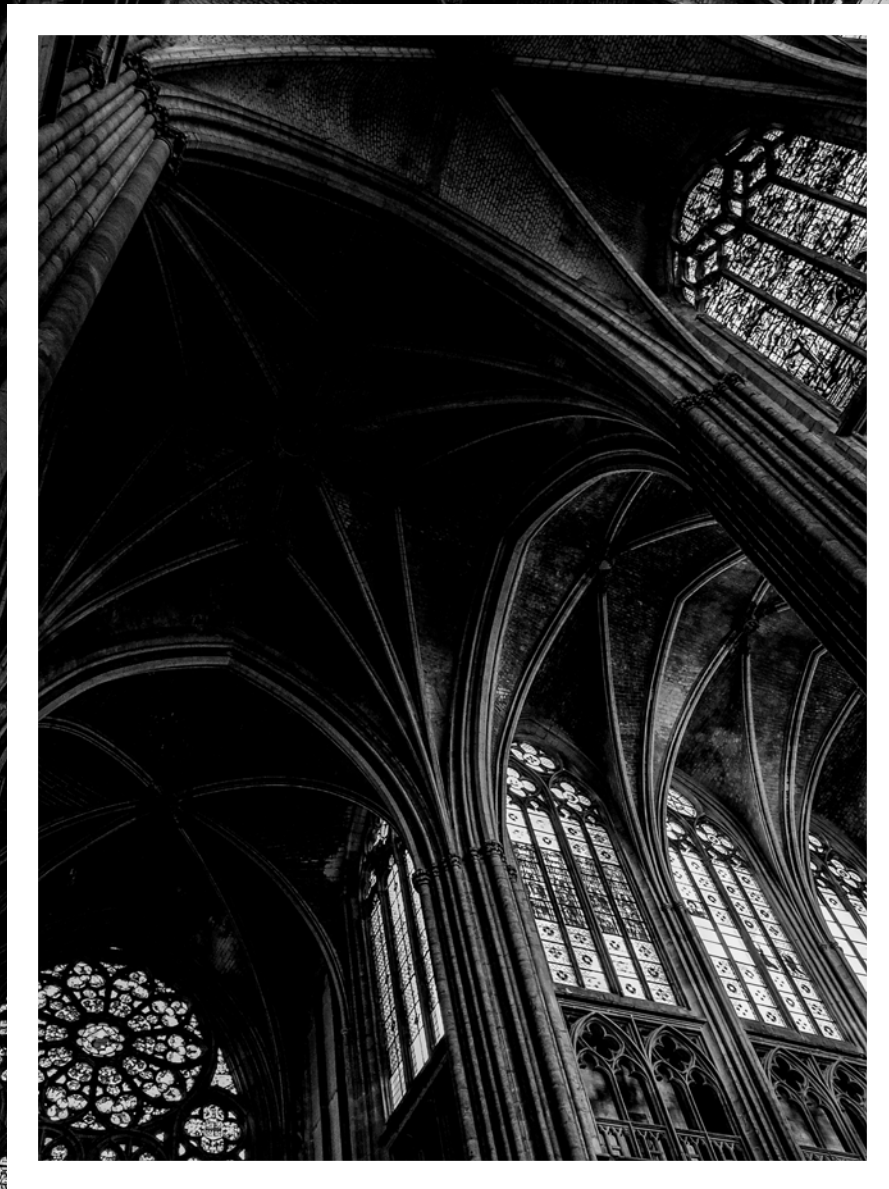


Transcendentals

Staring Into Heaven

A DIGITAL CATHOLIC JOURNAL



JULY 2021 • ISSUE 2 • VOLUME 3

Copyright © 2021 Transcendentals:
A Digital Catholic Journal

Individual copyright to works belong to
the individual creators and writers.

Photos and art not expressly from the work of the
individual contributors are from [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) and
used with permission.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be
reproduced in any way without express
permission of *Transcendentals* in writing.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 SPECIAL GUEST
CONTRIBUTOR:
Michael O'Brien

8 ART:
Desolation
Incomparable
Sweetness
Cor ad Cor
Loquitur

16

ESSAYS:
Journey Towards the
Stars
An Eternal Perspective
The Jeremiah 29:11 Trap

28

POETRY:
Constellations
Kings and Stars



NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Welcome back everyone! Thank you once again for being part of this journey and our growing network. We really do appreciate you.

We believe mankind was made to look up. Looking up towards God and heaven rightly orients our lives in a disposition of worship and awe towards our loving Father and Creator. We look up at the stain-glass in Cathedrals, we look up to our suffering Savior on the cross. We also look up to the stars in a beautiful night sky. During the long summer nights of July we might do this more often. That is part of why we wanted to see what our contributors would do with the theme “Staring into Heaven.”

Our Special Guest Contributor, Michael O’Brien, shares a reflection on the importance of keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus in the midst of turmoil and uncertainties. We hope that this piece in addition to the other wonderful work of our contributors, including five first timers, will provide a stimulating and transcendent experience. May we all look up with hope and confidence in the truth, beauty, and goodness of Christ and His Church.

Transcendentals



Mesmerisation in a Time of Fear

by Michael D. O'Brien

It is natural to react to threatening situations with what is called the “flight or fight” response (or is it fright?). This instinct is written into our beings for the purpose of self-preservation. All living creatures have a form of it. However, because human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, we are called higher by Him to respond to crises as children of the light.

The present proliferating crises in the world—some genuine, some inflated or grossly distorted by media—have created a kind of psyche-storm in many

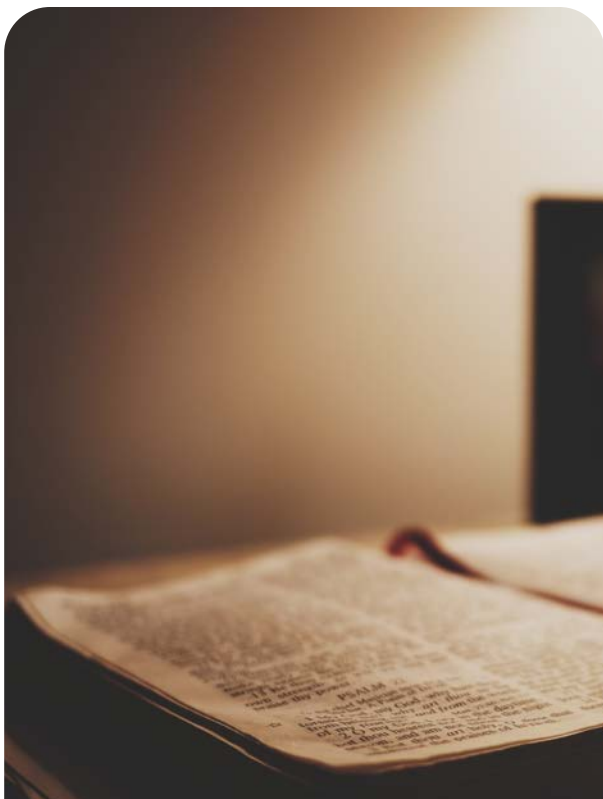
individuals and most nations. The covid pandemic, the civil unrest in the U.S. presidential election, economic instability, powerful world figures manoeuvring for a global “reset,” scandals and growing confusion in the Church, and so forth. A perfect storm, one might call it. All of these are partly the product of sin spread by human agents, and partly spiritual, but the cumulative effect is to plunge us into a distorted sense of reality. Whether one is fleeing the threats or is paralysed by them, there is mesmerisation in one form or other.

Not discounting the reasonable measures one should take in an ever-dangerous (and sublimely beautiful) world, our inner state should always be one of Truth and Love—truth and love integrated as a single unified whole. Our task is to keep our interior peace by constant prayer and by allowing the Holy Spirit to shape us, more and more, in the way of total abandonment to divine providence. This kind of abandonment is never a giving up; it is neither passivity nor indifference nor denial. It is a holy detachment, even as we keep doing those tasks that are appropriate to our vocations and our missions in life.

Yet it begs the question: what, precisely, is “reasonable” in such times as these. Reasonable precautions during the Black Death or the Great Depression or World War II would be different



according to the character of each situation, and they would further vary according to one's station in life, whether one had a family or was single, employed or unemployed, rural or urban, *et cetera*. There can never be a detailed route map or survival manual to infallibly navigate us through times of crisis. Attempts to find such a magic (even a supposed rational magic) remedy can be a disguised form of pagan Gnosticism—even when dipped in holy water, so to speak. While knowledge is a good in itself, knowledge alone cannot save us. Nor can Reason alone save us. Neither can the amassing of material resources save us. All of these may give us, for a time, the illusion of mastery over threatening situations, reinforcing our sense of security and the more subtle, subconscious sense



of self-reliance. Yet in the end, any attempt to live in the realm of the autonomous self will avail us little or nothing.

But what, then, are we to do?

For we who follow Christ, the truly reasonable response to perceived and actual threats is to invoke the Holy Spirit continually for His light on what we must do in our own particular circumstances, day by day. We must offer this prayer with total sincerity. With great simplicity. With the heart of a child.

Yes, be aware of the various gathering forces that are pagan and increasingly anti-Christian, but do not be mesmerised by our ancestral enemy the Devil, whom scripture calls the cunning serpent, the most subtle of creatures. Like real serpents, he would paralyse potential victims with terror, flooding our minds with dark scenarios, seeking to convince us that he has won, and thereby disheartening us so completely that he might more easily devour us.

In his general audience of May 11, 2005, delivered only a few days after his election to the papacy, Pope Benedict XVI said:

“History, in fact, is not alone in the hands of dark powers, chance or human choices. Over the

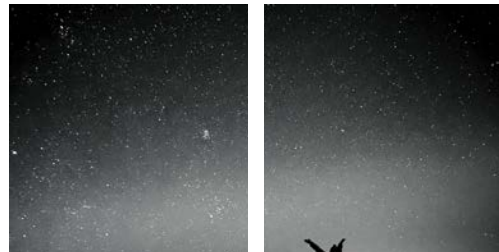
unleashing of evil energies, the vehement irruption of Satan, and the emergence of so many scourges and evils, the Lord rises, supreme arbiter of historical events. He leads history wisely towards the dawn of the new heavens and the new earth, sung in the final part of the book under the image of the New Jerusalem.”
(See Revelation 21-22).

Psalm 56 has much to show us about our human condition. With the entire Church, let us pray often the words of David:

“O Most High, when I begin to fear, in you I will trust.”

And let us take deeply into our hearts, minds, and souls the words of Jesus in the Gospels regarding the times of tribulation to come:

“When you see these things happening, look up, for your redemption is near at hand.”



Let us not look down in dismay but around in awareness. Above all, let us look upward in hope, keeping the eyes of our hearts on the true horizon: Jesus is coming. He is near.



**"The purpose of art is nothing less than the
upliftment of the human spirit."**

ST. POPE JOHN PAUL II
LETTER TO ARTISTS

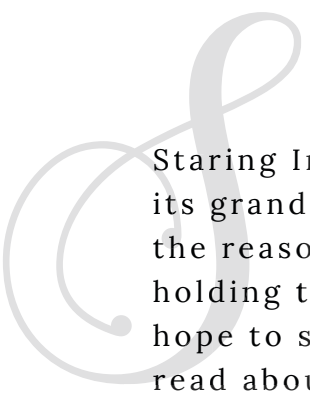


DESOLATION

ARTIST: JOSHUA TERPSTRA

MEDIUM: DIGITAL PAINTING (PROCREATE)

ORIGINAL SIZE: 8.5" X 11" AT 350DPI



Staring Into Heaven. With all of its grandeur and beauty, holding the reason for which we live, and holding the place in which we hope to spend all eternity. We read about such a place in the Scriptures and find artistic renditions of it in popular media. Regardless of our understanding of such a place, or the truthfulness in the media we consume, the very idea of attaining heaven should invoke in us nothing short of awe and wonder. It has filled the minds of the Saints throughout the ages. It has been dreamed about by the greatest of thinkers and theologians. And, in a beautiful way, every conceivable human effort to try to "capture" heaven will inevitably fall short.

In moments of consolation in the spiritual life, one might gain a fragmentary view, a slice of the goodness of heaven. In zealous or spirit-filled moments, it is as if God himself is saying "just you wait, this is only a taste." Praise God for such encounters. Often, however, the shoe's on the other foot: desolation, like a sore thumb, can tarnish any enjoyment of those beautiful things that we reach out to grasp.

I believe that such a state of desolation should be expected. It is a seasonal state in which there are vast incremental changes and long periods of seeming nothingness. It is a strange placidness that can steer us into a blind, unfeeling faith. It is the place in which we can see manifested that phrase: "the opposite of love is not hate, but, in fact, indifference." And what a strange state it is! Intellectually, the attaining of heaven should be the most utmost aim of our lives. Its very being should tantalize us, strike in us awe, transfix us. But in these moments of desolation, it is easy to turn inwards and to unintentionally choose a tainted inner focus over the glory of God Himself. It is as if we are offered a great reward, but settle instead for a blank cheque. It doesn't make sense, but it is real.

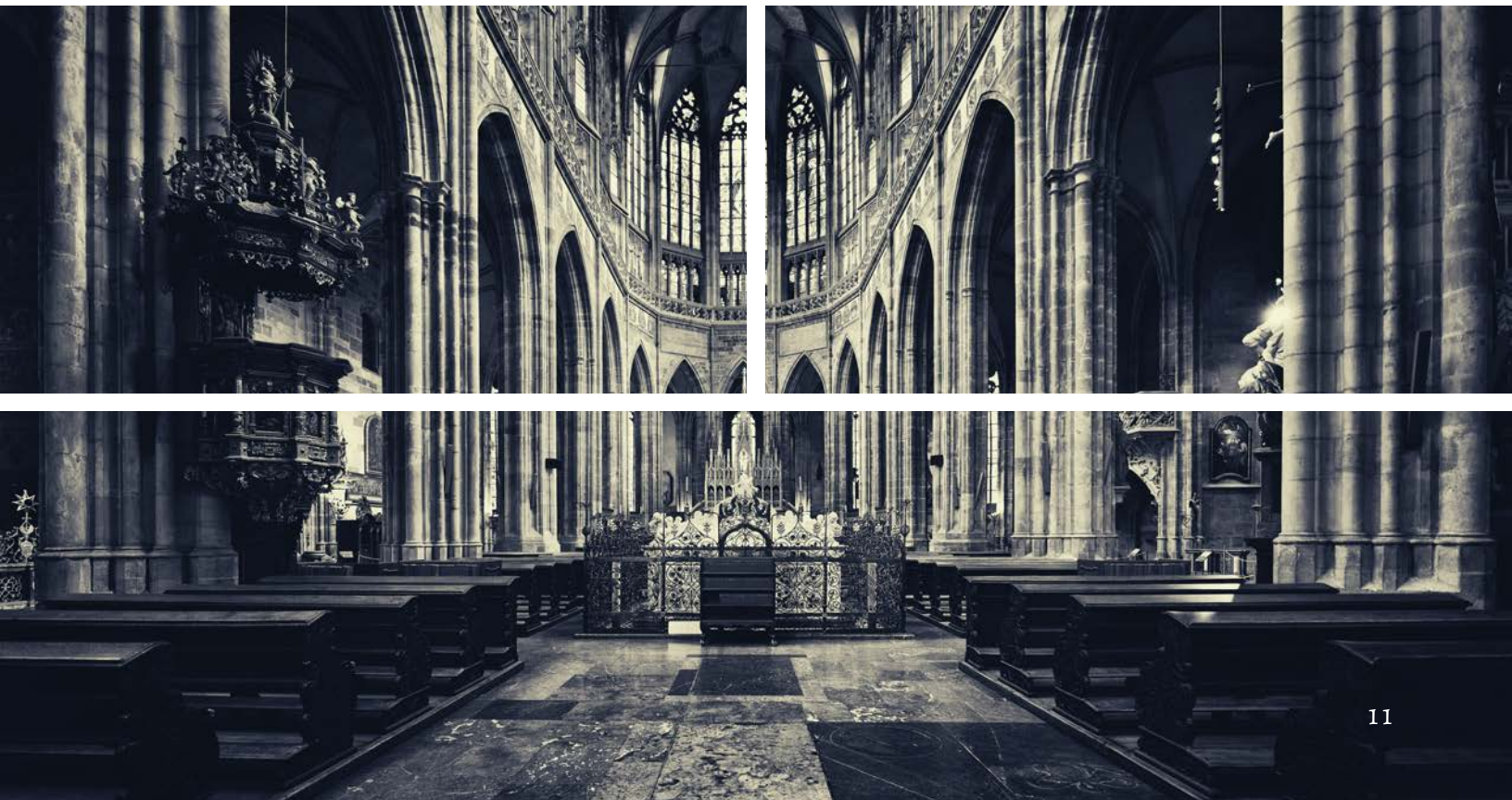


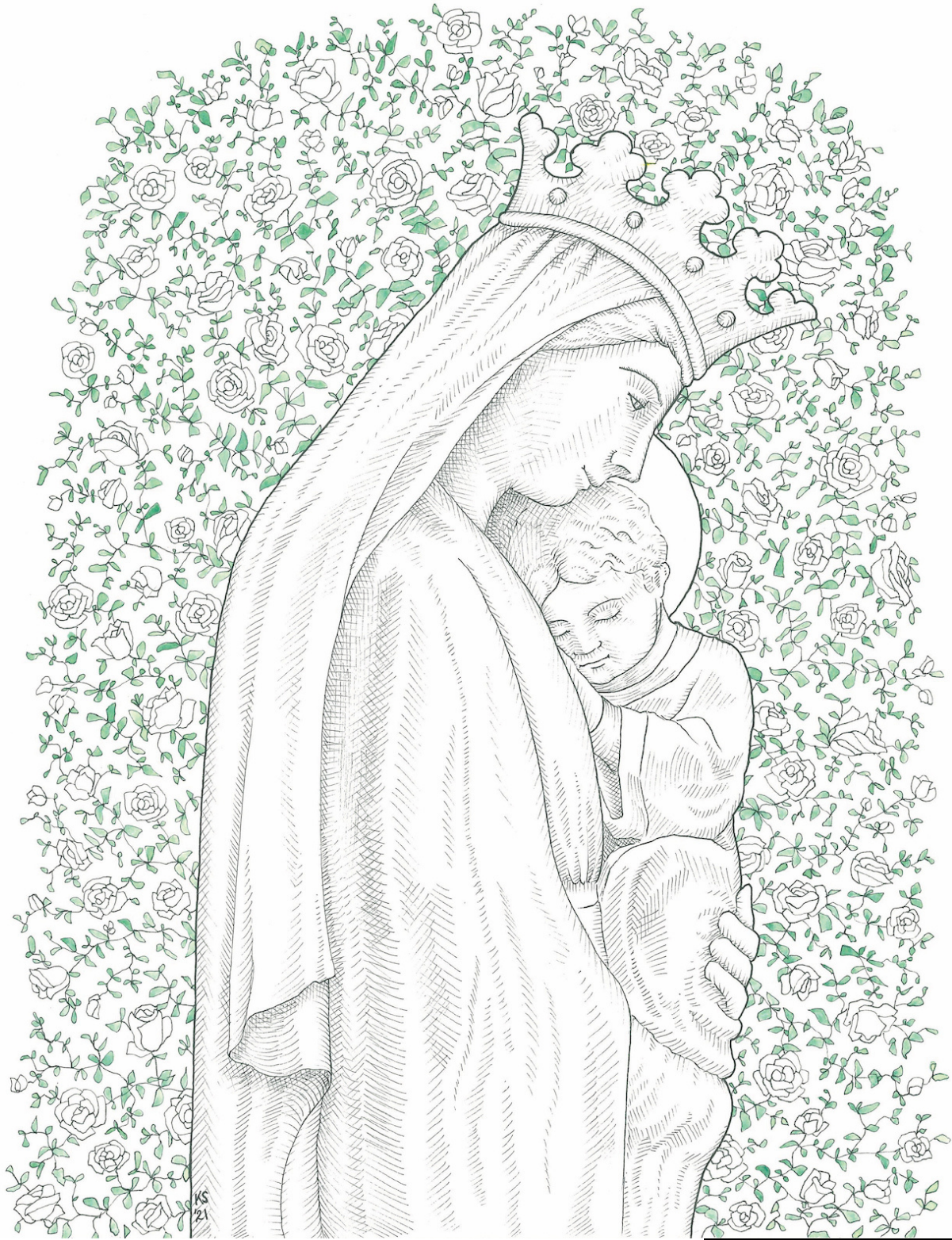
The piece presented here seeks to examine such a state. The grandeur of heaven sits just outside the window, bright and beautiful. Yet the inside of the room in which we sit contrasts this light of Christ. While I do not desire to write a treatise of the woes of our devices and over-
interconnectivity, I do think they can, ironically, be a frequent cause for our sense of separation from the Lord.

I encourage the reader to be mindful of their own moments of desolation. Where are you banking your time? How much of your limited energy is spent on an inward quest rather than looking towards the One who can indeed satisfy all things? How often do you find yourself in a

state of mind-numbing scrolling, of immediate gratification, of general indifference to the cares of the world? How often are you caught up in virtual conflicts or seek to conflate a virtue-signalling online persona? In what manner are you simply living a presentation of what you believe the world would be satisfied with rather than searching for the truth I who you have been created to become?

Simply put: how often are you the reason for your own desolation?






INCOMPARABLE SWEETNESS

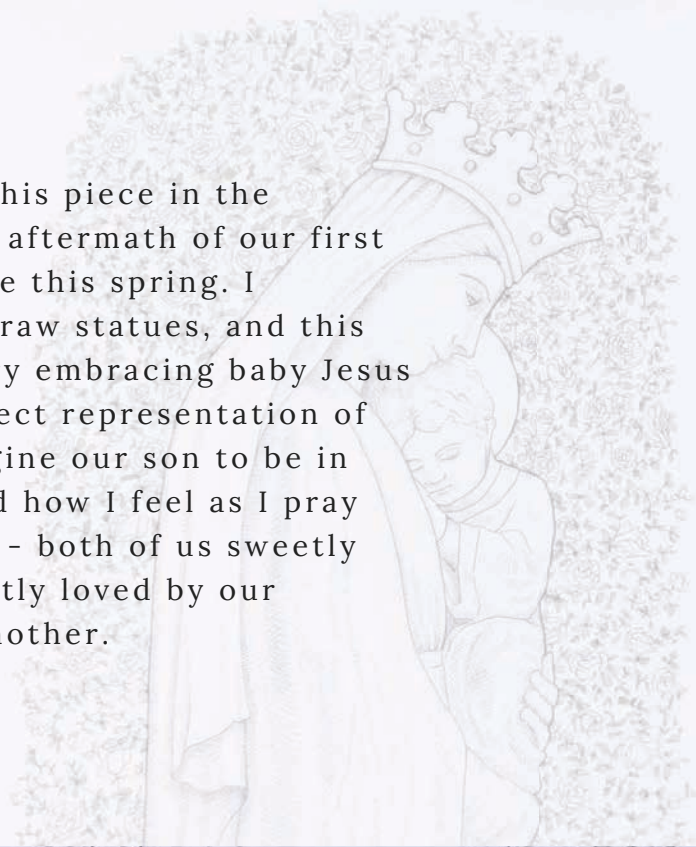
ARTIST: KATE SCIMENCA

MEDIUM: INK/WATERCOLOR ON BRISTOL BOARD

ORIGINAL SIZE: 9" X 12"

A pen and a marker are positioned horizontally at the bottom of the page. The background features light green and yellow watercolor washes and several white roses with green leaves. A white rectangular box is placed over the top half of the page, containing text and a drawing.

I created this piece in the immediate aftermath of our first miscarriage this spring. I typically draw statues, and this one of Mary embracing baby Jesus was a perfect representation of how I imagine our son to be in heaven and how I feel as I pray the rosary - both of us sweetly and perfectly loved by our spiritual mother.



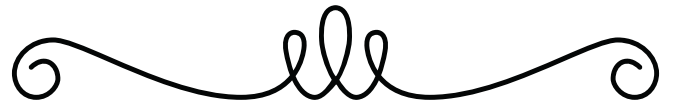


COR AD COR LOQUITUR

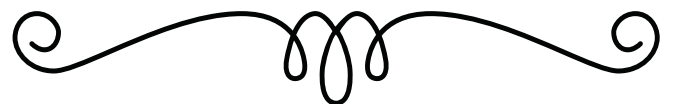
ARTIST: ALINA JOBY

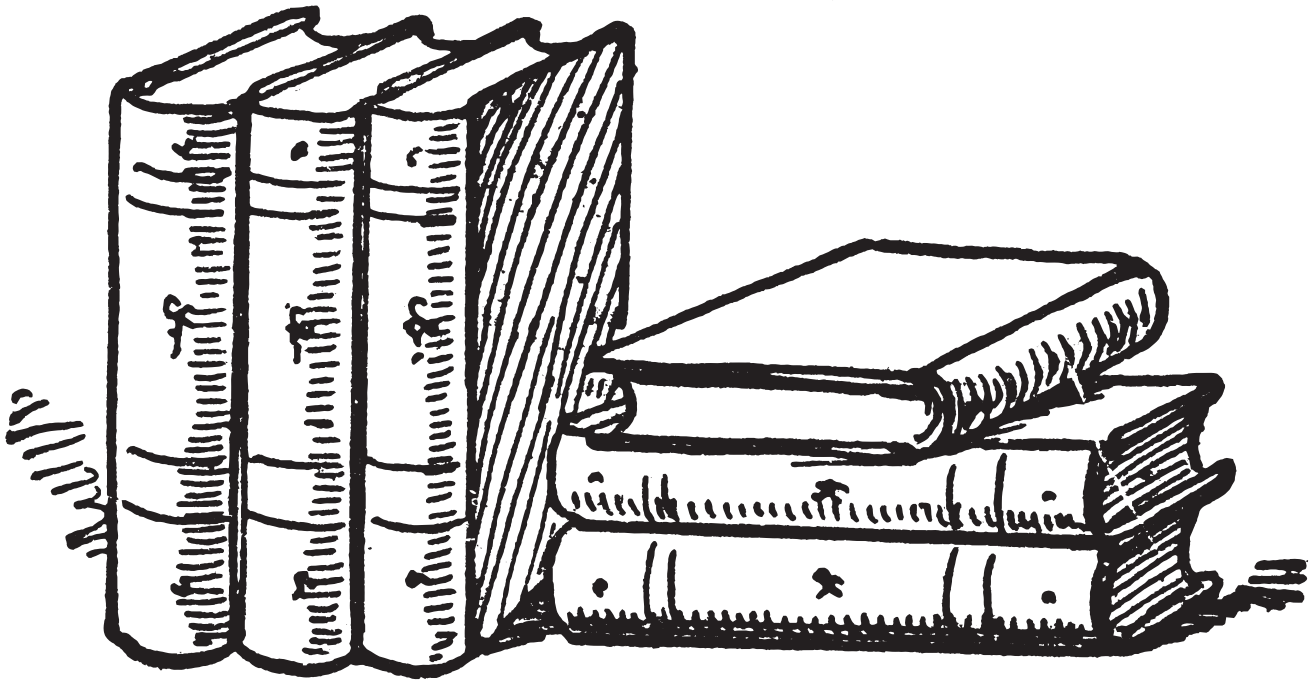
MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

ORIGINAL SIZE: 16" X 20"



"Cor ad Cor Loquitur," a Latin phrase stemming from St. Francis de Sales that translates to "heart speaks to heart," encompasses a beautiful message. In Cardinal Thomas Collins' pastoral letter on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he mentions how the Sacred Heart is commonly depicted with a heart on fire, wounded by a crown of thorns, surmounted by a cross, and many times, interestingly, with Jesus pointing to His Sacred Heart. This act is an invitation to draw near and listen, for there are unspoken words. The heart of God speaks, and it invites us to be on fire for the Lord and to love through suffering, but most importantly to reflect His heart itself. The painting is not surmounted with the cross as it is not a depiction of the Sacred heart, but of our hearts in response to the invitation which stems from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to become more like Him.





"No one in the world can change Truth. What we can do and should do is to seek truth and to serve it when we have found it."



ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

JOURNEY TOWARDS THE STARS

DAWSON WARMAN

"If seeds in the black Earth can turn into such beautiful roses, what might not the heart of man become in its long journey towards the stars?"

-G.K. Chesterton

When one stares off into the far expanse of the sky, into the vast world hidden beyond the firmament of the horizon, there is little space given for any reaction save to be silent. It is perhaps the great domain of space, the heavens hanging above our heads and before our eyes, that has enchanted and captured more minds, more hearts, and more eyes than any other sight readily available to us in this life. It is the heavens that has inspired countless sonnets, musical pieces, and masterpieces of artistry: the object that has drawn man's eyes upwards and subsequently brought them back to earth so as to relate the

beauty they have witnessed in a more immediate and propinquitous way.

But...

Why then did God put the stars in the sky? For a reason no different than why any father arranges hanging ornaments of stars above their child's crib: that their beloved child might take pleasure in them, that they might stare in awe of their motion and arrangement, to note the patterns and beauty so harmoniously composed, to dream and wonder as to their origin and reach up so as to touch them. Most of all, and in

the heart of all of these things, it is a sign of the Father's love for the child. The ornaments and baubles hung so carefully are a promise of presence even in moments of doubt: that when the child cries and wails so passionately for its parent, believing themselves to have been abandoned, though they are only but out of sight, they can look up and be reminded of what great love their Father has for them as they see the stars were placed precisely for them.

Is it better for the child to know the material of the stars placed above their bed, or to know who it was that placed them there? Is it better to know their exact number and precise definitions of their shape, or to simply take comfort in what they symbolize? For what does it profit a man to know the secrets of the universe, the composition of a star or the distance between objects, if he does not know to what end they, or he, was made? What does it profit if a man knows the process by which a star develops if he does not know how to similarly develop himself and live well? It is better for a child to know that their loving father so tenderly arranged the stars above their head than it is to know by what particular means they were so arranged. So is it better to look upon the stars, to grasp towards them, that we too might follow in

their blazing wake, set on fire in the heavens as signs of the Father's love for the earth below. We might imagine the stars similar to the saints, dwelling in the beatific vision of Heaven. For it is in the saints we observe God's great love for us, in them we see the arrangement of the universe, the law that so compels us out of love.

When we dwell upon the celestial bodies set in motion above, we may remark as John Keats did "Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art--" How remarkable that, independent of the age or fashion of the earth, indifferent to the speed at which they whirl, their beautiful communion remains. Harmonious constellations, divine choreography set into the heavens, the stars know their course and follow it faithfully. In a similar way, so too do the saints. Though separated by ages, within each we can observe the distinct patterns, motions, and arrangements of grace across their lives. As humans, how frequently do we require multiple examples of the same occurrence of idea, retellings of the same story before we begin to understand it? Over repeated observations, our trust that the same phenomenon will occur increases as in measure to the anticipated results. If the stars were to change their positions, to

disperse their organization, how could one possibly chart a reliable journey? By what means would I have to deduce my location in the midst of great confusion? But it is because the stars have not changed that I can take great confidence in their bearings. For how else have such great men navigated their travels across stormy seas and darkest of nights if not by the honest and guiding illumination of the stars above? The stars become not mere lights, but are a promise of restful reprieve, of the warmth of the hearth and reunion with those not with us. They are a sign of love. And just as they provide correction to the captain's course, so too do the saints in heaven above give us a sure path, a proper navigation in this valley of tears. We have been given a road, but what good is it if we lose sight of our aim, if we lose our footing? It is the saints then, shining brightly in the heavens above, who give light and calm in our most turbulent times. It is an ever-present reminder, in our darkest of nights, of the great love shown to us and offered through Christ: a lived realization of the promises of Christ, should we only trust and attempt as we have been given the freedom to. The saints are the living expressions of Christ's love, set on fire, heeding their commission with all seriousness, joviality, and grace.

Were the night devoid of light, of all stars in the sky, what sign might I have to judge the coming of the morning? If there were naught but dark, how might I last through the night? How terrible and dreadful an image. But it is not so, for just as the rain is but a sign in anticipation of a rainbow and the cessation of storm, so too are the stars, and likewise the saints, the promise of a most glorious daybreak, yet to peer over the horizon.

The saints want for nothing, and yet freely give everything. It is precisely because they already possess everything that they are capable of so offering up themselves as gifts of life. If they did not hold that which fulfilled them, how could they profess this capacity to give so greatly? But it is because that which they have is beyond their own capacity to desire that the saints too can give beyond their own capacity. For *ex nihilo nihil fit*, "from nothing nothing comes." After all, what can be born out of desire? Is desire not the expressed and felt absence of that which is supposed to be and yet is not? So out of desire itself alone nothing can come. It is only out of capacity, which in our own means is finite, that anything can be brought into equal measure according to our means. If our means are finite but the desire

infinite, it then follows that we require something that is outside ourselves. This is the secret of the saints and of the stars. It is only in cooperation with the demands of love, by cooperating with that which so compels them, that they are able to effect such brilliant light and warmth.

As we understand that every Hail Mary and Rosary is as a flower or a crown of flowers for our Blessed Mother, what could we imagine those souls who most entrust themselves to her Immaculate Heart to be? As Queen of Heaven, would it not be most fitting that the stars, those saints who have most clemently been received by her merciful mantle and fervently devoted to her and to her Son, be those that are, at the end of ages, laid upon her head as testimonies to the tremendous work that she so accomplished for her Son? Perhaps it is but a romantic yearning, but are not a Mother's children the crown of her life, the fruit of her labours?

In death the saints burn brightly, more alive than ever before. Immeasurably distant, nonetheless providing warmth and light greater than any hearth upon the Earth. Set in the heavens that we might aspire to go to even loftier heights of love. I have often imagined it to be a lonely fate, to be holy in an

unholy time. To be a saint in the midst of Babylon. But is this not what it means to be a saint?

Perhaps it is not so lonely, for as we look out upon the night sky we can see clearly that the stars, though separated by innumerable years and distances, burn brightly together in brilliant communion with the rest of the heavens, telling the tale of the great love that set them ablaze across the ages. That as it was, so too is it now, and ever shall be, a world without end.

The voyage to Heaven is a difficult and demanding one. Let us thank God, then, for such brilliant lights to guide our way across the stormy seas that we might yet reach our eternal hope and destination. If we have faith and confidence in the stars to set our bearings and right course, then let us have even greater faith in the saints to measure our ways, to correct our path, and to provide edifying instruction on our travels--for they have already walked it, and how patiently they wait at the gates with illumined hearts and minds to welcome us home.





AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

ANNA-MARIA NEUSY

“If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.”

- C.S. Lewis

With this month’s theme of “Staring into Heaven,” I thought to discuss the importance of maintaining an eternal perspective by setting our minds on “the things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Meditating on the joys of heaven in contrast to the fleeting cares of this world is at the heart of our Catholic identity as well as a central theme in Holy Scripture and the lives of the Saints.

“We must often draw the comparison between time and eternity. This is the remedy of all our troubles. How small will the present moment appear when we enter that great ocean.” - St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

The utter chaos in the world today reveals so clearly that nothing in this world can be trusted to fully satisfy us. Everything on earth is temporary: careers, wealth, human admiration. When these matters are sought after as though they could lead to ultimate fulfillment, man will always be left empty and miserable. Our hearts can never be fully satisfied until we behold God face to face in the beatific vision. Think of how refreshing it would be for all of humanity to know that through following Christ, it actually is possible to attain perfect happiness - in heaven! Through a loving relationship with Christ and His Church, our earthly life does have a higher meaning.

The Catholic faith offers something exceedingly better than anything this world has to offer: the path to eternal happiness in heaven.

***“Lift, O Christian, lift thine eyes
To thy home beyond the skies;
Eternal bliss awaits thee there
With which earth’s joys cannot
compare”***

**(Poem taken from ‘The Catholic
Girl’s Guide by Father Lasance)**

The Catholic Church certainly teaches us to have an eternal perspective. Just entering a cathedral or basilica and being surrounded with sacred art and music immediately lifts the mind to heaven and reiterates the fact that “we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). Every Mass is literally heaven on earth as the eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ is made present and we taste the bread of heaven in Holy Communion - accompanied by all the angels and heavenly hosts. Contemplating these truths of the Faith should make us realize that the veil between heaven and earth is unbelievably thin.

Now that we have grasped the beautiful gift of heaven and understand that the primary goal of our earthly life is to aspire towards closer union with God, I will discuss in more detail the significance of living with an eternal perspective by looking at the example of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ taught us to “seek first the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 6:33), and that we should always pray for God’s will to be done “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Christ sought to do His heavenly Father’s will above all things, even to the point of enduring His bitter passion for our eternal salvation. As we can see from some of His last words on the cross, the thought of heaven remained steadfast in His mind when He told the good thief: “today you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Particularly in moments of despair, the devil can easily tempt us into believing the lie that we would be better off living for ourselves instead of living for God, and to do what will leave us temporarily gratified rather than doing what will make us happy for eternity. To become more like Christ, who never lost sight of the reward of heaven for those who love God, we must ask for His assistance by habitually lifting our heart to Him throughout the day. I find it helpful to memorize short prayers such as ‘Lord, remember me in Thy Kingdom,’ ‘Lord Jesus, draw me close to Your Sacred Heart,’ ‘Jesus, I trust in You,’ and ‘My Jesus, have mercy’. Focusing our attention on the everlasting love of Christ will deliver us from the luring distractions and

temporary pleasures of this sinful world.

***“The Lord draws the gaze of the Apostles-and our gaze-toward heaven to show how to travel the road of good during earthly life.”
- Pope Benedict XVI***

Our Blessed Mother also gave us an example to follow in how she continually pondered the Word of God in her heart (Luke 2:19), which kept her mind constantly focused on the Lord’s goodness and faithfulness. The Bible is covered in passages speaking of heaven, and so to imitate Mary we must frequently meditate on them and cling with hope to the promises of Christ, who said that in heaven “your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:20 & 22). Asking for Our Lady’s intercession through the Rosary, especially when we pray with the glorious mysteries, is another wonderful method to turn our thoughts towards heavenly things.

Furthermore, the saints demonstrated an eternal perspective in that they were constantly yearning for heaven and lived as though they would “rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). They understood that their true home

was in heaven and that their life on earth was meant to be solely dedicated to advance in the love and service of God and their neighbour. By gaining reward in heaven instead of reward on earth, these holy men and women saw everything in this world as nothing compared to their passionate desire to see God and to be united with Him for eternity.

***“Our aim has to be the infinite and not the finite. The infinite is our homeland. We have always been expected in heaven.”
- Blessed Carlos Acutis***

Their legacy reveals that having an eternal perspective helps us to accept all of life’s circumstances and events, including the hardships we face, as part of our heavenly Father’s plan to purify our souls and bring us to heaven. Beyond the battle against sin and temptation, the saints perceived all adversity in the light of eternity by seeing that adversity as the opportunity to be sanctified through suffering. In the words of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, “afflictions are the steps to heaven.”

“Oh my Heavenly Father, I know that these contradictory events are permitted and guided by Thy wisdom. They give nourishment for our eternal life, where

we shall assuredly find that all things have worked together for our good. - St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

To follow the example of the Body of Christ in heaven, we must develop and maintain a close relationship with those in the heavenly realm through frequent prayer to our patron saints as well as our guardian angel. Our beautiful friends above love us very much and desire to help us adopt the mindset of looking “not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). The glory of the Saints should inspire us to persistently turn away from all evil and anything that might distract us from our path towards heaven.

Finally, not only does living with an eternal perspective conduce well to our own sanctification and the salvation of our souls, it also leads those around us to Christ and His Church. Pondering eternity strengthens our missionary spirit by making us realize that every person in our life is an immortal soul whom God loves and wants to save. Our Lord has a purpose for the people in your life and has given you the opportunity to cooperate with Him in leading these souls to heaven.

Our example of authentic joy due to our ardent hope of heaven amidst the darkness and disorder of this world will surely lead those around us closer to God.

Fixing our eyes on heaven is essential to our spiritual lives if we are to detach ourselves from this temporary world to be able to enter never-ending joy in the next. Wholly trusting that God has a beautiful plan to bring goodness out of every trial will enable us to persevere in the faith and nurture our growth in holiness. Despite the hardship we have all been facing, peace can abide in our souls and of those around us if we simply shift our gaze towards the kingdom of heaven. To conclude, listen with hope to these comforting words of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a saint who faced many of the same troubles that we are facing today (a pandemic, quarantine, political unrest, and anti-Catholic persecution):

“In the company of God and the choirs of the blessed, what will we think of the trials and cares, pains and sorrows we had once upon Earth? O, what a mere nothing. You are children of eternity. Your immortal crown awaits you and the best of Fathers waits there to reward your duty and love. You may indeed sow here in tears, but you may be sure there to reap in joy.”

THE JEREMIAH 29:11 TRAP

ROBIN MERCURIO

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

I am willing to estimate that one in every five Christians have Jeremiah 29:11 in their social media bios, and I have no shame in being one of them. In the middle of my undergrad, I was experiencing hopelessness and defeat regarding my future. I had no idea what I would do with my degree and considered dropping out. When I read Jeremiah 29:11 for the first time in a faith study, I instantly found peace knowing that God’s plan for me is a good one.

It’s been almost four years since that moment and the scripture verse still holds truth in my life. However, now that I’ve gone further into my spiritual journey, I want to issue a disclaimer - Jeremiah 29:11 does not promise a life devoid of failure and disappointment.

My initial understanding of the scripture was one-sided. I viewed God’s plan “for welfare and not for harm” as merely a road towards success instead

of a journey filled with trials. In the months that followed my reversion to the Catholic faith, I experienced a streak of success. My grades improved, I won an academic scholarship, and I completed an internship in England.

Unknowingly, I became blind to the idea of failure. I mistakenly fell into this trap of thinking that as long as I continue to live a spiritual life, only good things can happen. I was wrong. My streak of accomplishments came to an end when I did not get a job that I interviewed for. Soon after, I faced the reality that I would need an extra year to complete my undergrad because of missing courses. I grew frustrated with these setbacks and quickly began to doubt if Jeremiah 29:11 was still true.

I think many people prepare for failure with the approach to not put all their eggs in one basket. Although, I would go a step further and suggest we don't put all our focus into one outcome. It's good to keep our options open when we make important life decisions. However, we must also be open to the possibility of not getting the results we desire. God allows us to endure disappointment as opportunities to grow in patience and humility.

I don't intend to undermine the

sadness or anger we may experience in the midst of failure. God knows that our inadequacies can make us feel frustrated and discouraged. However, I believe He uses our shortcomings to remind us that we cannot rely on our strength alone. It's in our human nature to become so focused on the outcomes of our attempts, we forget to appreciate the source of our efforts. Jesus is the foundation of all the good in our lives and the grace that has yet to come.

Jeremiah 29:11 does not indicate there is a perfect path to get to where we want to go. However, there is a perfect man who wants to lead us to where we ought to be. Jesus wants to journey with us every step of the way, in the trials and the triumphs, and in the setbacks and the comebacks. The goals we strive for might seem like win or lose scenarios. However, the strengthening of our virtues when we rely on Jesus to take risks, step out of our comfort zone, and push forward is a victory by default.

I used to view failure as harm, but now I see it as essential to our welfare. Through failure, we are invited to depend on Jesus more and trust that God has our best intentions in mind. Whenever our efforts don't go as planned, God is either

withholding something that's not for us, or preparing us for something better. Our failures could also just be an incentive to pursue the same goal again with a stronger approach.

God's plan is always better than our own. We won't understand the significance of our failures immediately. We're not supposed to. That is why scripture says God gives us "a future with hope" and not a present with all the answers. God invites us to remain faithful to Him especially in times of inconvenience and uncertainty because He knows a brighter future lies ahead. The next time you find yourself anxiously waiting for the outcome of a job interview, school application, or anything that you've worked hard towards, try to hold onto this one truth - Jeremiah 29:11 is not a catalyst to test God amidst our plans, but to trust God in His.



**Lead, Kindly Light, amidst th'encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.**

**SAINT JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT**

CONSTELLATIONS

NOLAN TOSCANO

How arresting was that view
From an eight-year-old's bedroom
Where first he fell in love
With Heavenly things

Gazing into starlight
In awe of creation and his place in it
In wonder of He who made
The nightly masterpiece he was privy to

What saints those ancient stars saw
What holy men and women looked into them
And marveled his handiwork
Yet longed to see beyond

How they kept their vigil
Over salvation history
Reflecting off the eyes of their Maker
And witnessed to His triumph

They're a guide when he looks to them
A constellation of stars
A constellation of saints
Lead him home.



KINGS AND STARS

BARNABAS NEY

Ozimandias lies sunk in the sand
"ye Mighty, and despair" his own bequest
One once so proud, now the dust of the land.
Good Arthur, in a barge was laid to rest
Even the great cannot forever stand
He knew, as all must too, "my end draws nigh."
So, to all the mantle of death drops down
As sure as dark nights that cover the sky.
Yet pinpoints of light appear, shining through
The opaque pallium of Nyx's frown
Hinting at the Triumphant, asleep too.
"Those who turn many to righteousness" now
Shine ineffable in light of the true
One to whom, they the saints, in life did bow.

BIOGRAPHIES



Alina Joby

Alina is a second year biomedical science student at Ryerson University. The love she is constantly receiving from God and through the people around her has allowed her to see the world with life and purpose. Her goal is to use her hands (sometimes with a paintbrush) to point people to the source of her life, God.



Robin Mercurio

Robin is a graduate from Ryerson University with a BA in Child and Youth Care. He is currently in teachers college at York University, and aspires to share the beauty of God's love and glory to as many students as possible. He follows all sports, though he is a lifelong Toronto Raptors fan, supports the Buffalo Bills, and typically roots for the underdog. Robin doesn't lift weights very often, but he is determined to carry his cross daily.



Anna-Maria Neusy

Anna-Maria is a recent Catholic convert and is passionate about sharing the truth and beauty of Christ and His Church with those around her. She loves the Latin Mass with her whole heart. Most of her free time is spent reading good Catholic books, listening to Gregorian chants, baking, going on long walks, and spending time with her wonderful friends and family. She is a nursing student at the University of Ottawa. Her hope is to find joy and beauty in the ordinary and little things in life.

BIOGRAPHIES



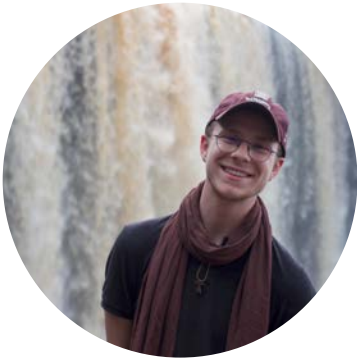
Barnabas Ney

Barnabas is a beloved beggar of the Most High King. He enjoys adventuring in the wilds of his native Vancouver Island, but is even more excited to be serving Christ and His Church as a campus missionary for Catholic Christian Outreach. While he holds an MA in Economic Policy, his real joy is in pursuing and contemplating beauty and its One true source.



Kate Scimeca

Kate is an artist, wife, and mother. Her favorite description of her work has been ‘a refreshing take on traditional Catholic iconography.’ It is her goal to create images that remind the viewer of God’s presence in our lives and to invite contemplation of the sacred through the delicate beauty of illustrations. www.katescimecaart.com



Joshua Terpstra

Joshua was raised in Belleville, Ontario, where he was received by a loving Catholic community in some of his formative years. His years in youth ministry coincided with a developing love of the arts, both in the theatre and in his sketchbook. Since beginning his studies at the University of Ottawa in 2017, not only has he found a community where he has been able to thrive, he has been led to travel across the world to Singapore, Cameroon, and Mexico to serve and to learn. As he finishes his psychology and theatre degree, he is teaching visual arts, drama, french, and english to elementary students at a private Catholic school.

BIOGRAPHIES



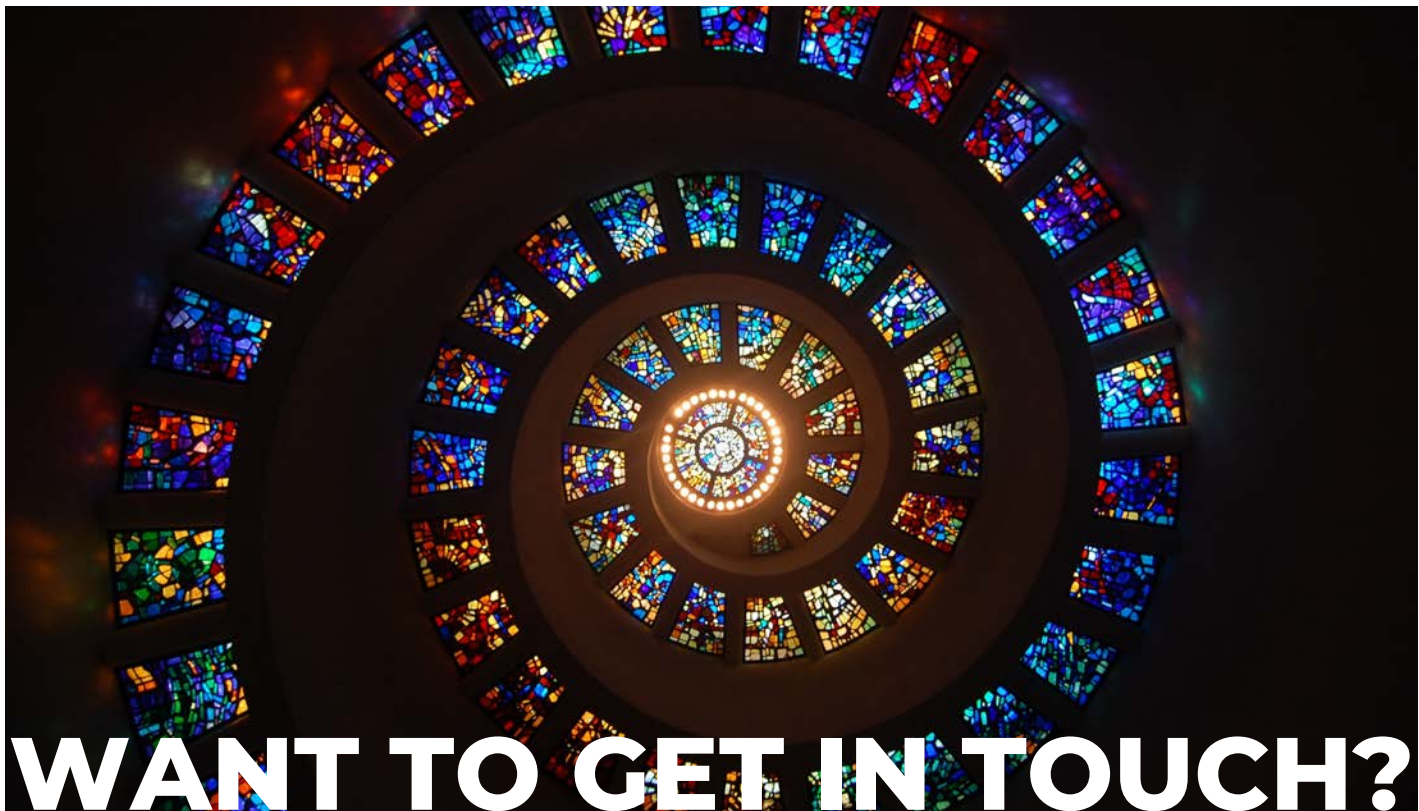
Nolan Toscano

Originally from Pickering, Ontario, Nolan has a passion for history, writing, mixology and puns. A jack of all trades, he has done everything from life-guarding to landscaping, professional cooking to political staffer, youth camp counselor to long-term care social worker. Currently, he serves as the Mission and Discipleship Director for St. George's Parish in Ottawa, Ontario. You can find him pondering life's silly paradoxes, exercising, engaging in debate, and above all, pursuing the Love of his life: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Dawson Warman

Dawson is a fourth-year student at Mount Royal University in Calgary Alberta, studying Psychology and Philosophy. In his free time, he competes in powerlifting, reads, writes and volunteers with the SFX Chaplaincy.



WANT TO GET IN TOUCH?

Email us at:

info@transcententials.ca

Follow us on Instagram at:

[@transcententials.ca](https://www.instagram.com/transcententials.ca)

Subscribe at:

www.transcententials.ca

Transcententials seeks to promote the timeless truth, beauty, and goodness of the Catholic Faith to a contemporary audience.

Submissions are Welcome!

**Do you have a passion for writing? Are you an artist?
Transcententials is your answered prayer!**

We are looking for young Catholics to submit their essays, art, and poetry for our monthly online publications.

Visit the 'Submissions' tab on our website for more details!

