

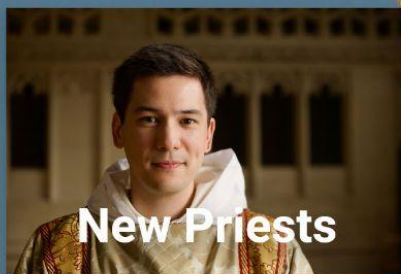
JULY 2022

EMPTY TOMB PROJECT

THE MAGAZINE

The Church POST-ROE

Let's play some offense and be unapologetically for life.



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ETP: THE MAGAZINE

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Note: All articles this month are written by Thomas Griffin



Thomas Griffin is the chair of the religion department at a Catholic high school on Long Island where he lives with his wife and son. He has a masters degree in theology and is currently a masters candidate in philosophy. He writes for several Catholic media outlets.

ETP FORUM: *Introduction to the Mission*

Print magazines are few and far between as we approach the quarter mark of the 21st century. Digital media is on the rise and there are countless initiatives out there that are transforming hearts in many ways. The recent focal points in Catholic media have been short posts (Instagram) and various lengths of video content (Youtube).

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine takes a different approach. We hold strongly to the claim that many Catholics and Christians are starving for material that is beautiful to the eye, relevant in topics, and challenging to the culture. What appears in these issues will be themes that are at the front lines of dinner conversations that parents are having about raising their children and that priests are having about how to reach their people inside and outside of the pews.

We are fervently committed to always providing images and artwork along with written words that lift the mind, captivate the heart, and inspire the disciple to deeper faith. Doing so means that we will always be faithful to what the Church teaches while highlighting not just that those truths are being attacked but how we can live in a culture that does attack them.

We will not become a writing entity that makes the world its punching bag. We will not make personal attacks nor will we cross the line into the easy games of personal defamation that are too often seen on social media. We want to make individuals more aware of the truth and empower people to stand for Jesus Christ. Doing so will allow us to change the tide, little by little.

Each month we will have several sections in the magazine that are devoted to different topics and avenues of thought. From a focus on a monthly saint to controversial Church teachings all the way to political talking points and Vatican chatter. If there is something that needs to be spoken of or simply something we should be prepared for, we will go there.

The mission revolves around the empty tomb of Jesus. That is our project because that is what changes everything. If he really is alive then we are called to tell everyone about him and we are invited to make that joy spread through every relationship we have. Our hope is that this endeavor can provide a conduit for Catholics to meet Jesus as a real living person and bring that experience to the forefront of their own lives.

MAJOR HEADLINE:

WHAT DOES THE *POST-ROE* CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

There have been strong advocates for and against abortion for decades now. This topic has been volatile for quite some time and speech revolving around it has always been intense. With the overthrow of the landmark Supreme Court case *Roe v Wade* things have changed.

First and foremost, this is a victory for the pro-life movement and for the countless members of the faithful who have spoken out for decades defending the lives of the most vulnerable. We cannot forget this. The prayers uttered in public and in silence have been heard and they were effective and impactful. More and more people, inside and outside of the Church, have been convinced that murdering babies in the womb is not who we desire to be.

So, this is a time for rejoicing and celebration. Only God knows how many lives will be saved as a result of this decision. In the midst of so much wrong in society and in our country, this is the crack in the door filled with light. We should not become naive to think that the fight is over in defending life. We do have a long way to go so that we can further protect the unborn as well as the elderly and the homeless.



However, a common flawed inclination in the American Church is the uncanny desire to remain pessimistic about the future and about the culture. There is a tendency to continuously murmur like the Israelite's in the desert. They were saved from slavery and death - their enemies were crushed, and yet they consistently complained.

As bad as things are today, this is nothing compared to what they endured, but we should learn from what they got wrong. We can acknowledge that we have a long way to go while also giving thanks to God, the prayers, and the policies that got us to overturn *Roe*. Because this is so much more than merely finding the silver lining. Every single life saved is worth God's very life. So, we rejoice because so many will be saved.

That being said, we cannot overlook the facts that are present in response to the Supreme Court leak. We are all hearing about the loud voices and the calls for vandalism and intimidation towards Catholics. Masses have been interrupted and pregnancy centers have been vandalized to damage property and prevent women from receiving the care they need.

Companies and large corporations have also taken steps to ensure that their employees will not be impacted by the Supreme Court's decision or state's decisions to prohibit abortions. They are beginning to include added funding for women to travel to other states in order to receive women's health care. Abortion would be included under healthcare.

(continued on the next page)



However, right now the Catholic Church is in the headlines and on the minds of many people, especially individuals who are not usually thinking about faith. This means that even though the topic is still difficult for many, we have an opportunity to inject Jesus into the lives of others because of what is going on in the political sphere. We are about Christ first, and everything else second. So we do not need to become political agitators at every street corner, but we should not be afraid of approaching the topic as it comes up in the conversations with our families and friends. We should also be empowered to speak about it online and in more public forums.

For too long, Catholics have shied away from being vocal about abortion and other culturally relevant topics. Institutionally the Church has not done a great job in preparing people for those debates and for how to deal with these topics hitting our front door. Like when a friend of our high school daughter speaks to her about the morning after pill or how she should watch this documentary on Netflix that promotes a women's right to choose.

If we cannot explain why abortion is wrong, and always wrong, then we will feel incapable in responding to such a real world issue. Without prior insight and conversations about the topic, confronting your daughter might simply be seen as confrontational or "not nice." Now that *Roe* is overturned we can use this as reinforcement. We can speak to our kids about the law, they already know about it from their social media pages anyway.

Life post-Roe should embody conversations among our loved ones regarding clarity on what we believe as rooted in the truth about murder as well as in what has been revealed to us from God. In today's culture we cannot take it for granted that it is clear. In our everyday lives there will be more conversations on the topic, not less.

The real decision to overturn *Roe* is here. So let us be ready for how we can further stand for life and for the truth by preparing ourselves. Too often, people of faith are on the defensive. Let's play some offense and be unapologetically for life. Then the post-Roe Church will thrive and be speaking the language of what is most on people's hearts, even if they do not know it.



CATHOLIC LIFE
& CULTURE

Spending Summer with God & Family (for *Busted Halo*)

As a teacher, I find my summer months are often ruled by constantly changing schedules and very little routine. Even when I was not working as a teacher, the summer was simply different. For me, having more time with family on the weekends and more energy for life makes for a great opportunity to have fun and increase my faith. And while I will be the first to admit that having the summer off is something to be cherished, I've still found it to be a challenge to remain rooted in the faith when my and my family's time is less structured.

The first area that I found to be particularly helpful in keeping God at the center of my summer months was incorporating at least one type of prayer each day. I would decide between picking up a spiritual book, reading the Bible, or praying the Rosary, and stick with it. Choosing just one allows for spiritual growth by being simple in prayer. No one wants their summer or their time off to be strictly laden with check-ins, but a good spiritual rule of thumb is that when we schedule God in our day, he is never outdone in generosity.

I found that keeping a similar morning routine year-round, even when there is time off on the weekend or the summer in general, can go a long way. I wake up at a similar time each morning, make some coffee and head outside for some spiritual reading or prayer before the family wakes up. Setting goals for what I wanted to read or what I needed to pray for has allowed for a beautiful balance between being too strict with prayer and not praying at all in the summer.

I also have attempted to set aside at least one afternoon or evening a week when I could visit a local church for Eucharistic Adoration or to just sit quietly. Doing some research on when your local parishes have Mass or Adoration, or simply have the church building open, can truly be a huge help. This makes portions of the summer feel like a mini-retreat. These small habits prevent me from having the entire summer pass me by without growing closer to God.

Second, I have found that giving myself over to the spontaneity of what summer can be is such a blessing. There are days when plans come up with family and friends at the last second. Summer is not meant to stress us out more, but to revive our childlike spirits. I have found that when we spontaneously decide to go to the zoo one weekend because my wife randomly saw a commercial for one on TV, life is simply better. The more ways I apply this principle to my family life and faith life, the more joy comes about.

There are days when meal plans are thrown out the window so we make a mess of the kitchen and embrace some chaos. At times it can feel as if we "got nothing done" but the only thing that mattered was that we were together as a family. In this way, the summer months can truly be an invitation to become more like Mary and Joseph who went with the flow as God guided them on the journey of their own family life.

Third, we have found it to be a huge blessing to have Sunday breakfast together every weekend. Whether it is before or after Mass, there is something about having a family meal on a Sunday morning that looks different than other meals that brings the family together. The kids can help set the table or cook while mom and dad provide a small feast for the family. And, in the summer, you can eat inside or outside which the kids really love.

As your family gears up for the summer months, whatever these days might look like, carve out some time each day for prayer, cling to the "random" events that come your way as a family, and have a Sunday morning feast to celebrate. I have found that these three realities are a recipe for a summer well spent and a faith increased.

IS THE CHURCH RIGHT? ORDINATION SEASON & PROVING THE EUCHARIST

Across the social media sphere and atop diocesan headlines across the country are the announcements of the ordination of men to the priesthood. Images are flooding in of young men being prayed over by their bishop, and then other priests, as they receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Some dioceses have a few while others have a crowd. No matter the count, there are men who are being definitively changed forever and there are thousands of people witnessing their offering of self as they lay prostrate in cathedrals across America this summer.

The question that arises from the outsider looking in is why any man in his right mind would do such a thing in today's culture and for such a flawed Church? Sacrificing so much of your liberty (you have to live and serve where your bishop tells you, you cannot be married, have children, or have a "regular social life") how could someone possibly be happy?

And yet, in these photos over the previous month - these men are beaming. Their families have tears of joy in their eyes as they watch their son, brother, or friend become a priest of Jesus Christ. In the midst of so much selfishness and egotistical living they are marching at the beat of Christ's Way of the Cross - but on individuals that represent and teach in the institution.

There is something universally beautiful about an ordination or a wedding. Both are making promises that are forever. If we desire to win back the culture, not just to save it but to purify souls - then we must promote the sanctity of sacrificial choices. Ordination season must become something that Catholics marinate themselves in so that we can bring Jesus into the outskirts of our lives. Let us vow, in some small ways, to honor the offering of these men by being willing to speak to some family members or coworkers about our faith. If they can sacrifice so much, then we can go on a limb and inject Christ more into our lives. Then the ordination season will take a strong grip on the hearts of so many who need God. (continues on next page...)



Being inspired by the witness of these men is noble. Understanding what makes someone do something so beautiful so that we can become like them is even more important. Unequivocally, young priests are claiming that the reason why they are a priest is simple: because of the Eucharist.

Many Catholics are familiar with the statistics revolving around the Eucharist and Mass attendance. It is important to reiterate them, however. Not because we want to be negative and cast a shadow of gloom, but simply because these facts provide a fork in the road. On one side we have these priests and many faithful Catholics, on another side we have those who do not believe in the Real Presence.

A 2019 study from the Pew Research Center found that only 31% of church attending Catholics believe that the Eucharist is actually Jesus. A Georgetown study from 2021 found that only 17.3% of Catholics attend Mass every Sunday. Therefore, less than a third of 17% of Catholics believe that the Eucharist is Jesus. We are talking about a very small portion of Catholics who actually believe what Jesus (and the Church) has always taught.

The probable reason why resides in the Church simply not speaking about it enough and when she does speak about it, not doing so clearly enough. That fault is not on an institution but on the individuals that represent and teach in the institution.

Undeniably the disciples understood that when Jesus said “you must eat of my flesh and drink of my blood” (John 6:54) he was speaking literally. Otherwise, why would so many of the disciples leave Jesus for good (see John 6:66). When he said, “this is my body” “this is my blood” Jesus meant it.

So often in Jesus’ ministry he spoke figuratively:

- “I am the vine.”(John 15:5)
- “I am the gate.”(John 10:9)
- “I am the good shepherd.”(John 10:11)

No one ever questioned if he was speaking literally or not because it was so clear. But when it came to his words on the Eucharist, he was vividly concrete and literal.

Just as critical is Jesus’ understanding regarding what the Mass is. At the Last Supper, when Jesus said “do this in memory of me,” (Luke 22:19). The word used for memory is the Greek word *anamnesis* which means, “a past event becomes present now.”

The night before he died, Jesus was distinctly referencing what would happen to him the next day on the cross. The Mass is a sacrifice. We are placed at the one moment in time when Jesus was suffering to death on the cross. That last act of divine love is made present, even though it happened two thousand years ago.

When it comes down to it, belief in the Eucharist depends on how we answer one question: do we believe that Jesus was telling the truth? If we believe in God and know that Jesus is God then he has the power to make himself present in the Eucharist. Because he is not dead, but alive.

Union with Jesus in the Eucharist is the most profound communion with the divine this side of heaven. That is why we go to Mass, that is the love that married couples desire to emulate and that is the flame of mercy that calls a man to be a priest. Once we allow ourselves to be captivated by this reality then Mass becomes not a chore, but an opportunity to witness the greatest love story ever told.

Being faithful to Christ’s words reveals, again and again, that he is trustworthy and that he is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.



MONTHLY SAINT: *St. Benedict*



When your country, society, and culture are turned upside down by ravenous forces of Godless philosophies, you must respond. Saint Benedict, whose feast day is July 11, knew he had to do something to safeguard the faith and cultivate his personal holiness, so he went to the desert and changed the Catholic landscape for centuries. If we want democracy rather than tribalism, rational debate rather than the tyranny of tolerance, and if we desire sanctity over the reign of evil, we too must respond.

Benedict was born in Nursia, Italy, in 480 A.D. His parents were wealthy, and in his younger years, he lived an ordinary life for the social class he found himself in. He was schooled in his hometown and was later sent to Rome to continue his studies. The lifestyle in Rome drove him to start a religious way of life that would shape the future of the Church and enrich the lives of millions. Today, his advice and witness are more crucial than ever before.

Rome was filled with debauchery, crime, and licentiousness. Benedict saw these realities and knew that life among the Romans would only lead to disaster.

He fled to the desert and became a monk. Rome fell only four years later. The pursuit of happiness through pleasure proved to be futile. In order for our country to avoid the same fate, it must recover and establish principles that encourage holiness and virtue over pleasure and power. The antidote lies in becoming so in tune with the movements of God and so entrenched in Jesus' words that we instinctively know how to be in the world but not be consumed by it.

The choice of today's Catholics is similar to Benedict's. Do we remain or do we leave and safeguard truth? This became famously known as the Benedict Option - circle the wagons and forget the world. An in-between might be closer to the answer needed.

Benedict left the world in order to save it. He relied on prayer to become holy and his followers began to come in droves because of it. The remedy for the culture is not an embrace and not a complete flight. The healing will come when individuals begin to turn their whole hearts to God, like Benedict did. In honor of him today, may we rely more on prayer and less on our own will power to save our world. Store up treasure with Him and watch as the darkness falls and the light reigns victorious.





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4. Run to the Eucharist.
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