding owed yearly amounted to \$40,000-50,000 for remedial teachers and materials. This was an important resource that had never been given. A new Director of Federal Programs had been hired at the district to replace the retiring director. For months, she claimed she was still learning the job and checking on the status of private schools, etc. etc. ad infinitum. I contacted her constantly by phone and email and personal visits. Finally, the third year, we received 21 computers, a network and server, 7 printers and 7 laptops for our teachers, and a remedial teacher and teacher aide. The last year I was there, we had three Title I teachers and two Title I teacher aides.

With computers installed in every classroom, I designed and built a website for the school so that we could communicate with the parents, alumni, and the public.

I started a Summer Program for Enrichment. The library needed to be improved before the On-site Accreditation Review in May, 2009, which we accomplished. The Music Program was expanded to include drama and putting on plays. Art & Spanish were added to the curriculum since I could provide these from my own background and experience with no additional cost to the school.

The old convent building already housed the school library. We set up Title I rooms in the now unused sisters' rooms. The old living room became the

Teachers' Lounge area. A couple of the old rooms were used for storage and a teacher workroom.

Along with several parents and grandparents of children with special needs, we fought the battle with the local public school district for speech therapy, special education services, and testing and evaluation services. These needs are not covered by Title I. The district refused to do the mandatory testing required by ChildFind, a federal program that requires districts to search for children with special needs and provide services. Each time we presented a student with a need, for example our stutterer, our dyslexic students, or our hearing impaired student, the district refused to test in order to avoid an official designation by their evaluators. Although they kept refusing, we kept approaching them. Finally, in January, 2011, the district started complying.

Fully accredited again in 2009, I had a road map for future goals and improvements. The obstacles that had been keeping the school from moving forward had mostly been overcome. There were obstacles I could do nothing about.

The Episcopal elementary school board announced its closing in November, 2010 at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Remember that most of the parents at the predominantly white parish had continued sending their children to this Episcopal school, even when the Catholic elementary school reopened. Those parents began a push to re-open a

Catholic elementary school at the historically white Catholic parish.

Through the month of December, 2010, the Bishop and the Superintendent of Catholic schools met several times with these parents behind closed doors. I was not invited, and neither was the principal of the junior-senior high Catholic school.

After these meetings, the Bishop announced his decision that the predominantly and traditionally black elementary school where I was principal would move—teachers and all—to the nicer and more updated historically white facility on their parish grounds. The Bishop had a meeting at the predominantly black parish one night, and the same meeting agenda and format at the white parish the next night to lay out his plan. It was not to be negotiable. He had a one-page handout that stated at the top in bold print, as I remember: **This plan is non-negotiable.**

Over dinner at the rectory the evening of the parish meeting for my school community, I told the Bishop that the other parish community did not want me for their principal. I was willing to step down. He answered: “But *I want you.*” In that conversation, he promised me that he would make himself available at any time by email or phone for consultation and support during this difficult transition. He also said I did not have to come to the meeting at the other parish. I did drive by the next evening and saw there was an overflow crowd. This was early February, 2011. One time in April, along with the Superintendent of

schools, I met with the Bishop. That was the only contact I had for the next months during which the transition was supposed to occur. Calls to his office or emails went unreturned. Mostly, I was told he was “out-of-the-diocese”.

E. I warned Carol Ann, uselessly as usual, to not expend a bunch of energy on this supposed move. But, for someone who could email a person 50 times without a response and still email the 51st time thinking the other party might yet be acting in good faith, this warning was not expected to be much heeded by me (So, if we can learn discernment, anybody can!). Carol Ann was already into extreme overtime and over-work before this additional task. As I found out later, she was eating fast food, drinking sodas and coffee, skipping sleep because she didn’t have enough time to do everything needed at the school.

Quoting from the bishop’s newspaper, February, 2011, he says that his highest priorities are to keep the school open where Carol Ann was principal and retain her, the faculty, the staff and school board. That’s what he says. What he does is not respond to Carol Ann. Quotes from the pastor of the church where they are supposedly re-locating include: “But you know these are our buildings.” And, “You’ll have to put your materials away every Friday for the PRE classes on Sunday.” And, “You can share the teacher’s work room for your office.” And, “You can’t use the church kitchen for the National School Lunch Program.” So,

the more modern facilities were not going to be the school's.

The bishop says in the article in his newspaper that he has “agreed to move the school from its location to newer and better facilities.” Who the bishop “agreed” with would be whoever was in the closed-door meetings. Who was not in those meetings? Those affiliated with Carol Ann’s school: parents, the students, the staff, the faculty, the school board, and the involved parishioners, all those who would be most affected. I don’t see the upside for this affected group since they would hardly be able to do half the things they were doing in their present location. Carol Ann’s numerous attempts at contacting the bishop never elicited a return call, text, or email.

Carol Ann was in regular contact with the principal at the other Catholic school in town, a junior high-high school, which yearly received students from her elementary school. That principal’s opinion on the subject of Carol Ann’s school moving was that it was “causing a big mess. “

This principal and Carol Ann, two months earlier had put together a 12-point plan to accommodate increased enrollment at the present locations of the two Catholic schools because of the closing of the Episcopal school in town. They had checked and found that the compensation for the Episcopal staff was comparable— should they need additional faculty. They planned on moving the 5th-6th from the elementary school to her junior high-high

school, changing the other school into a middle school 5th-8th and a high school 9th-12th. The other principal had the room for that. Then the two now available classrooms at the elementary would serve as a computer lab and a Pre-K 2 year-old class. Forty-thousand dollars had already gone into setting up a computer network with servers throughout the elementary school, but Title I required that a room be a dedicated computer lab. This 12-point plan was worked out by the two involved principals and submitted, as requested by the Diocesan Center, a couple of months earlier, at the same time the December closed-door meetings were going on.

The bishop's non-negotiable plan was to require the parish now supposedly going to house the elementary school to keep the school's present name, which was the name of their neighboring parish across town. Additionally, he was requiring the parish that no longer had its school there to continue to pay that school, now located at the other parish the \$1000/month support they had been paying. His plan did not have any other details???. It looks to me that all his plan did was to have each parish impose itself on the other.

Carol Ann's school did not move.

Finally, a new priest arrived at the parish of Carol Ann's school. Within six months he had remodeled the interior of the church, including a new altar and tabernacle and pulpit, cleaned and re-painted the outside, brought up the parish's numbers, and

raised \$150,000 from the community for the school, to keep it open. After he accomplished this, that's when the bishop decided to close the school.

CA. The Diocesan Superintendent of Schools announced the school would close in December, 2011 at the Christmas break. That was the impetus for the new young priest who had only arrived in early August to go out into the community and within 7 days raise over \$150,000 to keep the school open. So, the Superintendent and the Bishop relented and allowed the school to stay open until the end of the school year. The new priest still wanted to keep the school open, so the Diocese required a minimum registration of 65 students by the end of April. We usually had 40-50 students register early. At the same time they required the school to change this early registration non-refundable fee from \$75 to \$200. And, they raised tuition from \$2750/year to \$3750/year. May came. There were only 36 enrolled. The school was "officially" closed.

The next year, the Catholic high school was also closed. This left a town of over 40,000 that has 2 Catholic parishes and had had Catholic education for over 120 years with no Catholic schools.

This Catholic diocesan school was not started by the diocese.

A former slave worked day and night in a local hotel serving tables. He was given room-and-board.

With his earnings, he made loans to other black men to help them start businesses or buy land since no banks would loan money to black men. With the interest, he started several businesses-- the local horse-drawn taxi and bus service (still in service today), a race track for horse-and-buggy racing, and real estate investments. It was he who donated the land and financial support for the first school for the education of black children. This school was built on the same site where the school and parish buildings are located today. The African-American school (a 7-12 high school) pre-dated the parish by a decade. It opened on September 9, 1889. This local businessman is still revered in the community. The school's mission to educate black children and serve underprivileged families never wavered.

Some of the early student exams, artwork, and projects had been bound in a couple dozen books and exhibited at the Chicago Centennial World's Fair in the 1890's (1892-1896), and again at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. I found six original, leather-bound volumes in the library storeroom with photos and other memorabilia of the school's history. I was able to get a grant from a local community service organization for the restoration and preservation of the antique volumes which were handwritten. These volumes testify to the comprehensive curriculum in place at that time: Free-Hand Drawing, Maps, Spelling, Definitions, English Grammar, English Composition, United States History, Popular Science, Hygiene, Physiology, Natural Philosophy, Botany, Rhetoric, and Literature. The Sisters of Loreto had established this first curriculum.

In the 1950's, high school male students picked cotton in the summers to raise money to build the gymnasium. It is still a prominent feature of the campus—a large two-story heighth Quonset-style building with a stage and dressing rooms on one end, a varnished wood floor with basketball court and goals, bleachers on one side and a ballet bar extending most of the other side for dance classes.

The original school was expanded to include elementary grades by the 1930's. This two-story frame structure burned down in 1960. The gym and the parish church did not burn. The new priest sent there had been a carpenter before he entered the priesthood in the missionary Order. He became known as “the carpenter priest” when he designed and re-built the entire school, rectory, cafeteria, and convent. The new school re-opened as an elementary (K-6) school.

Wherever we went on field trips (including to other cities) to museums, landmarks, legislative building tours, parks, zoos, restaurants, and bowling alleys, our students were given rave reviews. Tour guides, docents, and concessionaires went to special lengths to seek me out, or the teachers and chaperones, to compliment our students on their behavior and conduct. They were struck by their questions, comments and enthusiasm for learning.

This legacy of the school lives on in the community.

Earlier in the year of the school moving crisis, I was attending a funeral visitation for the mother of a Catholic friend and met a couple from a parish Erik and I had attended for several years. During our conversation, I was asked if I had read the Bishop's March for Life homily for that year. No. I had been too busy to attend and had not read his column in the Catholic newspaper either. I have since looked it up online and read it for myself. Please know that as a Southern lady blessed with the inheritance of *noblesse oblige* from my mostly southern, but also Christian family and relatives, I was appalled at what I read. Let me quote directly from the Bishop's published homily:

“Can you imagine my astonishment upon hearing that here in (our southern state) we celebrate Robert E. Lee's birthday this weekend, in addition to that of Dr. Martin Luther King's? Why in the world would we ever want to do that? Can you imagine how many lives were lost because he took up arms against the United States in a Civil War on the side of those who sought to keep millions of people in bondage?

“...General Lee may have had many good qualities and can only be judged in the context of the world he lived in, but the bottom line is that his efforts served to promote the culture of death while Dr. King promoted the culture of life...

(ending paragraph)” Our nation's effort at health care reform is itself an epiphany of sorts because it reveals the state of our nation's soul, whether we are aligned

with the culture of life like Dr. King or aligned with the culture of death, like General Lee.”

I more or less grew up in the middle of the Civil War, a hundred years later. I was raised in part—summers and after school—by my maternal grandmother who had been raised on what was left of the Mississippi plantation by her grandmother who had been a girl of 15-18 during the years of the Civil War. So, I have a cultural immersion through her stories and recollections passed on to me from my grandmother. I have always loved the old epithet that “nothing is sliced so thin that there are not two sides to it!” The Bishop’s casual remarks were to a primarily Southern audience of listeners—his flock. To me, they seemed to be inflammatory, insensitive, divisive, historically inaccurate, and uncharitable. Did his opinion improve the case for life-- at that point in time, the speech he was supposed to be giving?

To me, and to my family, General Lee was a hero. He came from a long-standing military family that had served our country for decades, especially his famous father, General Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee who fought in the Revolution and who became governor of Virginia and was even discussed as a candidate for the Presidency. General Robert E. Lee, the West Point Superintendent, did not go to war frivolously, and it is well-known that if his state of Virginia had voted to go with the North, he would have served the Union. When Virginia seceded, he rode south. That’s how I was raised. My Yankee dad, who fought the Civil War with his mother-in-law, often

remarked that General Lee was a “Christian gentleman.” He was a family man, honorable, brave, and loved by his troops.

E. In 2012, we were at a Latin Mass said by a diocesan priest in this local diocese. Instead of the homily there was going to be a recorded message from the bishop. Rather than listen to it, I walked out. I’d already heard a recorded message from him instead of the homily for the diocesan money appeal. His advocating to the poor to really sacrifice and squeeze out a significant contribution anyway, while in an article in his newspaper he mentioned his 401K didn’t sit well with me and I really didn’t want to hear more from him. So I didn’t. Carol Ann got it online. I had already heard about the “ghetto mentality” phrase in it. He has two paragraphs that make it clear he doesn’t think much of the Old Mass, the Latin Mass, the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite.

Mediator Dei by Pope Pius XII was written to specifically make clear that there is a hierarchy in the ways to worship when attending Mass. Now *Mediator Dei* was written in 1947 and clearly gives the highest place, by far, to explicitly following the Mass-- the prayers in the missal and the movements at the altar. Pope Pius XII gave the subject a high place by using the vehicle of an encyclical to convey his message. He could have mentioned it during a public audience or some other more casual setting. He addresses the lower nature of participation in praying the Rosary during

Mass. I, as a beginner, could follow the Mass, better actually, because there were no change-up option possibilities like in the Novus Ordo.

There are many movements and positions of the priest and also what the server is doing, along with the bells, to know exactly where the priest is in his saying of the Mass. It is quickly apparent to me how fast the priest is going so I can adjust my pace. *Mediator Dei* was issued some 20 years before the Novus Ordo Mass and some 15 years before the completion of Vatican II documents. So, this local bishop's words in his recorded message:

“I invite you to consider what a blessing it is to be able to participate fully in the Mass, which was not the case prior to Vatican II.”

Regardless of Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei*?

And the local bishop says:

“In the past much of the laity prayed the Rosary privately during Mass.”

Is he saying that nobody, including himself, listened to the Pope?

And this local bishop says:

“That was the reason for the bells: to alert people that the priest had reached the consecration and so they should interrupt their rosaries and other devotions and now direct their attention to the altar. So

first, I invite you to consider what a blessing it is to be able to participate fully in the Mass thanks to Vatican II.”

Yet again, it has been rather easy to show another instance of this local bishop being wrong, just by quoting him.

It is, however, nice, that, so publically, the bishop expresses his personal aversion to the Extraordinary Form. He does so subsequent to its affirmation in *Ecclesia Dei* by St. Pope John Paul II and *Summorum Pontificium* by Pope Benedict XVI.

On a side note, touching on matters outside the Mass itself, here are more words of the local bishop in the same recorded message:

“It’s really hard for young people today to have any concept of the ghetto mentality that pervaded the Church 50 years ago... I remember well what it was like to be discouraged from reading the Bible out of fear of misinterpreting it and to be forbidden to attend practically anything except funerals in a non-Catholic Church out of fear of contagion... The council fathers (Vatican II) realized that this is not what Jesus taught and that it was time for us to lay aside our fear of the outside world. “

His use of the phrase “ghetto mentality” is followed by the verb, “pervaded.” That verb means every aspect, so even if he didn’t go into every aspect of the Catholic Church, yet he refers to its entire living embodiment as “ghetto mentality.”

What he does specifically refer to in the Church, calling IT, specifically, “ghetto mentality,” is “fear of contagion.” What would this contagion be? Answer: It would be errors, because the source would be the world, and the source would be non-Catholic. Accepting a relaxed posture towards this issue, is that what he’s advocating? If I had been so relaxed, I would not be pointing out error after critical error after critical error from him as bishop, speaking to his flock. So much for worrying about contagion from the outside.

Going back to an earlier subject touched on, remember, Fr. Blank, a priest saying the Latin Mass, was kicked out of the diocese for a corrective slap, not opposed then or in hindsight by all the witnesses, including the parents. It occurred to me that the issue could be determined by answering two questions: 1) What was the anger level of the priest? 2) How hard was the slap? These answers are only known by the witnesses. If I poke somebody in the side in order to say, Hi, I’m here!-- is it corporal punishment? Apparently, the hardness of the slap or the anger emanating from the priest was not like a Whoa! to the onlookers. I guess if I bump into somebody, I’ll never fill an official position in this diocese—like I’d want to.

This was a Latin Mass priest. Next, the local bishop put a six-month moratorium on replacing his Latin masses. For what reason? None given. After this, he determined to change the 15 years of daily masses offered, to Sunday only. Then, he tacked on another six-month waiting period for priest training. Of course, some people moved away from the area who were

living there specifically and purely to go to the Latin Mass. This arbitrariness is awfully similar to that which de-stabilized the schools in the town where Carol Ann was principal.

The priest who was accused by one person a couple days before, cleared by the police in that time frame, but was convicted by the local bishop in his special homily at his special mass without any evidence-- remember that earlier story-- he was saying the Latin Mass. There was another priest, only occasionally, as far as I know, saying the Latin Mass. He was sent by the bishop to a sanitarium. So, some of the teachings of this local bishop don't seem to align with Catholic teachings, such as those found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. And, some of the actions of this bishop don't seem to follow the explicit instructions from the Church, such as found in the *Motu Proprio: Summorum Pontificium* by Pope Benedict XVI.

TO GENERALIZE: one way to destroy something is with the façade of legitimacy and fairness and openness to the thing's continuing existence. We went to a Scripture Study once, again in this diocese, that expressed an uncertainty as to who wrote John's Gospel, and the study expressed openness to either of two possibilities. Turning the page in this workbook, and thereafter, John was *not* written by John. So, the openness to this possibility was only a façade. The workbook taught otherwise.

That one priest was only freshly alleged to have done something. So, what do you do? Two possibilities

present: 1) He did it. 2) He didn't do it. Express, in fairness, these two possibilities, and your uncertainty as to which one is true. Then, "turn the page," and-- he did it. This is what the bishop did.

General Lee has good qualities, and quoting the local bishop, "can only be judged in the context of the world he lived in." The other, unspoken, possibility is that we **can** judge General Lee at this future point in time. Turn the page, and the bishop definitively aligned General Lee with the culture of death... so he does judge him.

A more careful method of destroying something is accomplished by slowing down the "turning the page," and using more subtlety. This time your very own words may actually agree with each other. This time it's more likely the actions don't agree with the words. This time a more subtle casting of something in an unfavorable light might be employed. This destruction is much more likely to take place over a period of time. In this method, shoving the thing aside is more discrete, the play at fairness is more involved.

The Scripture we used for this chapter is the Shepherd and the hireling. The hireling runs away for what reason? The sheep actually work as a decoy for the hireling. If the hireling was alone out there with the wolf, the wolf might start some trouble with him. So the sheep's misfortune is used to better the fortune of the hireling. The hireling is actually a sham through and through, and all the wages ever paid to him was money

thrown away, because he never was there for the main purpose intended, the safeguarding of the sheep.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Beginning Phase IV Discernment, Still Working On It

“Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God.” I John 4: 1 (Douay-Rheims)

E. Also in Chapter 4 of I John, there are given three ways to recognize the Spirit of God:

- 1) “Confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.
- 2) “He that knows God, hears us... By this we know the Spirit of Truth.”
- 3) Charity.

And in the first part of Chapter 4, I John, five ways to recognize the spirit of the world:

- 1) Dissolving (denying) Jesus.
- 2) Worldly speaking.
- 3) The world listens to them.
- 4) Cannot hear or adhere to the truth.
- 5) Lack of charity.

Of course, if there is a cover-up, it is not so blissfully easy to discern the spirit. What Phase IV discernment we have been doing up to this point has been unconscious. But, just before writing this, we determined that at least one avenue to take in Phase IV

is to ask the right question, and we've done that a couple of times.

I did a little stint of announcing on an extremely small radio station. One of the things I talked about a few times was civilization. I was saying that a healthy civilization did not put any restraints on citizens acting with good intentions trying to go about their good activities of the day. I also said that a healthy civilization needed to make clear that bad stuff was distinctly restrained by it.

We think it's easier to do Phase IV discerning when the subject matter is a whole society, or a grouping of people.

We can think of three major questions to ask of the civilization (the thing about this very large population is that the answers can be found in existence and available already, unlike trying to find out personal things about an individual). The three questions are: 1) Are good intentions and works unhindered? 2) Are ALL moral evils abhorred by the general population and given negative consequences? 3) Does society care and provide for its weakest members?

There is a public aspect to the role as pastor, so it is not necessary to delve into the personal arena of an individual pastor to arrive at a discernment. The question, "Is the pastor beating the sheep?" can be asked and the answer viewed from multiple public encounters of that pastor rather than just a one-on-one. So, therefore, you don't necessarily have to directly and

actually frame a question to that pastor. It does help to have the right question(s) consciously in mind. It provides a lens for viewing.

We have framed a question about this country in the very slow months it has taken to write the end of this book. The question to the country is: who does it consider to be *people*? Looking at the country's historical response to this question, it seems the default status of most people is as *non-persons*: children, women, unborn, spics, elderly, krauts, blacks, Eskimos, Catholics, indigents, wops, pollacks, anybody located on a piece of land desired by the country, anybody located on a resource desired by the country, all Native American tribes.

Three states withheld voting by Native Americans into the 1970's. Japanese-American citizens were held in internment camps in the 1940's. The Geneva Convention is upheld, except when it is inconvenient. Children were still chained to machinery in factories until the early 1900's. Women were allowed to vote starting in the 1920's.

At the very exact same time-period that the North was flouting its high-minded, conscientious observance of blacks as people, not chattel property, it treated the Native Americans exactly as the South treated black people— as non-persons.

In this country we do have innocent until proven guilty. This is good. However, non-person until proven person is more basic and important. For another example, *Seward's Folly*, 1867, the United States

purchase of Alaska from Russia, was as if the whole territory was empty. Ask the native tribes, including an estimated 50,000 Inuits, about it? No, of course not. They don't count. 1865 is the end of the Civil War and so in 1867, at the same time, the North is down there in the South telling the South not to treat black people in much the same way—as non-persons. The *Constitution* and the *Declaration of Independence* hold life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as rightfully available to ALL. Historically, by action, ALL meant: propertied white men-- who weren't too different, and, sometimes, others.

Trying to see past appearances is called discernment. That's what this book is about. Again, trying to form the right questions seems to be key.

A separate question to ask the country is: what will be attained by starting the Civil War? The rousing answer proclaimed *to* the largest segment of the population, and *by* the largest segment of the population, is: The war preserves the Union and ends slavery. Slavery did end. Poor, or abominable treatment of blacks didn't. It was the 1960's, and Dr. Martin Luther King had a real, not imaginary, mission to get society at large to treat blacks like anybody else.

Preserve the Union? “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” is the country's promise to its citizens. How does holding a rifle at the forehead of a third of the population in the contiguous South keep them in the Union and preserve, as citizens, this essential element for them?

Preserving the Union by force against the citizens of that Union is called a dictatorship, a coup, a military dictatorship with the army of the country opposed to the population. That is not preserving the Union. It is destroying that one cherished foundation--the unfettered freedom unknown until the creation of this country.

When a police officer shoots someone in the back, it's questioned a lot more than when he shoots someone in the front. If the South is seceding, it's leaving, it's walking away. It's saying, "Leave us alone." It required the North to say, "We are not going to leave you alone. We are even going to shoot you in the back."

If the North was so gravely morally against slavery on principle, then what had they been doing for the previous 40 years bringing in free and slave territories and states, equally, if they were so dead set against slavery?

CA. I would like to give one more example of our poverty of soul as a country. In the 70's, Dee Brown, the historian, published his landmark examination of our treatment, as a nation, of the indigenous tribes native to this land (*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 487pp., 1970). It is, not only a serious work of non-fiction and documentary, it is an indictment of our national heritage and its doctrine of "Manifest Destiny." I was

not able to read but a single chapter of the book each night, so stunned was I by its contents—the reflection in the cultural mirror, as it were, and the dissonance between who I thought we were as a nation and what we had done, as a nation. The memories of reading that book still haunt me and bring tears to my eyes.

At that time I did not even know that I was 1/16 Cherokee. My family never talked about the Indian heritage or even admitted that my paternal grandfather's grandmother was a Cherokee Indian. The information was given to me when in my thirties one day I looked into a mirror and wondered why I had such high cheek bones and asked my parents about it. They laughed and explained. Nothing else about me looks Native American—blue eyes and blond hair from my mother's Scots-Irish side, but then, looking at my grandfather's picture in his youth, I can see his dark hair and eyes, reflecting his grandmother's native identity. My path as an ordinary American of European ancestry ended and I became a person of mixed heritage, a survivor, in some sense of the word, of what *was* a holocaust and in many ways in our society, *still is*.

As I completed my reading of Dee Brown's book, I read several reviews in magazines of the book and remember a striking review by the book editor of *TIME* Magazine. This particular editor, and sadly, I do not remember his name, was a rather surly, cryptic, and cynical reviewer of books. But in Dee Brown's review, he broke stride and wrote a glowing tribute, ending it with these words (and I am paraphrasing from memory as I no longer have the review to refer to):

“Many books come across my desk each week to review. None have ever touched me as this one. It has convinced me that we are a people who do not know who we are, where we have come from, what we have done, or why.”

