

NOTRE DAME PARISH

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.



Jesus shocked his audience when he used the images of the hated landowner for God and the violence of the workers for the oppression of the prophets. God created Israel (the vineyard image) and loaned it to the leaders of his kingdom (the tenant farmers). Yet, the leaders insisted upon ruling Israel as their own. Anyone who opposed their rule was intimidated or eliminated (the servants of the owner),

including God's chosen (the owner's son). God's Kingdom would not only be taken from the leaders, a new people would emerge with God's blessing. [21:43] Israel could not claim exclusive rights over its own God. Salvation was not a birthright or a guaranteed passage. No, God was pleased to create a new people, one of sinners and foreigners. *Do you find yourself surprised by the violence of the Kingdom?*

MASS INTENTIONS

- Saturday, October 3 @ 8AM
Joan & Mike King
- Saturday, October 3 @ 10PM
Memorial Mass for John Weithers
- Saturday, October 3 @ 4PM
Margaret Courtney Birthday
- Sunday, October 4 @ 9:30AM
Hedwig Macudzinski
- Monday, October 5 @ 8AM
Nora Dotson
- Tuesday, October 6 @ 8AM
Szostak, Martonisi, & Kazwarak Families
- Wednesday, October 7 @ 8:30AM
John Benish, Sr.
- Thursday, October 8 @ 8:30AM
John Luce
- Friday, October 9 @ 8AM
Tom, Florence, & young Tom Gately
- Saturday, October 10 @ 4PM
Deceased of the Coady Family

Oremus – Let Us Pray

- For President Trump and other administration members who have tested positive for COVID-19
- For the grateful reception of Pope Francis' new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*
- For deliverance from COVID-19
- For increased devotion to the holy rosary
- For civility in the election campaigns
- For our pets and all creatures as we remember the feast of Saint Francis
- For the sick, especially members of our families and parish
- For those recovering from climate events
- For the depressed and those with anxiety

What Is Being Christian About?

I doubt that any two Christians/Catholics would answer this question in the same way. I base this upon empirical experience of what people say, what they do, what they fear, and what they hope for.

Less so today, perhaps, but in precious decades and centuries, Christianity was a social connection. Cultural norms pressured families to attend church, even without strong commitment. In England, for example, Anglicans are guardians of British culture. They attend liturgies much as they would a concert. Vespers and other traditional services are “performed” rather than prayed. Many are secular, not believers, at heart. The same dynamic

seems to have taken place in Russia since the ascent of Putin. Putin has embraced Russian Orthodoxy, but does not appear to have a Christian heart.

As membership and Sunday attendance decline, as vocations to priesthood and religious life grow thin, the Catholic Church, especially in America, has set out on a “new evangelization.” The emphasis here is on doctrine and “right teaching.” It is about religious literacy, but not necessarily about faith. It is about programs, youth rallies, Christian music, and media – a la Evangelical Churches – that try to gain members through entertainment and rewards.

These and other expressions of “being Christian” should ask



each of us to answer the ultimate question posed above.

As Jesus showed and taught, being Christian is not so much about what we believe, what rules we keep or break, or what we do on Sunday alone.

What marks true Christians is *who they are, what they do, and how they do it*. It’s called character.

Father Keith & Rocco

Did You Know? Boring Prayer is Good Prayer.



Silence is God’s first language.
Saint John of the Cross

St. John of the Cross defines contemplation as “nothing but a hidden, peaceful, loving inflow of God.” John’s insight that prayer is so often a hidden or secret process is something we are reticent to accept or believe. That our prayer is kept secret, even from us, seems almost illogical. Wouldn’t it be beneficial for our growth towards God to know how God is flowing into us, relating and communicating with us?

I am far from the only person who has ever been frustrated by prayer in which “nothing happens.” In fact, I hear this quite regularly from people sharing their spiritual lives. We want to experience our prayer as we do almost everything else: productively. We wish to finish a time in prayer

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Faith Is the Antidote to QAnon

by Daniel Amiri

While it's a phenomenon that began online, the QAnon movement has found its way into the discourse and lives of ordinary Americans. With its conspiracy-laden messages, Q taps into Americans' deep-seated angst about their government, cultural forces they can't comprehend, and societal trends they find disturbing. Where will all this lead, exactly? Is it possible to know? The signs, if you can see them, reveal the truth.

As fantastical as QAnon-related conspiracies are, what is striking is how banal they are at their roots. They tell the stories of evil people doing evil things. In fact, many believe they are true precisely because we can clearly see that people are sinful. We lie and cheat. We are selfish. We hurt each other. We are greedy and vengeful. We see and commit evil at home, in the office, on the street. We can callously inflict the most gruesome and terrible evils on others. Evil is everywhere and it is common. It is so pervasive that it becomes oppressively chaotic.

In response, QAnon offers an explanation for evil in the world under the guise of providing a semblance of order and structure, but by stoking distrust, it only exacerbates our fear. QAnon conspiracy theories drive us further apart – especially from those unlike ourselves, and foment

anxiety by positing further evidence (some real and some not) of humanity's sinfulness. Consequently, the world appears more chaotic and the fearful are ripened for exploitation and manipulation by yet another conspiracy theory.

While evil is easy to believe, it is much harder to believe in goodness. Goodness is often hidden and humble. We can find it anywhere, but it is quiet and often imperceptible. No one gossips about goodness and there are no conspiracy theories built on the premise that people are good. Nothing in our limited human experience would lead us to believe that goodness is attainable for everyone or even something worthwhile to pursue. To be good often means suffering for others without any tangible benefit for ourselves. By worldly standards, it is foolishness. To see one person doing a good thing is a strange, if pleasant, sight. To imagine a whole group of people doing good things together often requires us to suspend belief beyond our limits.

To understand human goodness, our perspective cannot be, strictly speaking, human. Faith, given to us from outside ourselves, reveals the truth that underpins our collective humanity. With faith, we come to see that through God's great gift of mercy, we were not made to suffer or sin. Rather, we were created in Love to love. This is no

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QAnon, continued

conspiracy theory, but it is a truth much harder to accept than the pernicious lie that we are evil and irredeemable. By loving without expectation of being loved in return, we exercise our true humanity.

What faith reveals liberates man from the realm of opinion and sentiment (*Deus Caritas Est* 17). Faith—unlike QAnon—frees us from our prejudices and our angst. St. John Paul II wrote, “It is faith that allows individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom” (*Fides et Ratio* 13). Faith makes it possible to look upon the world with God’s eyes, to overcome our suspicions about other people, and to see through the pervasive evil that exists in our society.

QAnon’s adherents and acolytes are, tragically, enslaved to their own fears. QAnon traps them and constrains their actions and beliefs to the limits of their frail imaginations. QAnon’s popularity is indicative of a large number of people who continue to see the world with the prejudice of a prisoner, enclosed in a cell of one’s own making. Faith, on the other hand, sets us free. Faith reveals the world for what it truly is and gives us the ability to take actions that are efficacious and impactful.

The only true antidote to the QAnon craze is faith. Even after QAnon’s popularity wanes (and it will), something else will take its place, preying on our human weakness and providing another way to systematize fears and negative emotions about the

culture and country. Faith, however, assuages our fears and gives birth to profound trust in God’s providence. It is only in faith that we come to see that goodness exists, not as an aberration but as the truth of what we were made to be.

Faith leads to true understanding. It illuminates and reveals the dignity of every person, the meaning of sacrifice, and the glory of creation. Faith delivers us from fear and frees us from closed-in ideologies that make us self-absorbed. Pope Francis wrote in *Lumen Fidei*,

At the heart of biblical faith is God’s love, his concrete concern for every person, and his plan of salvation which embraces all of humanity and all creation, culminating in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without insight into these realities, there is no criterion for discerning what makes human life precious and unique. Man loses his place in the universe, he is cast adrift in nature, either renouncing his proper moral responsibility or else presuming to be a sort of absolute judge, endowed with an unlimited power to manipulate the world around him. (54)

There is only one Truth, one love. When Christians cooperate with the plan of God in faith and love, we “conspire” to make God’s kingdom manifest here on earth. Doing so, we all *breathe with the breath of God*. All love, rooted in one Truth, is ordered to the salvation of all. Consequently, when Christians around the world love, we effect God’s singular plan of salvation for each of us, whether we are aware of it or not. By confirming

the inherent goodness of creation and acting in accord with God’s design, faith empowers us to be agents of God’s love.

Without the gift of faith, QAnon will continue to drive division and hate. It will create more chaos and make inroads into the hearts and minds of the fearful and anxious. This chaos is not of God, who created our world and will bring it to completion in himself. Faith burns away the dark shadows of sin and points the way forward amid the concrete demands and challenges of life. Only in the light of faith can we love deeply and personally as God commands. This is the only path to order in our chaotic, sinful world. +

Daniel Amiri is a Catholic layman and finance professional. A graduate of theology and classics from the University of Notre Dame, his studies coincided with the papacy of Benedict XVI whose vision, particularly the framework of “encounter” with Christ Jesus, has heavily influenced his thoughts. He is a husband and a father to three beautiful children. He serves on parish council and also enjoys playing and coaching soccer. This article appeared on the website, wherepeteris.com

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feeling that we have accomplished something, learned something, moved forward, or used our time well.

These desires are left unsatisfied when the fruits of prayer are hidden from us. It is very easy, however, to invent them or derive accomplishments, lessons, or feelings of productivity in order to distract ourselves from the chilling conclusion that God has been silent with us.

It is important to clarify that John provides this definition of contemplation in his book *Night*, in which he is describing the painful experience of God's absence. This complete hiddenness and secret nature of prayer is especially felt within this specific season of the spiritual life. There are of course times when God, through our opening of ourselves to God's activity, inflames our hearts with Faith, Hope, and Love and we are aware of this. This is what St. Ignatius refers to as consolation.

However, it still stands that much more of our contemplation than we would perhaps like is an inflow of God that is hidden from us. And this is why we can fall so easily into thinking of prayer or discernment as functional rather than relational, results-based rather than love-based.

One other reason our prayer is so often kept hidden from us is that the fruit we are expecting to see is rarely the fruit we are looking for. Frequently we are hoping for answers, for sounds, signs, images, words or feelings that will help us make sense of this or that. We turn to prayer as we would a compass, to show us the way.

We also turn to prayer for assurance or affirmation. We want to feel God's presence in order to know we are on the right path. And this, though it is a very natural and human longing, is not necessarily the fruit that prayer will provide. In a letter to a friend, Sister Wendy Beckett wrote of this very natural tendency and common approach to prayer. Her words strike to the root of where our longings for productivity, learning, or drama in our prayer come from. She writes,

"[God] comes in 'life', just as it is. The as-it-isness is precisely how God comes. If we look for God in certain patterns or forms, we only receive a fraction. Now for

you, the natural tendency is to romanticize the way of God's coming. Your self wants that, at least: at least that glory, the glory of holiness. And God says, No, I can't give myself, not fully, in any way that gives self a foothold. Nothing romantic or beautiful or in any way dramatic; nothing to get hold of, in one sense, because it must be God that does the getting hold."

Sister Wendy's guidance compliments John of the Cross's definition of contemplation. She speaks to our anxieties for drama, extravagance or simply something concrete to point to in our prayer. But, according to Sister Wendy, this desire cannot be fulfilled by our prayer. Rather, we must learn to accept the "as-it-isness" which is where God has chosen to hide himself. The invitation is to surrender to this "as-it-isness," to be content with the boring, hidden silence which makes up the great majority of prayer. "

A true gift will feel like no gift at all," as Fr. Iain Matthew writes in his book, *The Impact of God*.

My spiritual director once told me, boring prayer is good prayer. It is hard for our egos to find a foothold in boring prayer and this, as Sister Wendy explains, is exactly why we are invited to be content with it.

God's silence and prayer in which "nothing happens" can indeed feel painful and confusing. There is, however, great peace that can come from giving up on looking for results or going to prayer with expectations of productivity.

As you let God, slowly but surely God will take hold of you.+

Billy Critchley-Menor, SJ, is a native of Duluth, Minnesota. Before joining the Jesuits in 2015, he studied at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. When he isn't talking about how Catholic sisters have changed the world, he is collecting cardigans and organizing his room. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in American Studies at Saint Louis University, focusing on racism and antiracism within the postwar American Catholic Church. This article is taken from thejesuitpost.org.

