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NOVEMBER 2023 ISSUE

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THE MAGAZINE

The Church Should Not Change

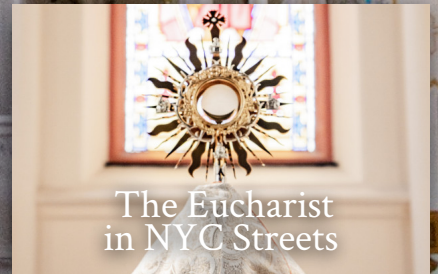
The Countercultural Nature of the Faith



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Save You



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The Eucharist
in NYC Streets



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What is The Empty Tomb Project?

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine is a non-profit that exists to bring the reality and power of the empty tomb to as many people as possible. We are convinced that if men and women encounter Jesus as a real living person their lives will be radically changed.

We are a Catholic media company that desires to bring relevant cultural and spiritual topics to our readers in an honest and fresh manner. We dive into topics that truly matter to people, themes that are brought up in people's homes as well as in church circles. We desire to bring uniformity in message and an increase in inspiration to Catholics across Long Island (and beyond).

Along with providing the most dynamic content we are committed to producing a product that is beautifully captivating to the eye. To do so we will always rely on the best Catholic designers (StartUpCatholic) so that the content can be amplified by the aesthetics of the magazine.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the critically important message of Christ we rely on donors in order to grow the mission and impact of our magazine. This will allow us to remain free and ensure that anyone who desires to meet Jesus today will have that opportunity. If you feel called to support us, please reach out via email: EmptyTombProject@gmail.com and join us in the mission! All donations are tax deductible.

MAJOR HEADLINE: The Church Should Not Change

By Thomas Griffin

There are some things that change. But there are many that don't.

Two of the most popular headlines revolving around the Catholic Church in the news over the past month or two have been the possibility of the Church blessing same-sex unions and the possibility of women being ordained to the priesthood or diaconate.

Some of these headlines were the result of the Synod on Synodality that took place during the month of October in Rome and some headlines were the result of comments made by Cardinals, Bishops and Pope Francis. Rather than go into the way that the American news covered these topics and reports I think it is important to simply investigate the topics themselves according to the orthodox Catholic position.

The short version of the headlines, if you have not heard about them, is that there have been some Cardinals and Bishops upset with the way that Pope Francis speaks about these two specific issues (and others). They wish that he would be more clear about Church doctrine in order to avoid breeding confusion among Catholics about the Church's teachings.

Despite Francis' recent and previous words about the nature of marriage as between a man and a woman there are some comments that can be taken to mean that the Church must consider specific circumstances and act accordingly.

All of the confusion has several layers that need to be addressed. First, most people and many Catholics misunderstand papal infallibility. Not everything Pope Francis, nor any pope for that matter, says is true or undeniably aligned with Catholic doctrine. Papal infallibility has only been strictly invoked twice (both times for teachings about the Blessed Virgin Mary). The Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the Assumption in 1950.

The pope is the servant of the servants of God. He is the bishop of Rome and the head of the College of Cardinals. He is the predecessor of St. Peter, the first pope, who was also a sinner and who also denied Jesus three times before his death. The pope links us with the Apostles and with the ministry of Jesus himself. The pope can invoke infallibility when he speaks very specifically on matters of faith and morals and states that he is doing so. But, the pope is not infallible in the sense that he is always right and can never be wrong.

Second, the Synod on Synodality was not a meeting that was or even can change Catholic dogma and doctrine. Synods meet to discuss how the wider Church should respond to and look at important issues of our time. It is a fact that Catholics and non-Catholics are concerned with the topics of same-sex marriage and women ordination.

Federal law protects and promotes same-sex marriage. The Catholic Church says there is no such thing and refuses to recognize nor perform rituals that would pretend that such unions are marriages. Marriage, according to God, Jesus and, therefore, the Church is between a man and a woman because marriage is physically and spiritually procreative. Procreation only comes about through an act and embrace that takes place between a man and a woman. This is not discrimination but simply a fact.

For this reason, the Church could never bless same-sex unions because it violates the truth of marriage. Truth is the conformity between one's mind and reality. Our country has redefined truth to be whatever one makes of it and marriage to be whatever one thinks is love. But the Catholic Church cannot redefine these matters because it cannot violate the truth nor God's command.

The ordination of women to the priesthood is also not possible. Jesus chose men as his apostles and priests. Women were a part of his inner circle but they were not made priests at the Last Supper. If Jesus is God then he cannot make mistakes and he would not (as some claim) feel the pressure of his time to go against social norms that prevented women from such an honor. Jesus went against countless social and religious norms. If he wanted to he could have done so in this arena as well but he did not.

Some note that there were deaconesses in the early church but they were not ministerial priests. Since baptisms took place through full immersion into water, women would help the other women during those baptisms and they were designated with the term deaconess which is radically different from the ordination of women.

Those who wish to change the teachings of the Church in regards to these two topics forget that men and women are equal but they are different. Even this statement is condemned in today's world. However, all we have to do is look at the anatomy and physiology of men and women to view their differences. In fact, their difference is what allows for their complementarity. Men and women are made for each other because they are different.

Ultimately, the Catholic Church can never change these teachings because God is truth and goodness and beauty. Jesus does not make mistakes. If we wish to follow him and we disagree with these teachings could we consider the fact that maybe God is right and we are wrong?

I don't know about you but when it comes to what is right, I think He might have the upper hand in understanding it - even if most of the world says He is wrong anyway.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.



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Church teaching insists that cremated remains must be given the same respect as the body, including the manner in which they are carried, and the attention given to their appropriate transport and placement. The cremated remains of a body are to be buried or entombed, preferably in a Catholic cemetery, and using the rites provided by the Order of Christian Funerals. The following are not considered to be reverent dispositions that the Church requires: scattering cremated remains, dividing cremated remains and keeping cremated remains in the home.

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The Eucharist in NYC Streets

By Matthew Chicavich

On October 10, 2023, the Napa Institute invited Fr. Mike Schmitz to St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City to celebrate Mass and lead a Eucharistic Procession through the streets of Midtown Manhattan. Fr. Mike Schmitz has reached Catholic celebrity status through his YouTube apologetics and Bible in a Year podcast, both sponsored by Ascension Presents. He is also heavily featured on the Hallow App.

St. Patrick's Cathedral was packed an hour before Mass. I was skeptical about the scene, questioning if those in attendance were more excited about the potential social media post than worshipping the Trinitarian God and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. My judgmental perspective even extended to the famed main celebrant as I pondered how he would receive the mania caused by his presence. All of my doubts disappeared during the procession, when Fr. Mike reminded me Whose Presence matters most. At the end of a long line of seminarians and priests, Fr. Mike walked down the center aisle with his head bowed in obvious prayer. He was solemn and exuded the utmost reverence for what was about to go down: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Fr. Mike Schmitz introduced the Mass with the familiar high energy present in his online evangelization. However, on this occasion, he almost sounded nervous. He explained how intimidated he felt by comparing the current massive congregation in NYC to his routine celebration of daily Mass in a small school chapel on a college campus in Minnesota. His humility was most apparent when he began to preach.

"Our hearts are a mess," he testified. "We look good on the outside, but our hearts are a mess on the inside. Let us pray for hearts worthy to praise Jesus." He got me. It was true. In NYC, whether you are walking to a fine restaurant for a meal or to the local bodega for an energy drink, the pressure to look "put together" is palpable. It's a temptation we face everywhere and in every state of life. Fr. Mike understands this false reality we experience. He ministers to it. That's why he came. To bring true reality to the streets.

"I don't like ambushing people with Jesus, but I think we need to today," Fr. Mike continued during his homily. He explained that we were going to walk through the streets of Manhattan and encounter people that have never met Jesus. The NYPD was going to shut down some of the busiest streets of Midtown Manhattan during rush hour, so we could give praise to Jesus Christ with a Eucharistic Procession. How was the bike delivery person, the taxi driver, and the person late for a meeting going to respond? With anger? With wonder?

Fr. Mike explained what God has asked of us this day: "Go out into a world that doesn't notice Me, doesn't understand Me, doesn't accept Me. Go out there and take Me with you. And maybe someone will look up and see the friends of Jesus and ask the question, Who is that? They may

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just ask: Is it true that God loves me that much that He doesn't stay in the Church and wait for me to come to Him but leaves the Church and comes to where I am?"

Isn't that the deep desire of each of our messy hearts? Behind every "put together" mask is a messy heart crying out to be satisfied by the Love of their Creator. The good news is that He Whom we seek, seeks us first. Beyond the media attention, celebrity priest, and massive NYC crowd this simple truth remains: "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out" (Ezekiel 4:11).

Matthew Chicavich teaches religion and physics at a Catholic high school on Long Island where he lives with his wife and four children. He has a masters degree in theology and a bachelor's degree in physics.

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Thanksgiving Can Save You

By Theresa Marino

Be honest. When you are driving away from church after Sunday Mass, where is your heart's attention focused? Is it pondering the divine mystery in which you've just partaken? Or is it more like a post game report to the tune of... The cantor needs to work some new songs into her repertoire... The homily ran a bit long... Those fidgety kids behind me needed to be disciplined... The teenager in front of me was dressed like she's going to the beach...

Whether you attend Latin Mass, folk Mass, family Mass, or silent Mass, the list of criticisms among us churchgoers is spectacular. Surely we'd all be ashamed to admit how much of the petty judgment dishing has begun with our own sharp tongues. It's worth asking, if we Catholics can justify thinking this uncharitably during and about the most sublime experience Heaven can deign to bestow upon humankind, how much more easily can we justify carrying this demeanor of heart into the rest of our lives? How do we position ourselves interiorly concerning colleagues, family members, or casual acquaintances? How do we integrate and not reject the graces available to us in our daily crosses - the very method by which God has ordained to give meaning to our lives on earth?

By comparison to other habitual sins, criticism seems all too easy and inconsequential a trespass to muster an urgent need for correcting. However, remarks of impatience and thoughts of judgment, even those whispered only to ourselves, act as a kind of slow and sneaky poison to our Christian charity in the same way that twenty bite-sized chicken nuggets do to our arteries. We tell ourselves... I'd never be caught eating a Big Mac, but these are so tiny! I can get away with 5 or 6 more. In no time, we've nibbled ourselves all the way to a stomachache and remorseful gym resolution. In a similar manner, we deceive ourselves into habits of ungodly thoughts by saying... They don't know I'm saying this about them so it can't do any harm. It's true anyway, so I'm just being honest.

Never mind what damage our interior criticisms do or don't cause to others. Serious Christians are called to elevate our thoughts above these things because God knows that the damage done to ourselves through the habit of focusing on the failings of others is something akin to a slow and steady erosion of patience and Christian charity overall. As Catholics called to pattern our thoughts after Christ who bears wrongs with perfect patience, it stands to reason that how we psychologically bear the wrongs he permits us to endure is extremely significant for our eternity. We must learn to submit our unruly interior voices to the yoke of Christ's humility if we hope someday to be exalted instead of humbled (Matthew 23:12). But how do we actually put this humility into practice? How can we train our hearts to grow in a desire to receive what is difficult in circumstances and people as an invitation to holiness? How do we grow in the skill of noticing what is hiddenly good in others, when it is so much easier to remark on their obvious incompetencies?

Thanksgiving seems a fitting practical antidote to the human weakness of prideful criticism, since it is effectively a reorientation towards noticing what is present in a circumstance or person, rather than noticing what is lacking. Saints don't list grievances, they list gritudes. Actively noticing what we have to be grateful for is precisely the name of the game as it relates to the patriotic American observance of Thanksgiving Day. Funny enough, this national holiday collides almost precisely with the end of our Catholic Liturgical Year, which gives us Sunday readings to chasten our hearts by reminding us repeatedly that our end is drawing near (personally or globally).

The momentum of these two seasonal markers lend needed and valuable perspective to our lethargic human hearts. If the calling to mind of our own blessings in life, or our fragility in death, do not reorient us towards Heavenly things, arguably nothing else will. The month of November is as good a time as ever to perfect a practice of gratitude in an effort to become more like the saints we admire. They changed nothing, practically speaking, by their good-natured thoughts. However, it made them spiritually and psychologically resilient even unto the fiercest forms of martyrdom!

St. Paul's closing remarks in his letter to the Philippians (4:8-9) exhort us to do just this. He says to focus on "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable." He continues by saying that "if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." So there is a conscious effort we saints-in-the-making must strive for, being intentional to "put into practice" the turning of our thoughts towards the good rather than the bad. And it is precisely in this practice of gratitude and humility, St. Paul says, that "the God of peace will be with you."

So while our postgame reports from the car ride home probably paint an accurate picture of our experience at Mass, our thoughts are surely better spent focusing on the Eucharist - the thanksgiving - of it all.

Theresa Marino is a New York native who has served the Catholic Church throughout her twenties in various ministry capacities. Currently a middle school Religion Teacher, she has also worked in high school campus ministry, music ministry, mission work and parish settings.

No Sacrifice = No Love

By Thomas Griffin

“Without sacrifice there is no love.” - St. Maximilian Kolbe

The Merriam-Webster dictionary has about 16 definitions of the word “love.”

Most people intuitively know that love is the most powerful force in the universe. Love transcends space and time. We can love people that we have never met before (parents who are expecting their baby to be born) and we can love those who have been dead for years. We deeply know that without love, we are nothing.

When Jesus spoke about love, he was speaking about something very specific. Love, in the Christian sense, is willing the good of the other. This means that to love someone is to desire what is best for them. Loving someone is not equivalent to simply wanting them to feel good or be happy. Feelings come and go, but true love is lasting. True love is forever.

If we know that love is the most powerful force in the universe then love cannot be a feeling because feelings come and go. The most important reality in the universe, the thing that makes us most human cannot be something that comes and goes. In fact, true love is personified by choosing to love someone even when we do not feel like it and especially when it is difficult. We know this because we never say to each other: “I love you today” or “I love you partially.”

Love is all or nothing. Love always requires something of us. Therefore, love is a choice. If we get love wrong, we risk misunderstanding what life is all about.

When my oldest son, Benedict, was a few months old he had croup cough. This is an ugly cold when the baby can actually sound like a seal when they cough. One Saturday my wife, Joanna, had a lunch date with her girlfriends for the first time since Ben was born and even though he had a bad cold I wanted her to go. Right before she left she put Ben down for a nap and I got on the couch to watch the pregame shows for College Football.

It had been a long week at work and I was excited to have some free time to myself. About ten minutes after Joanna left I began to hear a faint cough from Ben’s room. I told myself, “I am sure he is fine.” After another ten minutes or so I began to hear him some more. In all honesty, I got frustrated. This was supposed to be some “me time” that I had to myself before he woke up.

The night before I barely had any sleep because we were up all night with him and I just wanted to relax. For the next few minutes I convinced myself that he was fine and that I deserved some space. Then I heard a string of bad coughs come from his room. So I jumped up and ran down towards the crib in his bedroom.

Benedict was clearly struggling so I picked him up out of his crib and began to rock him but his face was very red. Quickly I began to realize that he was not breathing well. I started calling Joanna and my mom and my mother-in-law on my cell phone but no one picked up. So my instinct kicked in, I flipped Ben on his chest in the palm of my hand and I struck the top of his back a few times forcing phlegm to eject from his mouth all over the floor.

He looked at me with a sigh of relief and placed his head on my shoulder. Luckily, he was alright.

I think about that day a lot. I did not feel like getting off the couch. In many ways I convinced myself that I was justified to feel like this was my time and my time only. If I allowed that feeling to rule my choices I firmly believe that Ben could have died. When I got him from his room and finally started acting, his lips were turning purple. He was not getting enough oxygen.



I got up from the couch that day because I loved him. Because love is a choice, not a feeling. And yet, I tried to convince myself that I should just relax on the couch because that is what I felt like doing. True love shows its worth when it acts for the other even when one does not feel like it. That is what that morning taught me. When days come, and there are many, when I do not feel like choosing to love others because I am tired or worn down I try to think of Ben's face from that morning. Each time I do, it always helps me to choose love rather than be ruled by my feelings.

Deep down, I think we all desire to be sacrificial lovers. And yet, our country and world desires to claim that love is whatever you make of it. Thinking this way, living this way - it degrades the true essence of love into something that we define rather than something that defines us and makes us great.

In a world that would have you convinced that love is ambiguous and up to the eye of the beholder, choose to love like God loves you. Choose a radical and reckless love. Choose to act for the other even when you do not feel like it.

Choose sacrifice. It is the true definition of love.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.

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TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS ISSUE:

1. **The Church Cannot and Is Not Changing.**
2. **Without Sacrifice There is No Possibility for Love.**
3. **March for and with the Eucharist.**
4. **Be Grateful and Become Like Him.**

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