

Transcendentals

MEMENTO MORI

A DIGITAL CATHOLIC JOURNAL



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**SPECIAL GUEST
CONTRIBUTOR:**

Tianna Williams - tiSpark

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A Message from Our Editors

Welcome to the second publication of *Transcendentals*! Before we deliver our message, we just want to express our sincerest gratitude to our readers. We have received wonderful feedback, ways to improve, and praises of this project. Thank you for subscribing, and if you have yet to read our first issue, it is available under the Publication page on our website.

Our theme for this month's publication is *Memento Mori*; a Latin phrase used in Catholic circles that essentially means "Remember your Death." This particular theme was selected for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the release of this issue is close in proximity to All Saints Day when we pray for the souls in purgatory so that they may attain closer to Heaven. Secondly, the month of November sees many priests donning their black vestments to serve Requiem Masses (of which the Mass is intended for a departed soul). We felt it best for us to dedicate this month, in solidarity with the Church, to recall our mortality on this earth.

If you have ever read *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, or seen the amazing movies, you might recall this quote from Gandalf in the third instalment of the trilogy: "No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take."

Indeed we must all take that path in our lives. Our mortality demands it so. Bearing this in mind, we can either refuse to acknowledge it and run away from it by living in the pleasures of the world; or we can join the "fight" and recall our death in order to fully live in the present.

The latter option is the route encouraged by our Guest Contributor, Tianna Williams. An artist from Alberta, Canada, Tianna is also known by her artist name "tiSpark." You can find her beautiful work on her website or by checking out her Instagram page (see the links on our Guest Contributor page). Tianna has offered to share with us her recent painting along with a brief reflection of *Memento Mori*.

OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



JOIN THE FIGHT - TIANNA WILLIAMS

OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Remember your death. As we approach the Christmas season, this might seem like an odd time to think about one's inevitable demise. This is supposed to be the time of year when we begin planning holiday festivities, shopping for gifts, and contemplating the birth of our Saviour.

But, it would be an understatement to say that this year has been quite unlike any other. A global pandemic has suppressed the world economy. Riots have ravaged our cities. Large swaths of the countryside have been consumed by forest fires, and political tensions grow increasingly hostile. Countless people find themselves unemployed, lonely, and even desperate. If there was ever a time that all of us have been forced to contemplate our own fragility and mortality, this is it.

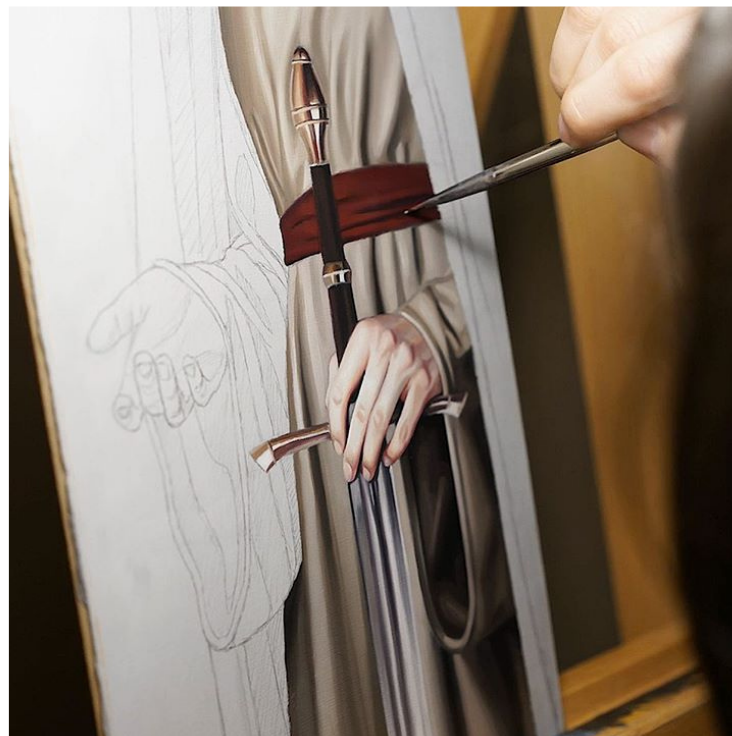
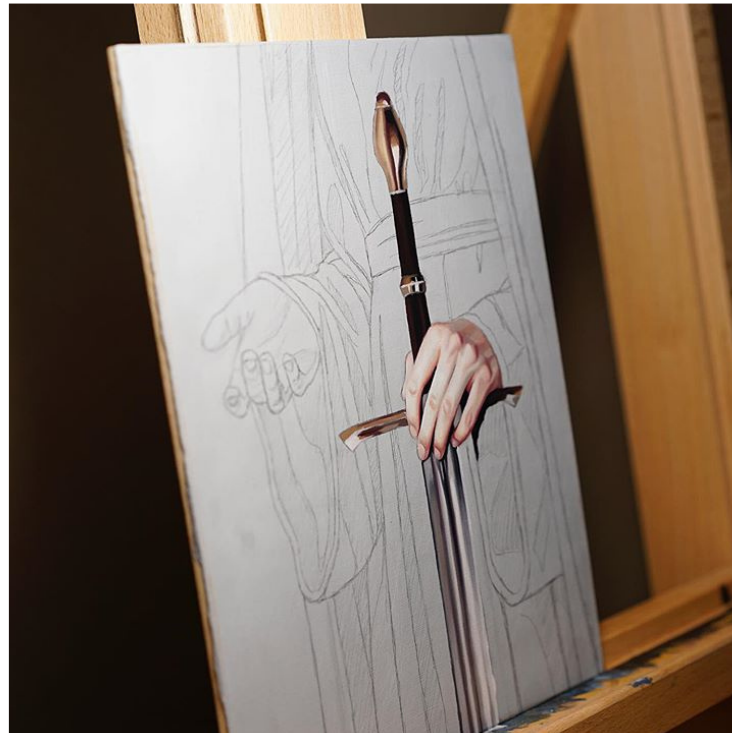
I painted this image in the heart of these crises. A sword, in combination with the title, Join the Fight, might seem to the unbeliever like a call to violence, and unfortunately, there are many who feel like that is the only option left to them. But for a Christian, it should bring to mind a popular passage from Ephesians:

"Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm... Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph 6:13,17)

We are indeed in the midst of a battle. But our enemy is not a virus, not our political opponents, nor tyrannical governments. Each one of us is in a battle for our souls; and the devil is ever biting at our heel.

The Catholic tradition of remembering one's death, Memento Mori, is meant to remind us of this spiritual battle. My life could end at any moment; this sobering reality should cause me to pause and reflect. Am I living out God's will? Am I ready to stand before the throne of judgement?

The beautiful thing is that none of us fights alone. We have a Saviour who died and rose so that we could be free from the shackles of sin. He sends to us the Holy Spirit so we have the strength to win every fight. He even gave us his own mother, and no one fights for her own as fiercely as a mother.



The future remains uncertain. None of us knows if life will return to some semblance of "normal" or if 2020 is only the start of many trials yet to come. But whatever comes, put on the armour of God and take up the sword of the Spirit. Delve into Scripture and fortify yourself with prayer. Remember your death- so that you may live.

Follow her instagram [HERE](#)

Art





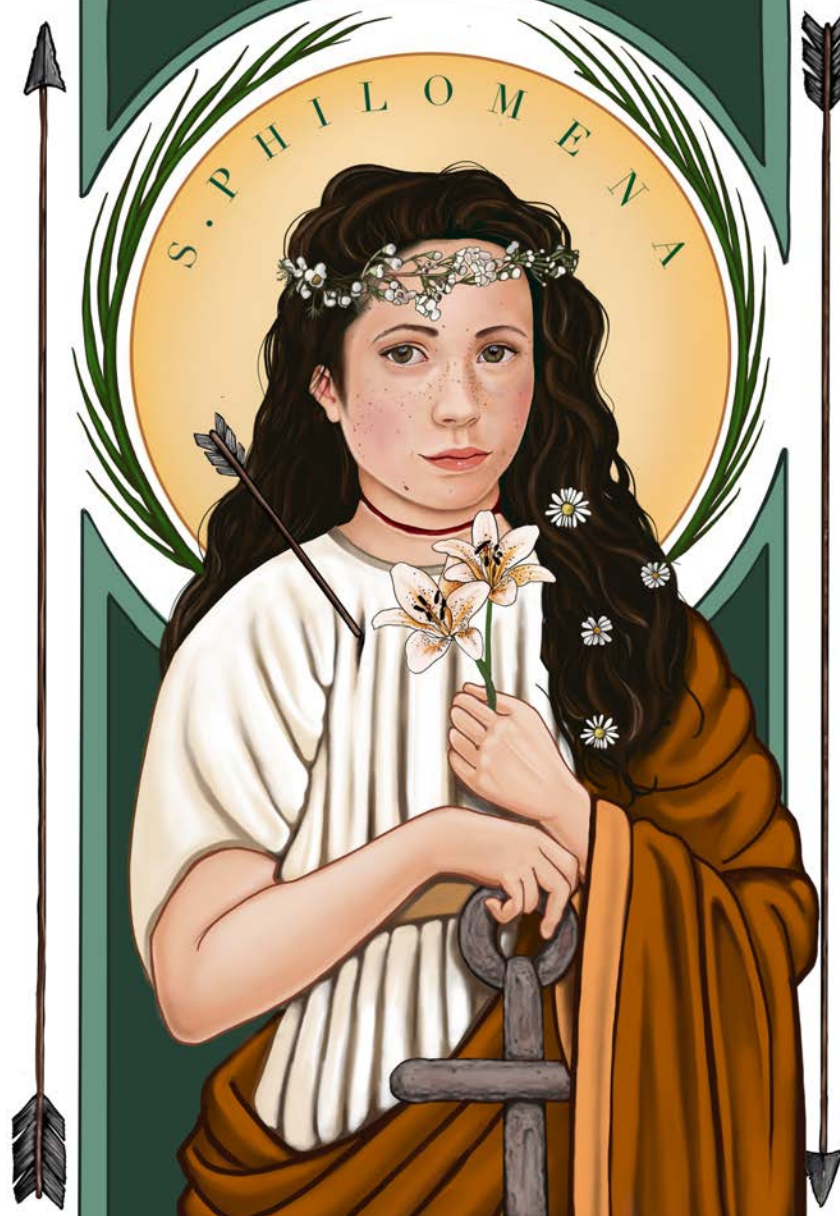
IT IS FINISHED

ARTIST: CELIA MCCORMICK

MEDIUM: GRAPHITE AND CHARCOAL ON PAPER

ORIGINAL SIZE: 12x18 IN.

We remember Christ's death for our salvation and meditate upon our own, calling to mind that the imitation of Christ's life and death will enable us to fully live.



ST. PHILOMENA

ARTIST: JOSHUA TERPSTRA

MEDIUM: DIGITAL WORK (PROCREATE)

ORIGINAL SIZE: 3825 X 4950 PX

What we know of St. Philomena comes from a vision from a Neapolitan nun, Sister Maria Luisa di Gesù. Although her state as a saint is deemed controversial, much devotion to Philomena grew throughout parts of Europe following the discovery of a tomb at the Catacombs of Priscilla on the Via Salaria Nova. The tomb bore the inscription Pax Tecum Filumena ("Peace be unto you, Philomena").

From Sister Gesù's vision, we understand that Philomena was a Greek princess whose family converted to Christianity. She took a vow of consecrated virginity soon after. The Emperor Diocletian fell in love with her, and whose proposal Philomena refused. She was then subjected to much torture, including an attempt at drowning by an anchor, being shot with arrows, and then finally by means of decapitation. In the image we see her holding the anchor they tried to drown her with, and unfettered by the arrow piercing her chest. According to her story, she was miraculously healed by angels for every piece of torture. No blood flows from her decapitation, as it was

simply the incident of her martyrdom. In a sense, it is almost as if death cauterized the wound. United to Christ in heaven, she does not bleed, but on Earth, we remember her for the moment in which her faith was the cause of her greatest sacrifice.

Unlike our Lord, Philomena's crown is not one of thorns, but of baby's breath flowers. These symbolize purity, innocence, and everlasting love. They also bear witness to one of her patronages: infants and babies. In her hands she holds two white lilies, symbolizing an unstained devotion to our Lord. Her hair bears daisies, representing her virginity and purity (another of her patronages). The palm fronds surrounding her halo declare her martyrdom, while the arrows cast to the sides are human weapons which could not pierce her. Her orange and white robes are common in her depictions, with the brightness of the white declaring her commitment to her consecration.

While the account of her life remains in controversy, I think St. Philomena represents an interesting case. As we celebrate Memento Mori, a remembrance of our own deaths, we need not be concerned in the manner in which we pass. We need not be concerned about our financial states, what we might eat or drink, what we might wear. All of these things are temporal. But to live as Philomena lived, to be obedient in the face of death itself: this is how Christ calls us to live.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus declares "truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." (Mark 10:15). These child martyrs, these legendary children along the likes of St. Tarcisius, St. José Sanchez Del Rio, St. Agnes, and St. Philomena can serve as inspiration for us who have surpassed them in years, but nowhere near their sanctity.

St. Philomena, O faithful virgin and glorious martyr, pray for us.



*Were you there when they
crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they nailed
Him to a tree?
Were you there when they laid
Him in a tomb?*

*Sometimes, it causes me to
tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they
nailed Him to a tree?*

I have vivid memories of the 3pm choir at St. Leonard's Church, singing this song acapella every year at Good Friday Mass, ever since I was a little girl. As an artist, the imagery of the lyric "...when they nailed Him to a tree" becomes so real. My intention for this piece is to depict that lyric literally.

The background image is a photograph I took on a camping trip in Manitoulin Island three years ago. It was early in the morning, the sun was coming through the trees, and its rays were visible through the smoke from our campfire. The foreground image is a photo I took for a photography class in high school. I used my mom's metal Crucifix and placed it among the twigs of a bush in our garden. I intentionally placed the vertical beam of the metal cross along the tree in the background image to show how the tree builds the cross. I added filters to the image of the cross to create what is called a, "double exposure" effect and to have the rays from the sun revealing Jesus's Crucifixion, as if He were physically there.

From what happened around 2000 years ago, Jesus's Crucifixion continues to shed light on the entire world today. Sometimes in today's day and age, the Crucifixion story is under-played. This piece serves as a reminder that the Crucifixion was not and is still not glamorous. When we suffer, Jesus is crucified all over again. That's how strong His love is for us: He suffers with us. Suffering is a Grace as it gives us a small glimpse of what He went through.

NAILED HIM TO A TREE

ARTIST: :LAURA BELL

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPHY (DOUBLE EXPOSURE)

ORIGINAL SIZE: 14.4X21.6IN.



Yes, when I carry my cross, I am there when they crucified my Lord.

Yes, when I am bullied or criticized, I am there when they nailed Him to a tree.

Yes, when I cry, I am there when they laid Him in a tomb.

Sometimes, it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

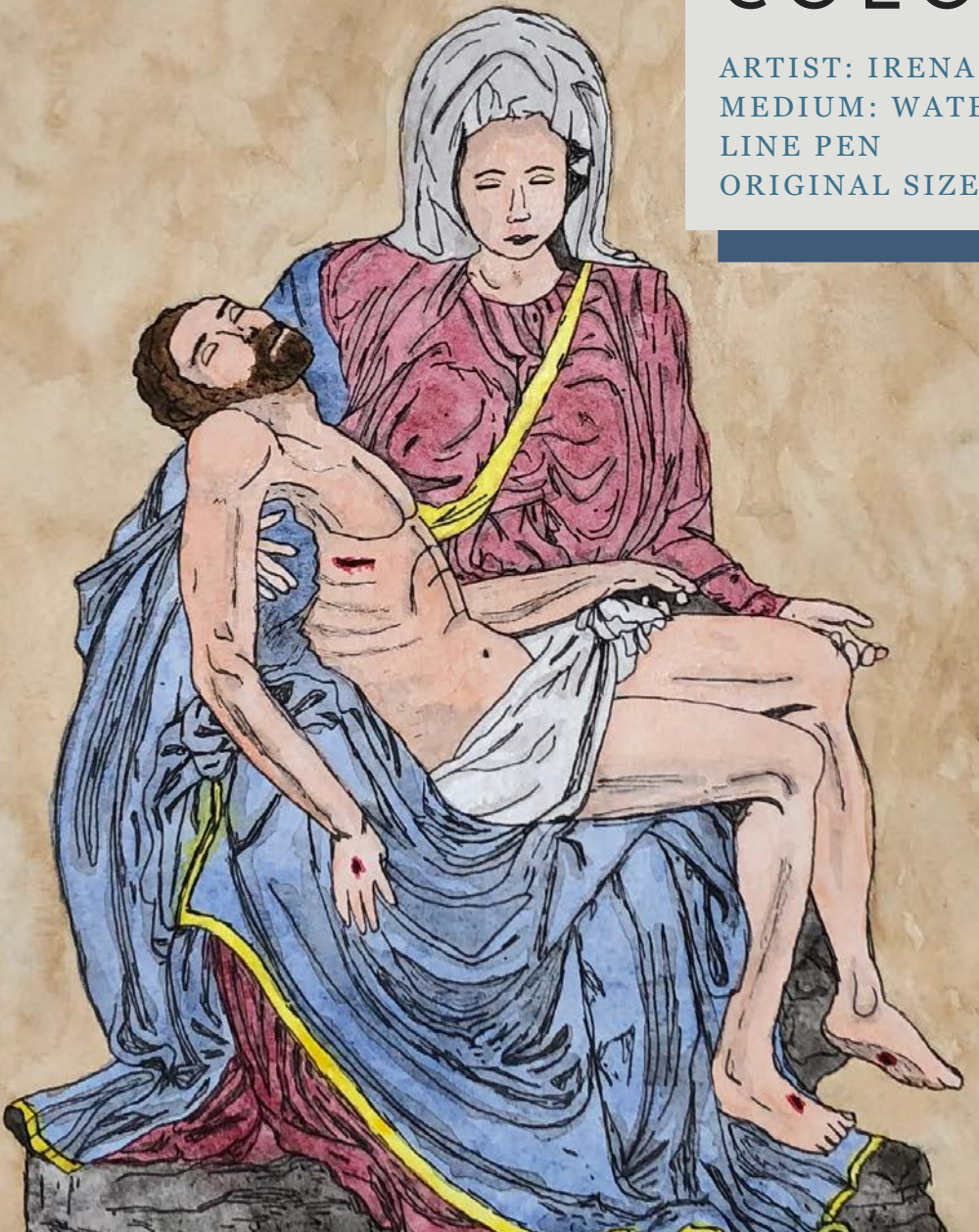
But I am here because they nailed Him to a tree.

THE PIETÀ IN COLOUR

ARTIST: IRENA VÉLEZ

MEDIUM: WATERCOLOUR WITH MICRO-LINE PEN

ORIGINAL SIZE: 22.9 X 30.5 CM (9 X 12 IN)



The Pietà is a Renaissance sculpture made from Carrara marble by Michelangelo Buonarroti, completed in 1499. It was originally commissioned as a funeral monument for the French Cardinal Jean de Bilhères but was later moved to St. Peter's Basilica in the 18th century. The sculpture depicts the Virgin Mary cradling her dead Son in her lap, after His crucifixion and removal from the cross at Golgotha.

Pietà means “piety” or “compassion” in Italian. It comes from the Latin word “pietatem,” meaning “piety” or “pity.”

As you probably have noticed, the two bodies are quite out of proportion. This is because Mary's size had to be adjusted in order for her to hold her adult Son in her lap full-length. Since the body of a fully-grown man in the lap of a woman would look very disproportionate, Michelangelo instead wanted to show a unique conformity between the two people.

Mary's face is also surprisingly youthful, which is strange because she would have been around

50 years old at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, assuming that Jesus had been 33 at the time of His death. Mary's youth represents her incorruptible purity and her closeness to God, the source of all beauty. Her outward beauty is a reflection of her interior virtuous and pious beauty. Mary's delicate, graceful appearance contrasts her strength and power to effortlessly carry her adult son. She does not seem to be struggling with it, her body is upright, and her facial expression is serene. She is a woman of vigor and power; she is not weak.

Jesus's lifeless body hangs over Mary's arms and you can see its weight, offering no resistance. Mary lifts Him under the upper back and legs and does her best to hold Him up, but His head hangs back limp and His neck lies exposed. His tortured and beat up body looks so vulnerable. The marks of the Crucifixion are clearly visible on Jesus' hands, feet, and side, yet his face shows no agony from His passion. Jesus had just died for all the sins of mankind, thus Michelangelo wanted to represent the communion between humanity and God sanctified through Christ's sacrifice.

This is a very intimate depiction of Christ and his Mother. Some say that Mary, in that moment, was remembering Jesus as a baby. There is a special closeness between Mother and Son. She tenderly looks down at her beloved Son and cradles Him, as if He were still just a newborn. The same arms that once held the Son of Man as an infant in a stable in Bethlehem, now hold her dead Son; who died for the sins of all mortals.

Although the Virgin's right hand holds Him up, her left hand is turned up and her palm lies open, as if presenting her Son to the viewer. This is an invitation to follow Christ. She is showing us the Way, the Truth, and the Life. She is showing us the Transcendentals: Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. She is showing us the path to salvation. She is showing us God's sacrifice for mankind.

Her endless humility and generosity allowed her to give up her Son as a sacrifice for our redemption. It is from this very sacrifice that steadfast love and boundless graces flow.

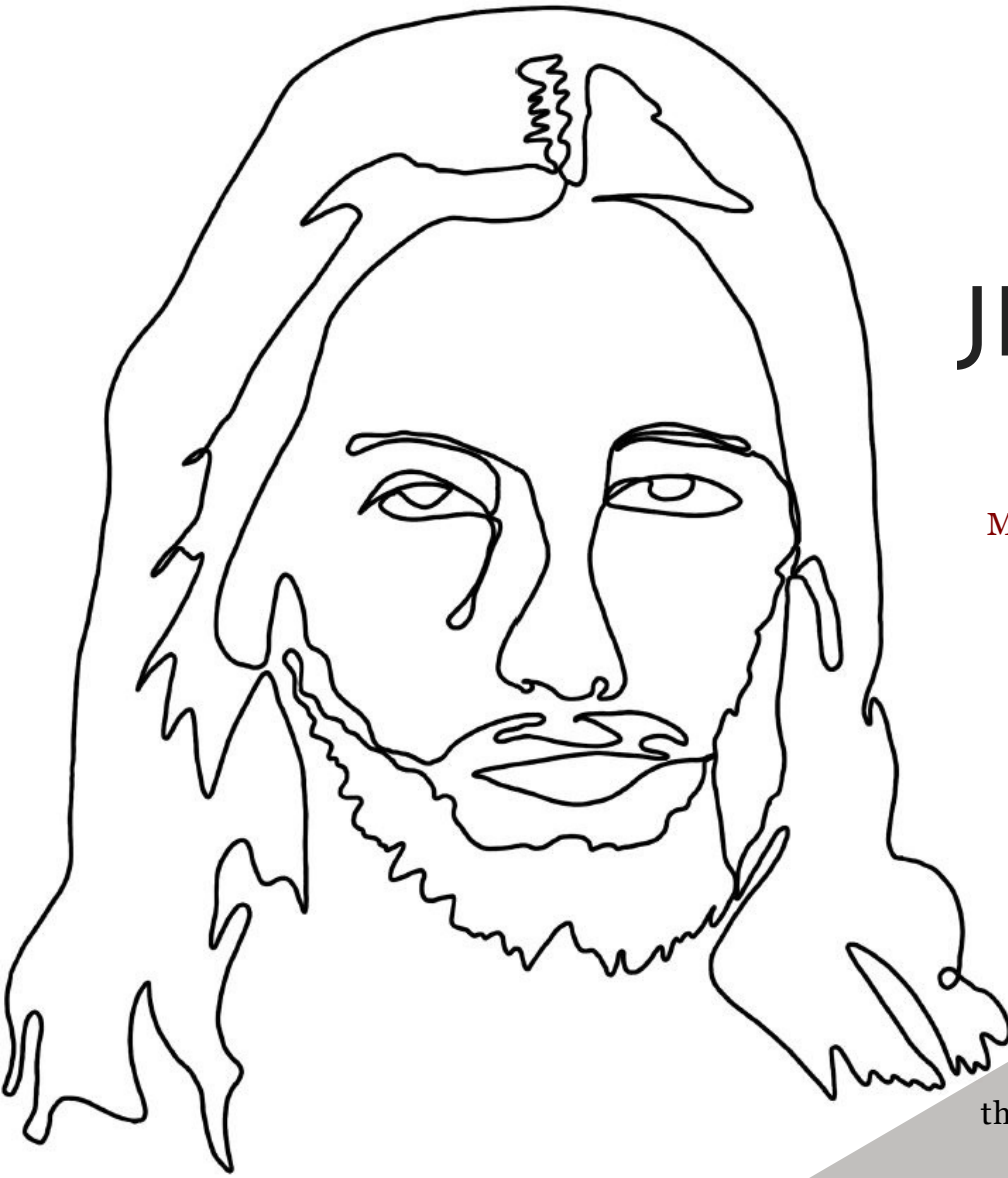
In that very moment, Mary is confronted with the reality of the death of her Son. She tilts her head down, gazing at His lifeless body, contemplating His death. It is interesting that she looks neither anguished nor horrified, her face expresses peace. She accepts that Christ's death was God's will. Her reverent acceptance of this sacrifice inspires us to follow her example. Mary came face to face with death. Mary saw death, held death, and kissed death. However, Mary fully and truly believed in Jesus' promise that He would come again. His death shattered her heart, but she knew that it would be mended through the Resurrection.

There is a contrast between Jesus' inanimate body and Mary's complete trust in His coming resurrection. An ordinary person would see a dead man, cold and departed, but Mary sees eternal life. Have faith, take Mary's perspective. Grief, sadness, and despair will always tempt us, but perfect love casts all that away. Do not worry, do not be afraid, death has been conquered.

When we look upon the Pietà, may this image remind us of our own deaths to come, as the phrase goes, "Memento Mori." Look upon this statue and remember what happens after. His death was not the end, but only the beginning. Life for us humans can be joyful, pleasant, and enjoyable, but it comes to an end. Earthly pleasures are fleeting and impermanent. We are mortal, death is a part of life, but it is not a bad thing because we believe in Christ and we know that we will rise again with Him on the last day.

Mary looks down at Jesus' lifeless body and recognizes eternal life, may we too see this.





JESUS WEPT

ARTIST: MIGUEL ANDRES
MEDIUM: DIGITAL (PROCREATE)

Thinking about death and its inevitability always reminds me of the shortest verse in the Bible.

"Jesus wept." - John 11:35.

No metaphors or parables. So simple. Jesus simply wept.
Jesus felt sadness

The verse was first highlighted for me during a funeral mass that I attended. There's an argument that states that Jesus wept because He empathizes with Martha and Mary, and some say He mourned Lazarus' death. Regardless, He cried and felt sadness despite the miracle He knew was about to come.

It's a reminder that to mourn and to be sad is to be human. It does not lessen our faith in Jesus, it just makes us human.

This line art is a remake of a previous piece. The piece contains one continuous line with no clear beginning or endpoints, which is a nod to the divinity of Jesus.

This piece also intentionally didn't have any perceived border that I often use in many of my works. Since the main focal point is the tear from Jesus, I've used the entire piece as a border to frame the tear. A way that I hoped would highlight Jesus's humanity and juxtapose His Divinity.

ESSAYS





I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

MEGAN JOSEPH

The spirit of Memento Mori is meant to make us stop and think about the inevitability of death, particularly our own. Death is sometimes described as the mere separation of the body and soul. With this definition in mind, it follows that there ought to be both a physical and spiritual dimension to death and the symbolism of Memento Mori allows us to think about both. Yet, how can we ponder death's duality on only one side of the grave? I would like to offer a short commentary on John 11. The story of the death and rising of Lazarus gives us a glimpse of how God, in the second person of the Trinity, understands human mortality.

The chapter opens with the announcement that Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, is sick. The sisters then send word to Jesus of the illness to which He prophesied, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it" (John 11:4b NRSVCE). Most biblical scholars would agree that the details and events of Lazarus's death and resurrection foreshadow the Passion of Jesus Christ. But Jesus's response to the news of His friend Lazarus gives a unique insight to the profound beauty of death: that God is able to use humanity's most final destruction to bring Himself glory.



When Jesus finally arrives in Bethany 17 verses later, Lazarus has already died and in fact, has been dead for four days. Jesus tells Martha, “Your brother will rise again,” to which she replies that her brother “will rise again in the resurrection at the last day”(John 11:24 NRSVCE). As a devout Jew, Martha is clinging to the teachings of the Pharisees of her time who preached the eschatological resurrection of the righteous at the end of time. However, she never once considers that Jesus, the Son of God, could bring him back to life immediately.

Jesus proclaims, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He did not claim to have resurrection and life or understand secrets about resurrection and life. Instead, Jesus dramatically said that He is the resurrection and the life. To know Jesus is to know resurrection and life; to have Jesus is to have resurrection and life. Thus, apart from Jesus, there can be no life.

Jesus boldly challenges Martha; not to intellectual understanding but to belief. Jesus asks her to believe in who He says He is. She must believe that He is the resurrection. And she does. This does not, however, mean that Jesus would not have raised Lazarus from the dead had she not believed. Biblical scholars suggest that Jesus had determined to perform the miracle when He first set out for Bethany, even though it was dangerous for Him there. Martha then answers correctly. She believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Her belief confirms the desire of Jesus’s heart to raise Lazarus.

However, a few short verses later, Jesus weeps. It is bizarre that Jesus announces that He is the resurrection and the life but still weeps with Mary, Martha, and those who are mourning. This paradox might be the most insightful moment in the Scriptures of God’s view of our death. At this moment, the Godman knows that He will raise the dead to life but this knowledge does not hinder Jesus from feeling compassion for the grieving. In the Jewish culture, unmarried sisters like Mary and Martha were likely destined for poverty without the patriarch of Lazarus in the family. They weep for the loss of their brother and possibly for fear of their future.

Jesus knows the glory of the resurrection and still weeps for love of them. In the separation of Lazarus's body and soul, the human side of Jesus grieves while His divinity joyfully anticipates the glory of the resurrection.

This paradox is about more than just feeling both emotions at once. Rather, it speaks to the mystery of the Cross. That the Lord brings life from death, glory from pain, and beauty from ashes.

Furthermore, the events of John 11 reveal that God sees our physical death as a means to glorify Himself. Jesus glorified Himself through the death of Lazarus. Verse 45 confirms this: "Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him" (John 11:45 NRSVCE).

In addition to the witness of the miracle, Jesus also glorified Himself by accompanying the sisters through their grief, revealing His divinity to Martha, extending His power to the other side of death for the first time, and predicting His own death and resurrection. God is able to use our physical death as a means to glorify Himself through our restoration. Jesus restored the life of Lazarus, the family unit of Mary and Martha, and many came to believe in the resurrection and the life.

These reflections lend themselves to the idea of Memento Mori in the Christian tradition. The secular culture sees death as something to be feared or ignored. Yet, Christians who echo the words of Martha, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the son of God," (John 11:27 NRSVCE) are called to ponder that in the face of death, our God is the Resurrection and the Life.



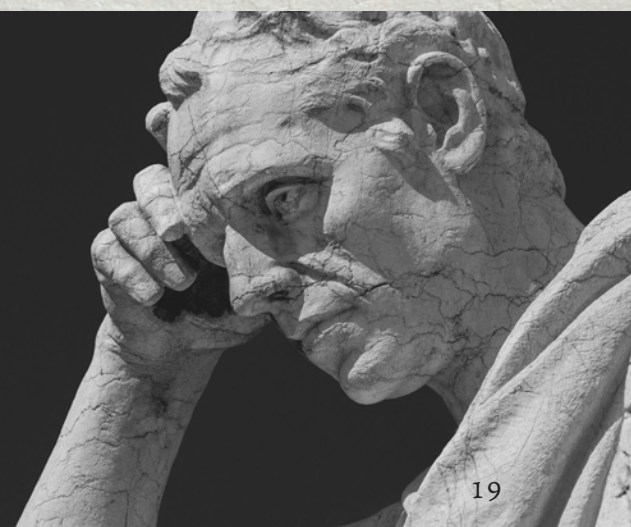
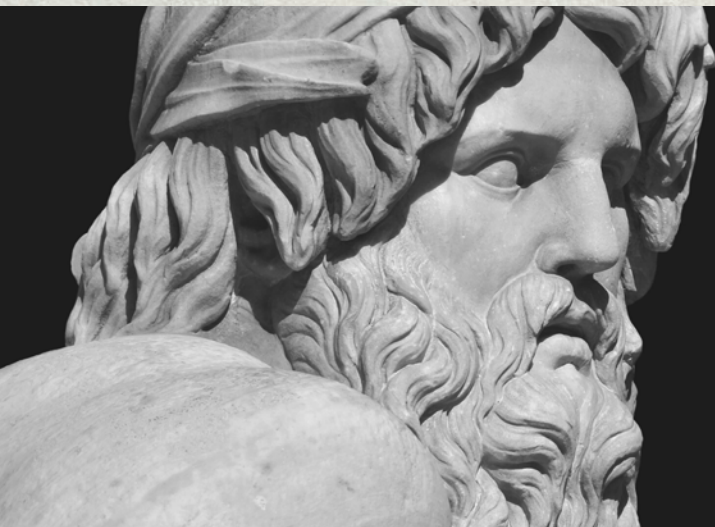
In Praise of Useless Philosophy

CLIF CLEMOTTE

Those familiar with philosophy are often familiar with the accusation that the discipline is useless. The accusation comes from many angles: politicians, Dire Straits, atheists, a former parish priest – the list is long! Philosophy, it is pointed out, is the discipline of arcane questions, like “if a tree falls in the forest, and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” But there are many who hasten to defend Socrates’s successors. When I make a self-deprecating joke about philosophy departments, the response is frequently a chuckle, followed by the comment, “But, in all seriousness, it does really matter – there are many ethical dilemmas today, and we need people to address them.” A former housemate enthused, “Oh, I love doing philosophy! My friends all say I am most philosophical and profound when I’m drunk!” Catholics too, especially

inspired by Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II, rally supportively around philosophy. Philosophy, the handmaiden of theology, is necessary for clear thought and for apologetics. Western culture has abandoned its Scriptural heritage, and the path for theology must first be paved by philosophy.

These defences, however, rarely provide much comfort. A philosophy distinct from action is useless. They seem to concede, and philosophy’s only value lies in ethics, as a prompt towards the good life; or perhaps philosophy serves also as a *preambula fidei* because it asks the profound questions and seeks the meaning of life. While granting that these are good things which some philosophers should do, I would like to suggest that a renewed interest in useless philosophy is an expression of wonder.



By useless philosophy, I have in mind the practice of a philosophy which asks questions like these: What is a mind? How does language relate to the human person and the world? What is the physical world made of? (Now there's a fun one) What are the limitations of natural science? What exactly is mathematics? Is the material conditional missing something? In short, I support work in philosophy even if it asks no life-changing questions. The study of the material conditional is unlikely, in itself, to inspire a soul to contemplation. Analyses of colour and its relation to the mind prompt yawns even from those who voluntarily subject themselves to the question. Why would anyone ask such questions when life is short, when depth and culture are rejected by the modern world, and there are more important things to examine? In the face of death, how can we take up any subject but ethics? A philosophy of useless questions, the critic laments, is indeed a waste of time – and probably a waste of one's life.

I want to briefly dip into the ancient philosophical tradition for a moment. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle states the following:

“It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and about the origin of the universe.” (*Metaphysics*, 1. 982b, trans. Hugh Tredennick)

Two things strike me about this line. First, the emphasis upon wonder as the beginning of the pursuit of wisdom (for “philosophy” means love of wisdom). Second, the nature of the “greater matters” he highlights – none of the examples he offers seems particularly “meaningful” in any life-altering way. Rather, Aristotle's emphasis is upon reality.

I cite Aristotle, not by way of authority, but to show that even the ancient philosophical tradition had this interest at its heart.

Lover of wisdom though Plato was, nevertheless (so the story goes) his Academy's doorway proclaimed that none should enter who was ignorant of geometry (Like all good entertainment, there does not appear to be any particular evidence that this was actually the case). The point is, though the ancient philosophers (and much of the philosophical tradition since) were rightly concerned with seeking profound meaning, their primary aim consistently was establishing a rational understanding of reality. This aim is fundamental to any search for meaning, and demands much patience; the closer we examine reality, the stranger it gets. I suspect thinkers as diverse and important as Socrates and Wittgenstein, Copernicus and Einstein, Aristotle and Lemaître, would all agree. These thinkers practiced great patience, great attention to detail, and – at least, some of them – great humility in the face of reality. It takes great effort to be right all the time (pace Jurassic Park fans) because the devil is in the details. If reality is properly to be grasped, if a rational understanding is to be acquired, if a human pursuit of wisdom is possible at all, then an account must be given of the details of the reality upon which any meaning must be founded.

I have a special admiration for two Catholic thinkers: Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II. First of all, I must love their personal sanctity. I personally suspect it was only on account of their humility that they could be men of such precise insight. John Paul II's praise of Aquinas in *Faith and Reason* is very revealing, and worth quoting at length:

“... Thomas recognized that nature, philosophy's proper concern, could contribute to the understanding of divine Revelation. [sic] Faith therefore has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it. Just as grace builds upon nature and brings it to fulfilment, so faith builds upon and perfects reason. ... Although he made much of the supernatural character of faith, the Angelic Doctor did not overlook the importance of its reasonableness...”

Faith is in a sense an “exercise of thought”; and human reason is neither annulled nor debased in assenting to the contents of faith...” (Faith and Reason, §43)

John Paul II thus both observes and endorses the interpretation of Aquinas whereby he is both a philosopher and a theologian – and a thinker who kept both methods distinct from each other. Philosophy is a legitimate pursuit in its own right, precisely because it is a search for the truth. Thus, philosophy (though it should be available to and must necessarily conform to Revelation) is rightly considered an autonomous discipline:

“It was not by accident that the Fathers of the Church and the Medieval theologians adopted non-Christian philosophies. This historical fact confirms the value of philosophy’s autonomy, which remains unimpaired when theology calls upon it; but it shows as well the profound transformations which philosophy itself must undergo.” (Faith and Reason, §76)

With this brief emphasis upon autonomy, I wish to return to Aristotle's emphasis upon wonder. The search for truth must begin with wonder; and a wonder guided by a rigorous method and personal humility can only be a good thing. It is a good thing to find wonder in the study of insects; to be fascinated by subatomic particles; to contemplate Scripture in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; to wonder what kind of thing the human mind is; to wonder what role the brain plays in perception. Reality is much too large to be fully grasped in one fell swoop, by one single method, or even by one single field within a method. Theology explains the most sacred truths, but is not likely to yield a usable theory of gravity any time soon. Philosophy, being concerned with nature, is an expression of wonder, and is therefore good. Indeed, very good; every exercise of rational thought is uniquely human, and must bear the stamp of the Creator. A philosophy of useless questions is no less an expression of wonder than an investigation into

quarks or DNA, because they all together examine reality and seek objective discoveries through a rigorous and often humbling method. Wonder is always expansive, and often seeks to go where none has gone before.

The useless questions, such as inquiries on the nature of human knowledge or the foundations of mathematics, are useless because they do not seem to change much. No revolutionary wars are inspired merely by discourse on consciousness. With the possible (and dubious) exception of Wittgenstein, no one has become a mystic while reflecting on the relation of language to thought. Yet this lack of utility is not in itself a bad thing; these questions do not reflect the wish to deconstruct reality, to tear down sound things in the frantic effort to express oneself. Rather, these questions reveal the complexity of reality. The furrowed brow is a sign of an intellect at work. Perhaps the solution one produces after years of research is completely wrong, and future generations shall chuckle at the effort. No matter; hard work was done, reality was tackled boldly and wonder proliferated.

Especially if one seeks also to lead a life of grace, what better preparation for death could one want, than the lifelong cultivation of wonder in analysis? In recent years, academic philosophy has discovered, perhaps 'rediscovered' is more accurate, many new areas starved for attention, from mind and matter to language and science. The world may not be quite as easy to understand as it seemed. Long may it remain so.



PRAISE HIM WITH STRINGS AND PIPES



AN INTERVIEW WITH A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIST

JAN BITARA

The king of instruments. The giant in the walls. It's hard to imagine a cathedral without hearing the characteristic chime of a pipe organ in the background. Out of all the instruments in the world, it's the only one that's the size of an entire building, and has a plethora of sounds from the tiniest whistle to the most chest vibrating trumpet reed. And they're impossible to find anywhere else in the general public. They had a brief debut in movie theatres in the early 1910's but pre recorded dialogue quickly made them defunct. And they've been mostly done away with in major league sports, such as baseball and hockey, being considered a relic of the past.

So why is the pipe organ still used in Christian churches throughout the Western world? As a classically trained organist, Josephine Craig Penner has a few thoughts. She's studied and perfected her skills at Holy Rosary Cathedral in Regina, Saskatchewan, and continues to

provide her talents at Blessed Sacrament Parish, the oldest Catholic Church in the city just a few blocks away.

Can you give a brief history of how you learned to play the organ and how you started playing music for Mass?

While I was growing up, my family attended Holy Rosary Cathedral [in Regina] (still do), where they offer an organ scholar program. This 3 year program allows organ students to study under the music director/organist at the cathedral whilst gaining experience in Mass playing on Sundays (with some monetary compensation). When I was 13 years old, I completed my grade 8 piano exam and so was able to begin organ lessons with Valerie Hall (director at the time). I continued for four years and received my Service Playing Certificate, which allows me to play at Masses, weddings, funerals, etc.

Are there any aspects of organ playing that can enrich a person's spiritual life?

Because Mass playing was part of the way I learned to play, most (if not all) of the music I was taught related to Christian spirituality. For example, the first thing you'll start playing at a Mass is the psalm and the hymns. And in learning the notes and rhythms, you have to pay attention to the words that are going to be sung. Part of the reason for this, is because part of playing the organ is setting the right registrations — the stops on the instrument that determine the type of sound that's going to come out. If the sound doesn't match the words, message, or mood of the words, there will be a disconnect. I never paid attention to the words that were being sung as much as I did after playing the organ.

The other element comes from playing music that is not meant to be sung. Some of my favourite pieces to play are from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* — a collection of 46 chorale preludes. The chorales themselves have words, but you have to communicate the same message, or the same prayer, without the words. So in a way it challenges you to pray in a different way and not just by yourself, but on behalf of the whole congregation.

STRENGTH

In what way does the organ enrich how the Mass is experienced, compared to other instruments like the piano or the guitar?

Something was said about the organ at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007: "The manifold possibilities of the organ in some way remind us of the immensity and the magnificence of God." I think this is quite accurate, and something that cannot be said of other instruments such as the piano or guitar. A few reasons for this: first, the organ has no problem sustaining a congregation in song. The sheer strength of sound it emits does not have to be hooked up to speakers, or distorted to reach the back of the room. In addition, the 'principle' sounds of an organ are meant to mimic the sound of a human voice. On a traditional pipe organ, this is supported by the fact that air is literally causing the sound, exactly how people make sound when they sing. This gives the listener not just an accompaniment, but another voice that's praying and worshipping alongside them. To me, this is comforting. The last thing is that for most people, the Mass is the only place they will hear the organ. You can find guitars and pianos on the radio whenever you like, and because of this, there is no strong cue that you should treat the music at mass any differently. But when people nowadays hear the organ, they know that it means something. And they listen differently because of it.

COMFORT

A RESTFUL NIGHT AND A PEACEFUL DEATH

TYLER BROOKS

At the end of Night Prayer in the Roman Breviary, the leader finishes the prayer with the following line: “May the all powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death.”

In a monastic setting, those who complete Night Prayer then proceed to their cell in silence and go to sleep. While this may not be feasible to the ordinary person who does Night Prayer, due to obligations or noisy roommates, the final line is just as applicable. With this issue’s theme being *Memento Mori*, a remembrance of one’s death and mortality, the request for God to grant us a “restful night and a peaceful death” seems very fitting to write about.

As a matter of fact, having a restful night is such an important part of the spiritual life. It is no question that when we feel more well rested, we feel better equipped to fulfill our daily tasks. Additionally, if the body and mind are well rested, then it is easier to be more attentive to what God desires. While there are many other factors that contribute to feeling well rested, it is unquestionable that the keystone for rest is a good sleep.

Unfortunately, the business and noisiness of modern technology can impact our ability to obtain rest. Even more terrifying than the late night Instagram browse or the “one more episode” of a streaming service is the deep-seeded spiritual element in those distractions. As scripture says: “Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8 RSV).

Christian tradition interprets that the adversary in question is the devil and that we can compare his hunting habits to that of a lion. Watching any nature documentary will show that while a lion approaches dozens of possible prey, it will go after the most vulnerable. This begs the question then: when are we at our most vulnerable?

I believe that when we are on our bed about to fall asleep, we are most vulnerable to the enemy. Speaking from experience, there is nothing I look forward to more than lying on my bed and falling asleep after a long day. However, when I finally do get to my bed, my mind sometimes will uncontrollably flash certain events of the stressful day or dwell on random questions about my life’s path. These thoughts then lead to restlessness, anxiety, and many other feelings that I know do not come from God. For it is when I am on my bed that I tend to let my guard down and am more vulnerable to spiritual attack.

Thus, it is clear that our bed is more than platform for a well earned rest: it is a spiritual battleground. Luckily, there are a few instances in scripture that show how to approach our bed:

“Be angry, but sin not; commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent” (Psalm 4:4 RSV).

“When I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night; for thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to thee; thy right hand upholds me” (Psalm 63: 6-8 RSV).

These passages highlight the importance of one’s bed and how it can be used to glorify God. We are told to be silent, commune with our hearts, cling onto to the Lord, and meditate on His beauty. Essentially, we are to pray on our bed! We can recite sacred prayers or fulfill any devotions; but essentially we are to ponder on the Lord. Not only will our bodies and minds be rested after a good sleep but so will our relationship with God. By bringing the Lord God into our sleep and on our bed, our spiritual defences will remain ready and our vulnerability will decrease.

Is this a case of over-spiritualization? I don’t believe so. Scripture also shows that if we do not

take this seriously, we can easily fall into sin. Our beds can be a place for pondering God and His precepts but also a place for wickedness.

“He plots mischief while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he spurns not evil” (Psalm 36:4 RSV).

“Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil upon their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand” (Micah 2:1 RSV).

One of the contrasts between the righteous and wicked rest on how they approach their bed and how they prepare for sleep. In this case, the wicked use their bed as a place for mischief and planning wickedness. Perhaps they are thinking about how angry someone made them throughout the day, or plotting revenge against their neighbour; or even dwelling on impure sexual thoughts. Regardless of the gravity of it, it is still possible to fall into sin even as we approach sleep.

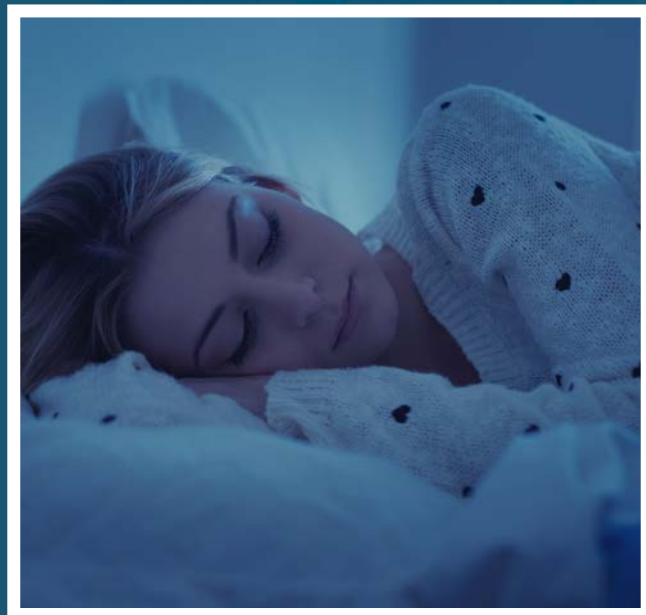
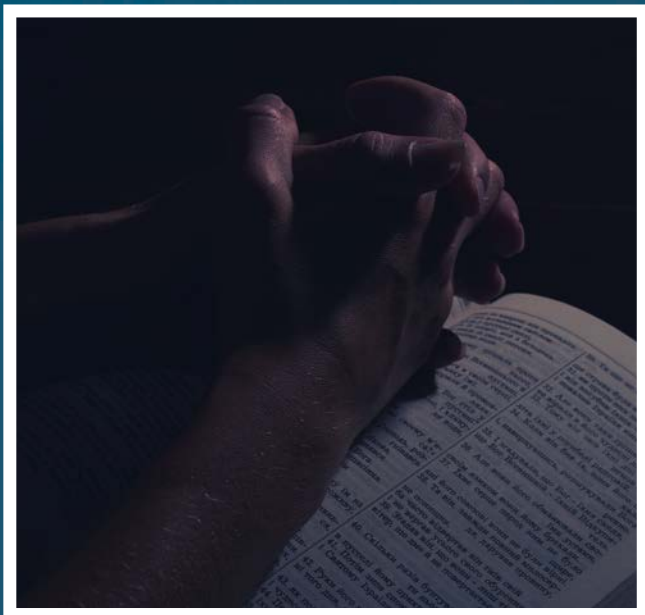
If it seems like a daunting task, and the thought of prayer as you fall asleep seems odd, allow me to present you two tangible ways of bolstering your defenses. The first is the Jesus Prayer, which is a common devotion in Eastern Christianity. It is a very short but powerful prayer with different variations.

However, the one I like to use is “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner.” We can be confident that just uttering the name of Jesus, whether by mouth or in our mind, will keep us safe from the enemy. As one of the Desert Fathers, Elder Joseph the Hesychast, stated:

“The name of Christ will illuminate your mind; it will strengthen your soul; it will help you in the war against the demons; it will cultivate the virtues; and it will become everything for you.” The second way is praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary with the simple Hail Mary. This is a powerful prayer that thwarts the adversary’s goal of causing unrest and even harm to Christ’s followers. Not only do we remind the Blessed Mother of the annunciation with this prayer, but we also ponder our own death when we say:

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

The next time we approach our beds for sleep, and hopefully this piece didn’t accelerate the desire for it, may we always remember the spiritual importance of rest. To have a good rest, we must have a good sleep. May Our Lord answer our pleas for His mercy and Our Lady intercede for us now and at the hour of our death.



Poetry



DAYS AWAY

NOLAN TOSCANO

The ring was thrice the size of the finger,
Made for it in an age when times were fonder.

Now he grasps it, as his life lingers
And his thoughts, and feeling, and senses wander.

What love that band was born into, I think
What trials, what sorrows, what life it saw

And now it shines as his hands slowly shrink
A reminder of his answered vocational call.

She enters, I stand, some small talk ensues
I'm told their anniversary is a few days away.

Something to look forward to in these late marriage blues
I turn to her husband, he's now barely awake.

She goes by his bed, and sits by his side
And so his face gives way, to a tired smile.

Her face reflects his, though her mask it did hide
And so she settles in, to be together some while

I then turned from their room, and walked to the next
I saw her hands over his, where his ring, it did rest.

Their rings, as they were, at the time they said yes
Was this the death of a marriage? No... a success.

Memento mori



PSALM 90:12

BARNABAS NEY

In a deep glen I saw a tomb
With rising mist and falling rain
It felt of damp and earthly gloom
My courage began then to wane.

But what I saw as close I drew,
A sure motif of memory
Not just of past but present too
A name etched in stone history,

Recalled to me my fleeting breath
But also, the Breath that breathed me
As the one ends in haggard death
I hope the other then to see.

“So teach us Lord to count our days
So that a wise heart we may gain.”
And recognize in all our ways,
The endless glory of your reign.

Ashes

EMILY MILAN

sun will rise up until it sets

snow falls down before it melts away

flowers grow tall and then they wither

these earthly ashes homesick for heaven
are

BIOGRAPHIES



Miguel Andres

Miguel is a son, a brother, a friend to many and a fiancé to one. He currently lives in Ottawa, where he serves the Lord as a missionary with Catholic Christian Outreach. He loves anything beautiful, especially his lovely fiancée Megan. You will often find him with a coffee in one hand and his iPad on the other.



Laura Bell

Laura is first and foremost a beloved daughter of Christ, second, a daughter of the Bell family, and third, a student of the Arts. This June, she will be graduating from Ryerson University with a Bachelors in Radio and Television of the Arts: Media Production.

Now, as she finishes her education, she is beginning a new chapter in her life by helping Transcendentals; a community in which she can fully engage and combine her two true passions in life: her love for Jesus Christ, and her love for creating art.



Jan Bitara

Jan is a writer, musician, and independent filmmaker living in Regina, Saskatchewan. He graduated from the University of Victoria in 2016 with a Bachelors of Fine Arts, and has been published previously in The Diocesan Messenger based out of Victoria BC.



Tyler Brooks

Tyler is a faithful Roman Catholic, student at heart, and passionate nerd. After recently obtaining an Honours Bachelor of arts with a major in History and minor in Political Science at UOttawa, he is now in the Master of Divinity program at St Paul University. He can be found reading history books, hanging out with his friends, and probably discussing theology.

BIOGRAPHIES



Fr. Stephen Bruzzese

Father Stephen Joseph Bruzzese was born October 11th, 1989. From an early age, he always wanted to be a priest and found great joy in being an altar boy. Between 2009 and 2012, he earned a Baccalaureate in Thomistic Thought from St. Philip's Seminary & between 2012 and 2017, he earned a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology and a Masters of Divinity from St. Augustine's Seminary. Father Stephen is currently serving the people of God at Our Lady of the Scapular.



Clif Clemotte

Clif is a student of philosophy, currently pursuing graduate studies and living on Vancouver Island. He holds two undergraduate degrees from liberal arts colleges, institutions that fostered his love of reading, research, and stimulating conversation. For a year after graduation, he taught at a private elementary institution; now, a student once again, he plans to conduct research on the human mind and the process of knowledge.



Megan Joseph

Megan has lived across North America but calls Vancouver, BC home. She has always loved seeking the truth which led her to graduate in 2019 with a Bachelor of Theology and Culture from Saint Mark's College. Megan is currently a campus missionary with Catholic Christian Outreach in Halifax, NS. She is also a seasoned equestrian, avid rollerblader, and now - an amateur writer!

BIOGRAPHIES



Celia McCormick

Celia McCormick is a student at the University of Guelph. She switched out of the art program and into the business program upon realizing that the art they were creating was a mockery of the beauty that art once was. She is a caffeine-addicted art enthusiast who loves to create. Her ultimate goal is to become a saint and to drag a boatload of people with her. She is now serving as a missionary with NET Canada!



Emily Millan

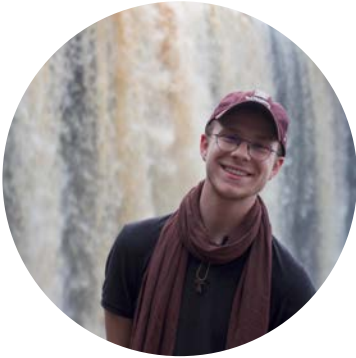
Emily is a born, raised, and chosen Catholic whose missionary zeal has taken her across both Australia and Canada. She is a seasoned evangelist, and has served with NET, CCO, and various other ministries in her mission to see hearts return to the Lord. She is unashamedly in love with the Eucharist, dancing barefoot, sunshine, and the ocean.



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.

BIOGRAPHIES



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.



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.



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.

