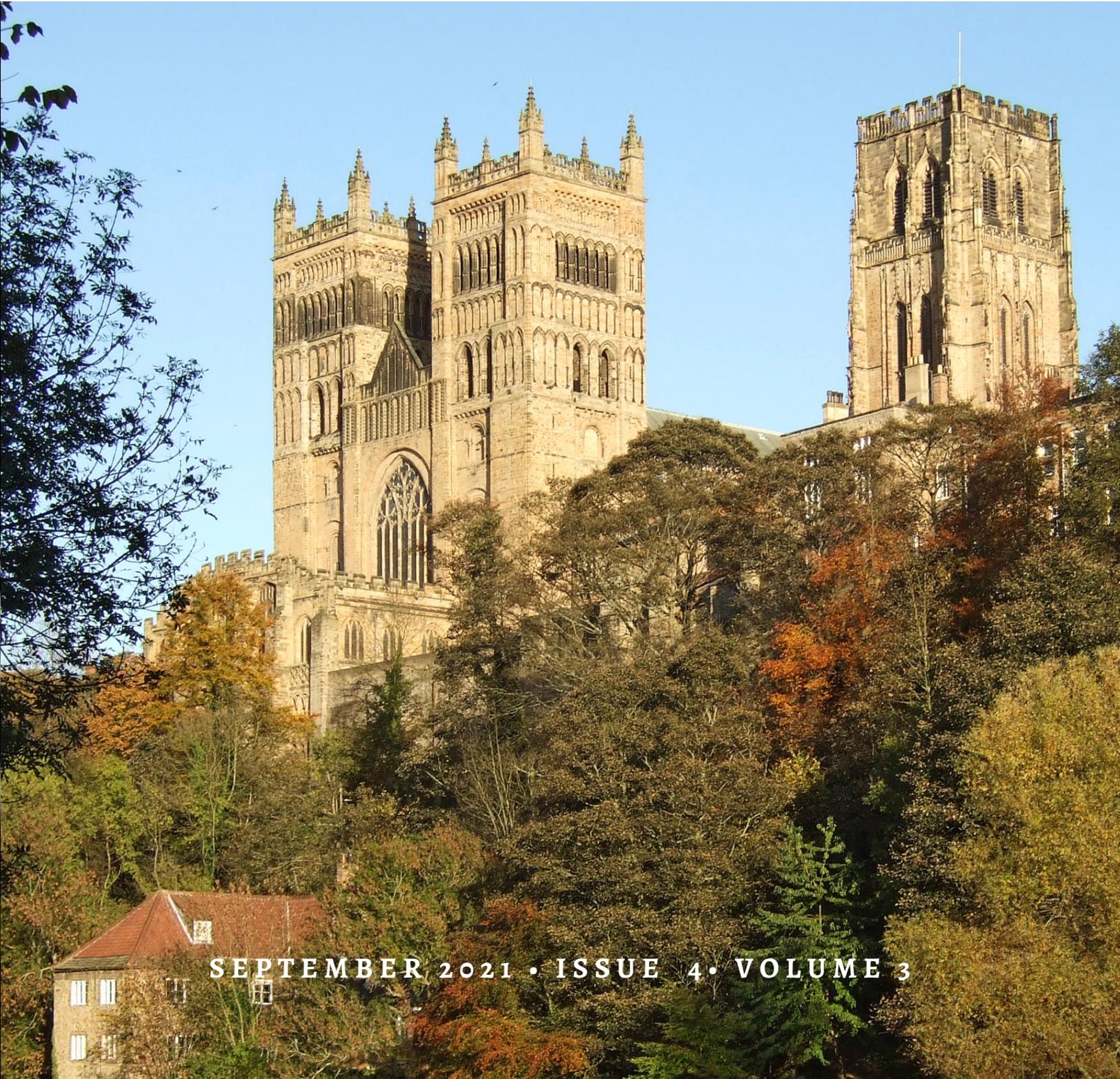


Transcendentals

Season of Change

A DIGITAL CATHOLIC JOURNAL



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We hope that you had a wonderful and prayerful summer!

Our theme for September is dedicated to the season that we young adults all experience: change. From the relaxation or grind of summer jobs, many of us are thrust back to the academic routine. Many of us also may be beginning new jobs that have us start in September as well. In short, the Fall sees us back into a new or familiar routine.

To help us keep Christ in the centre of our hearts during this routine change, our Guest Contributor and founder of Catholic Conscience, Brendan Steven, writes a brilliant reflection to keep our hearts on the transcendent during these changing times in our lives.

May God keep you all safe during these troubling times and thank you for your prayers.

Pax Christi.

Transcendentals



Rhythm of the Christian Life

by Brendan Steven



A famous artist once said, “Rhythm is something you either have or don’t have, but when you have it, you have it all over.” A Christian life lived fully—sacramentally, confessionally, practically—is a rhythmic life. This rhythmic character is one of the great earthly joys of a life lived for the Kingdom of Heaven. A rhythmic life is one in which life and its many winding changes are no longer an experience of battering and bruising, but instead become a pleasant dance. In the case of the rhythm of Christian life, it is a dance that leads us to sainthood and unity with Christ. It is the rhythm of existence itself. It is a beautiful motion that allows us to go with

the flow of our earthly experiences, in all their beauty and pain, in all the twisting and turning of change that marks all human lives.

Change always entails death. Even the best changes in our lives practically always require the loss of something good. For instance: I changed jobs last year. It was, in almost every sense, a radical improvement for my family life, for my community life, for my career. But it required leaving behind a wonderful colleague and friend. Even this positive change entailed a purgative experience. Like Purgatory itself, the journey to greater things requires suffering—temporary or otherwise. Rhythm makes this process less jarring.

Beauty always has a rhythmic quality. It is not surprising then that beautiful living has a rhythmic quality. This is most obvious in music, of course. But with the right eye, you notice it everywhere. My first full-time job was as a speechwriter, where I learned that the human ear has a special affinity for rhythmic literary devices in the spoken word. Like alliteration, the repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of closely connected words—as in Martin Luther King Jr. speaking of a world where all are judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. Or anaphora, the repetition of phrases among a string of sentences—as in Winston Churchill telling us we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, and so on. Great paintings present rhythmic images that go beyond the simple movements of the brush stroke. Consider Caravaggio's *The Calling of St. Matthew*. Christ's hand outstretched to the tax collector, light pouring towards the soon-to-be-Apostle as if conducted by our Lord's hand. Matthew himself pointing inwards, his physicality expressing both shock and acceptance of the summons. What is that blessed image except a dance of conversion, the rhythm of the Holy Spirit lighting an apostolic fire in a soul?



If rhythm then is the language of beauty, it is therefore unsurprising that the life of Christian discipleship would be defined by a rhythmic quality. Rhythm's Greek root word means "measured motion". Christ through the Church—like the conductor of an orchestra—is maestro of this motion, shaping a musical experience of life that results in the People of God sharing in a dance of praise and worship.

This rhythmic quality of the Christian life comes to life most obviously in the rhythm of communal worship. As St. Paul famously wrote, "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." One way the Church answers that commission is to

have, quite literally, a prayer for every circumstance. So, for every moment of the day, every day of the week, and every week of the year, the Church gives us sacred poetry to praise aloud this great God of ours. Through the liturgical calendar, the Church lays out all the mysteries and wonders of Christ, “from the incarnation and birth until the ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of blessed hope and of the coming of the Lord,” as the Church’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy puts it. The liturgical year is, naturally, so much richer than simply a shifting colour in the vestments of our priests. It is the Church collectively reliving Christ’s life, contemplating anew its wonders, reflecting again on our collective mission as the People of God. Like the movement of a song from introduction to verse to chorus, we move from preparing for Christ’s birth in Advent, to Christmas in all its incarnational joy, to the extraordinary miracles of Ordinary Time, to the mortification and preparation of Lent, to the apex of our communal life—Easter and the Resurrection. No matter the season, we gather every Sunday to together partake in the very summit of the Christian life, the Eucharist. Since our Lord ascended, as a Catholic community, we have collectively participated in a dance of

worship that stretches across space and time. It unites us to Him, and each of us to each other.

This same joyful rhythm is found in how the Church shapes the daily life of worship through the Liturgy of the Hours. The Hours sanctify every “season” of daily life with prayer. Lauds—the Morning Prayer—is a song of praise. Look at how wonderfully this God who loves us is, it says, and how little we merit it. Vespers—the Evening Prayer—is always defined by gratitude. Thank you, Lord, for this day, and its opportunities to serve you. Is there anything more poetic than a daily tide of praise and gratitude, moving in and out from waking to sleeping?

These liturgical rhythms and rhythms of interior life spring from the ultimate poetic well: Scripture itself. It is striking that these sacred words so often take the form of music—most famously the Psalms. “The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same delight in God which made David dance,” wrote C.S. Lewis. God’s endlessly gushing love for us as expressed in Scripture has always inspired dance, song, laughter, and ecstatic energy. Remember too: The Psalms are prayed most vividly in community. We experience this musical joy with others. This reality reminds us

that Scripture itself gives the People of God a shared language of the heart and soul, poetry from the lips of the Spirit to express all the emotions and experiences of life. This is the difference between a newborn baby, who can only cry for help—lacking words to express with specificity their plight—and that of a mature adult, able to express with rich detail the nature of their own experiences. Shared language makes community in Christ possible.



Rhythm in the liturgical calendar, in the Liturgy of the Hours, in Scripture and the shared language of love it makes possible: notice that all this rhythm accompanies change. The rhythm of the liturgical calendar orchestrates seasonal change for Christian life. The rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours accompanies the change from rising in the morning to falling asleep at night. The rhythm of Scripture—most vividly the Psalms—give language to all the many ups and

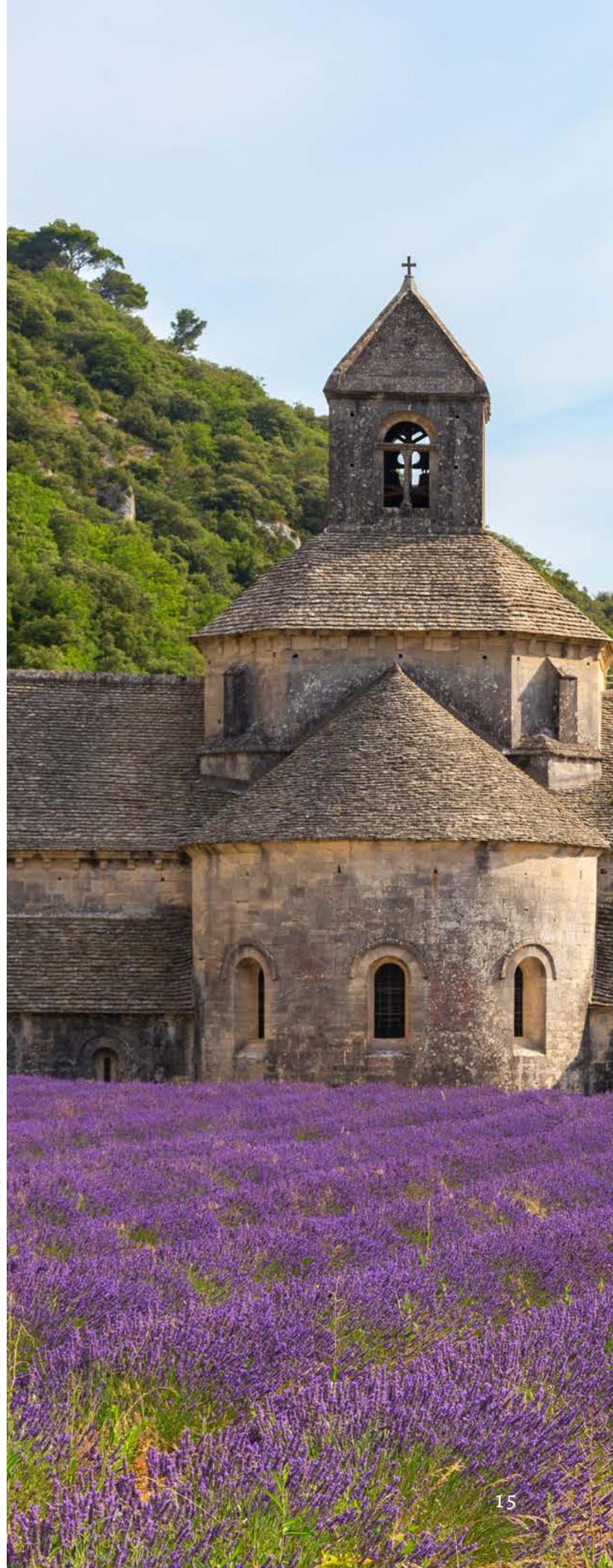
downs of earthly life. There are Psalms for suffering, Psalms for victory, Psalms for humility—Psalms for every emotion and experience of the human heart. These rhythms collectively make smooth and celebratory changes that might otherwise be experienced in ways more painful, more shocking, more tempting to sin. Importantly, they also make the experience of change communal. Through shared worship, shared prayer, shared language of the heart, we become more able to experience the ups and downs of life together as a People of God, walking towards Christ together. We become capable of following the beatitudes—comforting the mourning and being comforted in turn; showing mercy and receiving it; making peace and being called children of God. The journey to righteousness—a purgative experience of change—crucially communal. As Pope Francis so poetically describes it, “No one is saved alone.”

Rhythm, put simply, turns the bitterness of change into a sweeter flavour. It is one powerful way our Lord makes our yokes easy and our burdens light.

The rhythmic change of life isn’t always apparent until many years after a new tune starts playing and a new season has begun. One of the joys of approaching the tender age of thirty is to have

enough of my earthly journey behind me that the destination of life's many twisting roads is becoming clearer. The song of my existence has been played long enough for the rhythm to be just a bit clearer and the shape of the dance to become just a bit more obvious. To see clearly the dance the Lord has been leading you through over a season of your life—to see the fundamental goodness of that movement—is to rediscover that faith in your heart that all His promises to us are true and good and beautiful.

So, for all those young souls seeking to find their place in the plan of salvation, with all the seasons of suffering and joy this journey entails, my advice is simple. Get caught up in the dance. Follow the Church's rhythm of life. It will unite you to the Cross. It will make the suffering sweeter. It will open the dam holding back divine love until it overflows your heart in ecstasy and spills out in joyful oblation and magnanimous service to your fellow children of God, and God's glorious creation. It will bring you into community with others singing that same song, dancing that same dance, looking to that same good and wondrous God. It will lead you to joy, no matter the changes that life brings. It's the rhythm that makes all our burdens lighter than air to carry.





"...what they [artists] manage to express in their painting, their sculpting, their creating is no more than a glimmer of the splendour which flared for a moment before the eyes of their spirit."

ST. POPE JOHN PAUL II
LETTER TO ARTISTS



THE SACRED HEART

ARTIST: IRENA VÉLEZ

MEDIUM: WATERCOLOUR WITH FINELINER

ORIGINAL SIZE: 8" X 10"

A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus once said, "Change is the only constant in life." As odd as it sounds, we are all guaranteed to experience the both wonderful and terrible concept of change. Things come and go, memories are made and then fade, objects are grasped and then let go, friends are close and then far, people live and then die.

I assume that we are all quite ambivalent about the word "change." When our situation is less than fortunate, we hunger for change, and we grab at the nearest opportunity for something different. But when our situation is positively exceptional, we reel away from change as if it were poison. Even our reactions to change are always changing.

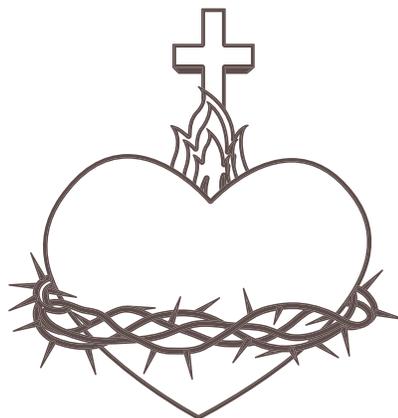
So, what do we do about change? Do we welcome it or reject it? Love it or hate it? Withstand it or oppose it?

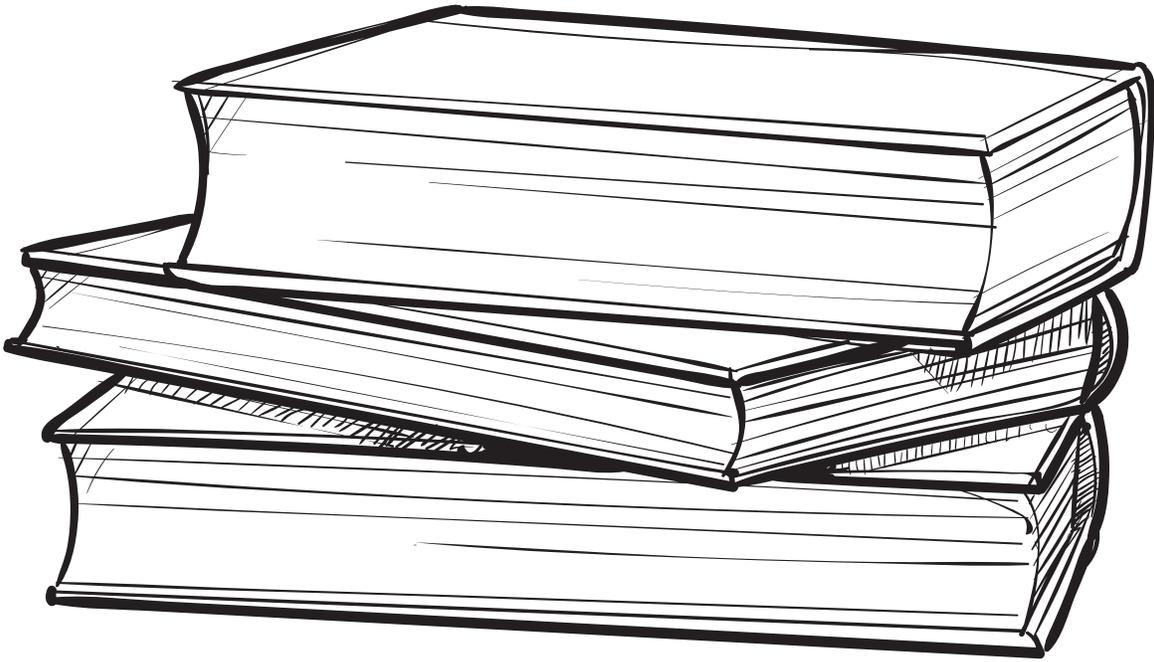
In our ever-changing lives, one thing remains unchanging: God. If we put our trust in the one thing that is immutable, the world could come crashing down around us and we'd still be okay. There is rest when depending on the eternal. There is true freedom when we let go of our own desires and let God's will play out in our lives instead.

In the eye of the hurricane we see God, steady as we whirl in the storm around Him. It is easy to be distracted by the strong winds, it is easy to fly further and further away. Do not lose hope, for the one who has overcome the world is the only constant. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.



A word of advice: Place your trust in Jesus' Sacred Heart and everything will be just fine.

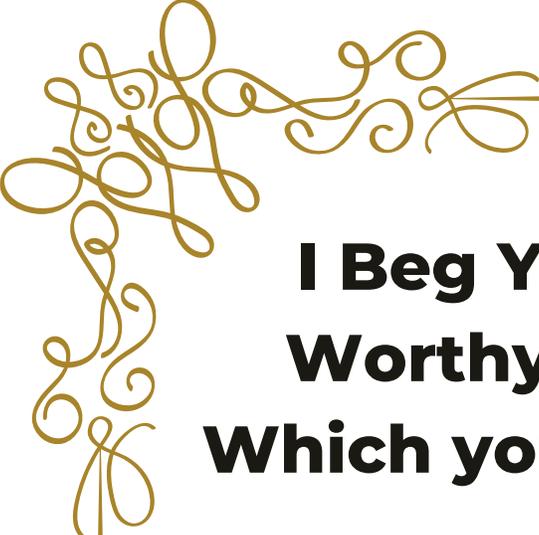




"The heart has reasons the mind knows not of."

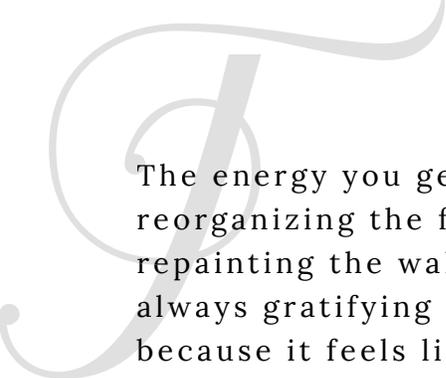


BLAISE PASCAL
PENSÉES



I Beg You to Lead a Life Worthy of the Calling to Which you Have Been Called

MICHAEL DO



The energy you get from reorganizing the furniture or repainting the walls in a room is always gratifying in the end because it feels like a fresh new start. However, a year or more may pass, and you begin to get bored with the layout and yearn for change again. Thus begins an endless cycle of wanting change to get new motivation or energy in your life. The same could be said when you first start writing in a new journal or start a New Year's resolution, where the energy is high at the beginning but fades later down the road. Now relate this to your spiritual life. How often do you feel like you go through cycles of change

to constantly invigorate your spiritual life? Personally, I find it that it can get frustrating and tiring going through this motion, leading to a sense of spiritual dullness. So how did the saints manage to have a constant devotion? Well, we must look to St. Paul.

In the beginning of one of his letters to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes "I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1). What does this passage mean? Well, we must first look at the context in which St. Paul is writing to the Christian Ephesians. "*The prisoner*

in the Lord” refers to the fact that St. Paul is literally in prison. Roman prison was historically known for being brutal, with some accounts describing it as a sentence worse than death. Yet, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul continued to write and proclaim the Gospel. How remarkable! But what does St. Paul mean when he refers to “*lead[ing] a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called*”? Just from the first verse, St. Paul knew the hearts of the Ephesians for living a pacific life, and urged them to resist the influence of the sophistry of Gentile philosophers and false teachings. Later in this chapter, St. Paul talks about how the Gentiles had darkened their understanding of Christ and alienated themselves from Him in their daily lives because of “their ignorance and hardness of heart”(Ephesians 4:19). They had lost all sensitivity to the love of God and abandoned themselves to their desires, to what made them happy.

Can you relate to this in your own daily life? God has placed heaven in our hands, providing complete access to His Heart, yet we squander that gift because we say we are too busy or are too exhausted. How often do we give excuses like “I’m really busy,” or “I have a lot of stuff to do,” but ultimately waste our time? Are we spending our time on stuff that is not worthy of the calling we

receive? St. Paul calls us to get rid of our old life and engage in the new:

You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-4)

How do we go about living the life that God calls us to embrace? This new life begins neither with rearranging furniture nor with a whole different formal change in your life, but requires an internal change in your heart towards God. The rest will follow.

External change is temporary, internal change is everlasting. We need to devote ourselves to God. St. Francis de Sales indicates that all true and living devotion requires the love of God, His grace. However, he addresses an important distinction in the use of God’s grace, namely that between charity and devotion.

...when the love of God strengthens us to do well, it is called charity – but when it attains its fullest perfection, in which it not only leads us to do well, but to act carefully, diligently, and promptly, then it is called devotion.

God's grace allows us to respond to His call to become children of God, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life. Therefore, we must ask for the love of God to change our hearts internally. Ask yourself what are the deepest roadblocks in your heart holding you back? What are the daily struggles causing you to walk ahead of or behind Christ and not with Him?

If following Christ is comfortable and not challenging, you need to rethink where you are going since it grows more and more challenging when you try to follow Him. At the outbreak of the persecution in Rome, Peter fled from the city, perhaps believing that "the rock" should be somewhere safe so others could find and cling to him later. On the road leading out of Rome, Jesus appears to Peter, heading in the opposite direction towards the city. Peter asks Jesus, *Quo vadis, Domine?* "Lord, where are you going?". Christ replies, "I am going to Rome to be crucified," and then disappears, after which Peter turns back into the city to embrace martyrdom. We are all called to embrace martyrdom, which does not necessarily require the shedding of one's blood, but for one to bear witness to the faith. "Martyr" comes from the Greek word *μάρτυς* (*martus*)—meaning "witness" in a court of law. Even St. Jerome calls out some of the early Christians who grew nostalgic for the old days of the martyrdom soon

after the legalization of Christianity:

Let's not think that there is martyrdom only in the shedding of blood. There is always martyrdom.

Martyrdom is always our vocation, even when it is just the martyrdom of a kind smile, our public witness. Our dedication to the work we do and the people around us should be an outward sign of a profound inner sacrifice, a Christ-like gift of ourselves. Martyrdom is a total gift of self and involves the daily dying to self in imitation of Jesus Christ. We must ponder our *quo vadis* in our own hearts. Do we follow Jesus where he leads, or go our own way?



How do we start to go about this practically? Firstly, we must recognize the distractions in our own lives and take responsibility to remove them. One passage that always puts a shiver down my spine as I can relate this in my own life is from C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*:

You will find that anything or nothing is sufficient to attract his wandering attention. You no longer need a good book, which he really likes, to keep him from his prayers or his work or his sleep; a column of advertisements in yesterday's paper will do. You can make him waste his time not only in conversation he enjoys with people whom he likes, but also in conversations with those he cares nothing about, on subjects that bore him. You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room. All the healthy and outgoing activities which we want him to avoid can be inhibited and nothing given in return, so that at last he may say...'I now see that I spent most my life doing in doing neither what I ought nor what I liked.

This first step of removing distractions is initially a frustrating challenge, as the Enemy will try anything to return you to your former way of life. Hence, St. Paul tells the Ephesians to “be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil” (Ephesians 4:27-8). Instead, with humility and openness, we must make room for God’s grace to work in our hearts.

Secondly, the faith infused in our hearts causes us to yearn for the truth. By knowing and loving God, we also come to know the

fullness of truth about ourselves. To become friends with someone requires effort by learning more about this person, right? The same is needed with Christ at the center of our lives. Take time out of your schedule to reflect and learn something that challenges you spiritually. Learn about the lives and writings of the saints for they reflect true devotion. There are endless tools, like Bible studies or the catechism, to help us create a deeper understanding of our faith and to communicate the truth of the Gospel to others. Even if you feel you are an expert in a particular area, have you truly exhausted the endless riches that can come about from it?

Lastly, living the life worthy of the calling to which you have been called requires prayer and the sacraments. St. Francis de Sales indicates this through Jacob’s dream in Genesis:

Ponder Jacob’s ladder: it is a true picture of the devout life; the two poles that support the steps are types of prayer that seek the love of God, and the Sacraments that confer that love; while the steps themselves are simply the degrees of love by which we go on from virtue to virtue, either descending by good deeds on behalf of our neighbor or ascending by contemplation to a loving union with God.

An example of the importance of the sacraments can be found with the Eucharist as the first Christians had devoted themselves to the “apostolic teaching, to the communion, and the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). In fact, the early Christians used the same language to describe martyrdom to describe the Eucharist. We see this when John describes his vision of heaven where “under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.” There, under the altar of sacrifice were the martyrs, the witnesses. Even the youth in early Christianity had such devotion to the Eucharist. St. Tarcisius was a young boy in third century Rome, and his devotion and virtue was so strong that the clergy would trust him with bringing the Blessed Sacrament to the sick. However, one day while carrying a pyx to the sick, he was recognized and set upon by a pagan mob. This mob by accounts was compared to a pack of rabid dogs as they flung themselves upon him trying to pry the pyx from his hands until he died. St. Tarcisius preferred to give his life rather than yield up the Body of Christ. We need a zealous devotion to the Eucharist by spending time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassatti is a perfect witness of the importance of the Eucharist in his life:

I remember Pier Giorgio well during adoration one night in the Turin cathedral: he was kneeling on the floor trying to pray as other young people were brushing past him as they went to and from Communion. Melted wax dripped from the candles onto his suitcoat, and he didn't seem to notice it at all, so absorbed was he in his prayers. Then I understood what Communion and a Eucharistic life meant to him. - Father Tommaso Castagno

Pier Giorgio nurtured his devotion to the Eucharist by spending hours in Adoration, often during the night in his mountain clothes before leaving early in the morning for an excursion. In the chapel he was intensely focused yet among his friends he was known for being riotously funny.

We are all called to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. Are you willing to take responsibility, remove distractions, and receive God's grace to transform your life?





**Man is permitted much
To scan and learn
In Nature's frame;
Till he well-nigh can tame
Brute mischiefs, and can touch
Invisible things, and turn
All warring ills to purposes of good.**



**ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
*THE ELEMENTS***



WATER- COURSE

BARNABAS NEY

A fiercesome fife
A beautiful bourn,
So majestic yet,
Somehow, so forlorn.

A turning torrent,
A carefree cascade,
Nothing abhorrent
By it shall be made.

A sparkling stream,
A bubbling brook,
It has none to ream
From shelter to nook.

A running river,
A rippling rill,
A laughter giver
Laughter with a thrill.

A casual creek,
An awesome outpour,
As it flows to seek
The ocean's fore-shore.

BIOGRAPHIES



Michael Do

Michael Do was born in London, Ontario to immigrant parents from Poland and Vietnam. For most of his life, he lived in Deep River, Ontario. He is currently finishing his Master's in Cellular and Molecular Medicine at the University of Ottawa/Ottawa Hospital Research Institute.

He has been involved with CCO for the past 7 years, has a first-degree black belt in karate, and is therefore a certified spiritual ninja. He is a lover of the outdoors, beer, books, and travelling with his favourite destination being Poland.



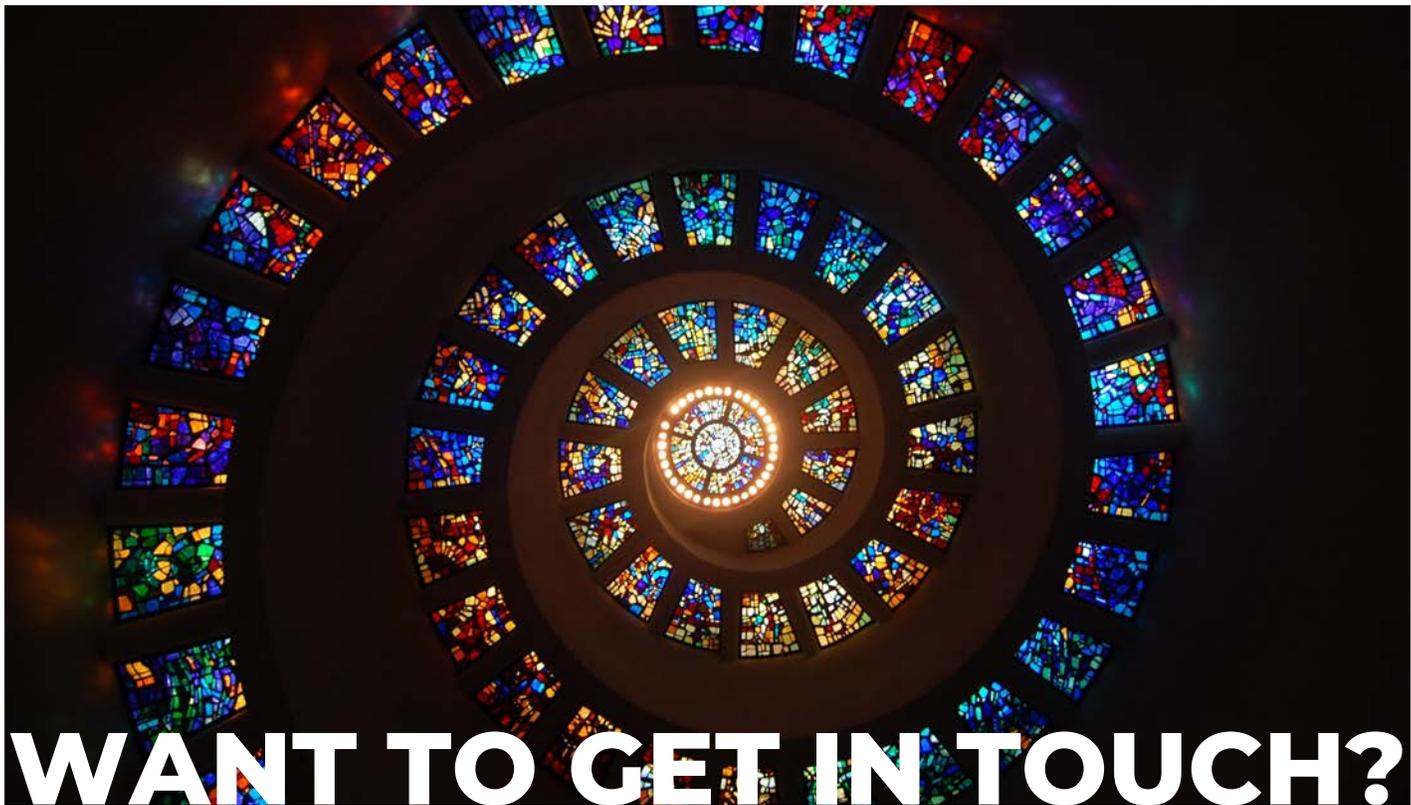
Barnabas Ney

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.



Irena Vélez

Irena is a passionate Ottawa-based artist working mainly in watercolour. Her art inspiration and ideas come largely from her Catholic faith and her desire to share it with others. When Irena is not painting, she is either at church, reading a good book, studying journalism and history, training in martial arts, or spending time with family and friends.



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