



Reflections

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International

Catholic Family Newsletter

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Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

From Atheist to Catholic The Final Warning From Jesus

In The Beginning, God Created the Heavens and The Earth (Gen 1:1)

Blessing to All:

By: Richard Pickard

The beginning, when time did not exist, God existed in a timeless paradise, which we call Heaven. God wanted to share His eternal life with us and through an act of His pure love, created the heavens, the earth and each one of us. We are his children, and he is our Father.

As Christians, we believe that God's son, Jesus Christ, was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. He taught and performed many miracles to prove He was the Son of God. Through His death and resurrection, all those who believe in Him, will have eternal life in Paradise. "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

For those of you, who are reading this Newsletter, that do not believe or who have doubts that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, please look at this video... There are some wonderful moments when John Lenox provides answers to your questions about the **Resurrection of Jesus**.
<https://duckduckgo.com/?q=best+video+on+resurrection+of+jesus+christ+%2C+john+lenox&atb=v346-1&iax=videos&ia=videos&iai=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D7oRT4ER5lx4>

The good news that Jesus taught when he was alive on earth, is that there is a heaven! There is a place of joy and peace and no more sorrow. There is something to look forward to, after death. Death is not the final to nothingness. There is MORE...

Please take the time to investigate the reality of Jesus Christ. You have eternity to thank yourself for taking the time to do this.

For non-Catholics reading this Newsletter or for Catholics who have lost their Faith in the Church...Jesus is calling you to the Church He FOUNDED.

Jesus put St. Peter to head His Church, and each new Pope as its head...Do not judge the Priests or Bishops or Popes for their sins and hate the Church...But take hope in the founder...Jesus Christ. "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt 16:18)

Conversion Story: From Atheist to Catholic

A LONG ARTICLE BUT NEEDS TO BE READ BY CATHOLICS AND
NON-CATHOLICS

During my early childhood, Catholicism — when my family thought about it at all — had two negative characteristics that meant more to us than any positive feature. First, it was considered **vulgar**. Second, it was considered **totalitarian**.

As to the first feature: the Catholics whom we knew generally had Irish surnames, always procreated abundantly, often had little interest in the life of the mind, and usually voted for the Australian Labor Party. This last was the worst sin of all in my parents' eyes, during the Vietnam War years.

As to the second feature: both my parents during my childhood had invested heavily in the belief that Catholicism was **philosophical treason**, the deadliest foe of free thought, and a kind of Stalinism mixed with holy water. Once I grew much older, I could face down this bogeyman without undue difficulty. But I would be lying if I minimized its impact upon what passed for my early thinking.

When I was ten years old we actually found ourselves living next to a convent. Members of a German order, the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, built a religious house next to ours. Improbably enough in view of the above, my parents came to adore them. At considerable physical risk to himself, Dad would every year climb his own pine trees and chop off branches of them, so that they could be used as Christmas trees at the convent.

More and more my parents' theoretical opposition to Catholicism became modified by such considerations as "Oh, of course, when we say Catholics are the enemies of free thought, we don't mean *you*." The sheer goodness-in-action (this is the least cumbersome description I can come up with) of the Schoenstatt Sisters modified not only my parents' prejudices, but mine. Nevertheless, my father certainly, and my mother probably, would have thought it grotesque in those days to believe that the nuns' goodness had anything to do with their faith. **No, somehow the nuns were good *despite* their faith.** They presented to my father the same unlikely spectacle as an improbably obliging communist, or an *improbably obliging* telephone-vandal.

When the possibility of converting to Catholicism became a real one, it was the immensity of the whole package that daunted me, rather than specific teachings. I therefore spent little time agonizing over the Assumption of

Mary, justification by works as well as faith, the reverencing of statues, and other such concepts that traditionally irk the non-Catholic mind.

Rather, such anguish as I felt came from entirely the other direction. However dimly and inadequately, **I had learnt enough Catholic history and Catholic dogma to know that *either* Catholicism was the greatest racket in human history, or it was what it said itself that it was.** Such studying burned the phrase "**By what authority?**" into my mind like acid. If the papacy was just an imposture, or an exercise in power mania, then how was doctrine to be transmitted from generation to generation? **If the whole Catholic enchilada was a swindle, then why should its enemies have bestirred themselves to hate it so much? Why do they do so still?**

Yet in addition, I must confess that the example of certain openly bad Catholics — out of charity I will say little about them, and nothing about the bad female Catholics — kept me out of the Catholic Church for years, as efficiently as if they had been wielding dog-whips in the nave. It is a terrible thing to have wrestled one's way into a position where Catholicism seems at least plausible, only to discover that armies of one's future co-religionists regard Catholicism (more especially, of course, Catholic teaching on sexual morals) with shrill contempt. They seem to enjoy all the benefits of Catholic life, and none of the inconveniences.

Another factor I have not yet mentioned: frequent bouts of mental illness. For years these convinced me that Catholicism would have the same impact on my soul which a lighted match would have on a gunpowder factory. Had I known that the opposite was true (and that my Catholicism has been more important than anything else in blunting the sharpest edge of illness), I would never have hesitated for so long.

Making the acquaintance of genuine lay Catholics was an eye-opener. Yet it meant less to me than two interlinked family tragedies in 1993-1994.

Shortly before Christmas 1993, my mother — who for decades had drunk heavily, smoked compulsively, and eaten hardly at all — suffered a massive

stroke. At first she was not expected to live. Gradually, the truth emerged: the stroke, while not powerful enough to have killed her, had robbed her of all speech and nearly all movement.

To watch an adult abruptly transformed before one's eyes into a paralyzed, whimpering vegetable, all too conscious (at least in a general fashion) of what had befallen her, yet as powerless to rectify anything as if she had been six months old, is in a way worse than losing a loved one to Alzheimer's. There, at least, the decay is gradual. This was as abrupt an assault on life as if it had been a homicide. But a homicide can instill in you justified wrath; how can you feel wrath against as impersonal a cutting-down as befell my mother?

From the day of her stroke to the day of her death, almost eight years afterwards, she was in twenty-four-hour-a-day nursing care. By that time my father had long since left the scene. Diagnosed with esophageal cancer, and convinced beyond all reason that his announcement of this diagnosis to Mum had brought about her stroke, Dad simply unraveled. So, to a lesser extent, did those watching him.

All Dad's elaborate atheist religion, with its sacred texts, its martyrs, its church militant; all his ostentatious tough-mindedness; all his intellectual machinery; all these things turned to dust. Convinced for decades of his stoicism, he now unwittingly demonstrated the truth of Clive James's cruel remark: *"we would like to think we are stoic...but would prefer a version that didn't hurt."*

Already an alcoholic, he now made a regular practice of threatening violence to himself and others. In hospital he wept like a child (I had never before seen him weep). He denounced the nurses for their insufficient knowledge of Socrates and Descartes. From time to time he wandered around the ward naked, in the pit of confused despair. The last time I visited him I found him, to my complete amazement, reading a small bedside Gideon Bible. I voiced surprise at this. He fixed on me the largest, most protuberant, most

frightened, and most frightening pair of eyes I have ever seen: "I'll try anything now."

(Years later, I discovered—and was absolutely pole-axed by —the following passage in Bernard Shaw's *Too True To Be Good*, in which an old pagan, very obviously speaking for Shaw himself, sums up what I am convinced was Dad's attitude near the end. The passage runs: "*The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt. Its counsels, which should have established the millennium, led, instead, directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed them once. In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshipers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith.*")

Eventually, through that gift for eloquence which seldom entirely deserted him, Dad convinced a psychiatrist that he should be released from the enforced hospital confinement which he had needed to endure ever since his threats had caused him to be scheduled. The psychiatrist defied the relevant magistrate's orders, and released my father.

Within twenty-four hours Dad had hanged himself in his own garden.

This was in June 1994. **I cannot hope to convey the horror of this event.** It dealt a mortal blow to the whole atheistic house of cards which constituted my own outlook. Was Dad in hell? If not, did he have the smallest hope of heaven, despite the manner of his death? If so, by what means? How much did my own evil contribute to his suicide? And how could I even begin to make amends? The story of the next eight years, until my own gruesomely belated baptism on August 11, 2002, is very much the story of how I writhed over — and wrestled with —such questions.

I read and read and read: mainly magazines (both Australian and American) as well as catechetic texts; sometimes entire biographies of saints and Catholic heroes. Though I read Chesterton and Belloc and Waugh and Christopher Dawson and Fulton Sheen and Frank J. Sheed and Arnold Lunn, the single most important volume to me — and I thank God for the priest who, having been informed of my existence by friends of mine, brought it to

me while I myself was hospitalized — appeared years back under the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart's aegis:

Chats with Converts, by Fr. M. Forrest.

Here was what I needed. The traditional Catholic priest, Father X, who lent it to me, must have detected how needful it was, in my overwhelmed condition, that I be impressed with the sheer *logic* of faith. Hence my use of Wallace Stevens's best-known line, "blessed rage for order," as the present document's title. [*Note: original title*]

We Catholics repeatedly make a very stupid error when we try to play the Pentecostal holy-rollers' game. The demagogic televangelist will always do that sort of thing better than we can. Shrieking rapture is not our religion's chief didactic glory. As to what is, Waugh admirably phrased the matter in his life of Campion: "the [Catholic] faith is absolutely satisfactory to the mind, enlisting all knowledge and all reason in its cause...it is completely compelling to any who give it an 'indifferent and quiet audience'." How many mainstream Australian Catholics today, I find myself wondering, have ever encountered this sentence of Waugh's? How many would be capable of regarding Catholicism as providing anything other (let alone anything more) than the same emotional buzz as a football telecast?

When in the course of my literary duties I came to learn in depth about two outwardly unrelated sixteenth-century events—the battle of Lepanto, and the Elizabethan martyrs' *via crucis* — I could no longer resist entry into the Catholic Church. In honor of the pope who had done so much to make Lepanto possible, as well as of his twentieth-century namesake so vilely slandered as "Hitler's Pope," I took Pius as my baptismal name.

By this stage all Australians had been confronted with the spectacle of Catholic martyrdoms right next door, as it were. Come 1999, when the Indonesian TNI exterminated as many East Timorese Catholics as it could, any Australian with the slightest historical knowledge experienced a sense of déjà vu. In the 1920s the main venue for anti-Catholic genocide had been Mexico. In the 1930s it

had been Spain. In 1999 it was East Timor. Cheering on the governmental death-squads each time had been the same conga-line of socialists, communists, sectarians, Whigs, and genteel atheists who imagined that what "backward" Catholic peoples needed was the smack of firm godless government to make them into good little global citizens: or better yet, into cadavers. The malice, hypocrisy and insensate craving for human respect that I needed to preserve this daydream were no longer qualities which I could, with an informed conscience and on a full stomach, justify retaining.

Thanks to Father X, the course of Catholic instruction that I laboriously completed could be described as *Chats With Converts* writ large. Patiently and elaborately, it revealed the infrastructure — as it were — of what Catholics believe. It bore the stamp of that splendid multi-volume publication from the 1940s and 1950s: Fr. Leslie Rumble's *Radio Replies* (which I also read). I think Father X knew that to the adult mind — even the adult mind as uninformed on vital issues as was my own — emotion is not enough: it is pitifully, painfully not enough. It can be, to a mind periodically disordered anyway, a lethal drug. What such a mind needs is a solid diet: neither the thin watery gruel of quasi-New-Age "spirituality", nor the pure tabasco of fire- and-brimstone threats. Those who have had the privilege of reading *Radio Replies* will know how nourishing it is, how fair-minded its author is, and how incapable he is of intellectual sharp practice for the sake of making a cheap point. Those who have not yet read it, are in for a great and sustaining pleasure.

Several side-effects, so to speak, of becoming a Catholic were completely unpredictable. One was the way it forced me to abandon, in practice, long-held political beliefs. During the 1990s, much of whatever earning power I possessed derived from my editorial, authorial and research work for a political think-tank. Happily, my discovery of active financial corruption on the think-tank's part (a discovery facilitated by front-page newspaper revelations of this corruption's extent) eased the pain of separation from that working milieu, which regarded Catholicism only with disgust.

What part did prayer have in my journey? "Precious little." Extreme difficulty in prayer, above all in mental prayer, seems very common among converts. (Waugh undeniably found it so, and lamented as much to Arnold Lunn.) Intercessory prayer for anything but the most urgent of life's necessities still alarms me, in part because of the opportunities it gives to the most swinish self-indulgence ("gimme gimme gimme"), and in part because my memory is so bad that simply learning the most basic prayers of our church—the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, the Memorare, the Confiteor, and so on ranks with the hardest intellectual work I have ever been required to do.

I am staggered by those Catholics who saw in my "dry soul" (Waugh's apt words) any seed of potential faith, however tiny. That any Catholic would ever agree to be my godparent astonished me at the time of my baptism, and it continues to astonish me now.

For as long as I can remember, the Catholic Church's liturgical music has moved me and been indispensable to me. I grew up with a certain shallow knowledge of Palestrina, for instance, though the inadequacy of this knowledge is embarrassing in retrospect and should have been embarrassing at the time. But Catholic visual art has not been thus indispensable: principally because I dread the sort of campy Catholic whose entire religion is merely a sort of aesthetic mud-bath. Were music my main concern, I would — in homage to the legacy of Bach and his precursors — have become, not a Catholic, but a Lutheran. So I cannot honestly say that art or music played an important role in my religious destination.

Like most converts, I suppose, I naively assumed that the difference made by becoming a full communicating Catholic would be spectacular. Instead, I found myself in the position of one who, while he has only recently acquired a passport, has enjoyed permanent residence for years.

I wish I had ample faith and innate confidence, as those Schoenstatt nuns did (and still do). Failing those, I wish I had greater courage. The adjective Belloc used about his own religious outlook — *desiccate* — perfectly

describes my own. Confession continues to be a torture to me, however necessary it has been for my soul.

Anti-Catholics often accuse Catholicism of throttling intellectual life. I have not found it so. It is true that Catholics' intellectual life is not meant to extend to writing pornographic novels or devising a shooting script for a Britney Spears video; but then, for the life of me I fail to see any real deprivation attached to these prohibitions. I side, instead, with Flannery O'Connor, who once observed: "The Catholic Church has saved me a couple of thousand years in learning how to write." Certainly the Catholic Church has saved me a couple of thousand years in learning how to think.

Because many, if not most, atheists remain convinced that Catholic converts spend their whole waking lives in a state of mouth-foaming fury against Protestantism, I can only report that I behold with admiration the efforts of several Australian Protestants in the pro-life movement. Such heroic individuals put me totally to shame. But I behold with stupefaction the sheer spinelessness of those Australian Catholics who still assume that a Catholic's sole job should consist of driveling sycophancy towards those (and more especially those newspaper pundits) who howl for our blood.

It won't have escaped readers' notice that the time I formally entered the Catholic Church was the very period at which the gutter-press' crusade against "pedophile priests" entered its first vociferous phase. Some may wonder how this crusade affected me. My answer is that it hardly affected me at all (though the scandals of 2010, to a certain extent, did).

First, I never deluded myself into supposing that priests were free from Original Sin. Second, I knew that those who yelled loudest against Catholic clergymen for being perverts were the same individuals who considered perversion eminently OK, when anti-Catholics practiced it. I also knew—unfortunately all too few of today's Catholics know—that filial obedience to authority is not at all the same thing as blind obedience to authority; that in certain circumstances, defined very specifically by the likes of St. Robert Bellarmine in his book *De Romano*

Pontifice, opposing (with the greatest respect) **the damage done even by a pope is wholly lawful; and that once particular clergy are causing scandal, we not only may protest, we must protest.**

Would the sex-abuse nightmare have occurred at all, if the average Australian or American Catholic had bothered to realize all this? St. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on Galatians, is absolutely emphatic. **"When the faith is endangered," Aquinas writes, "a subject ought to rebuke his prelate, even publicly."**

To any atheist who might still be hesitating upon the brink of converting to Catholicism, understandably shocked beyond measure by priestly sins that cry to heaven for vengeance, I would say something like the following words:

"Those dirty criminals who rightly disgust you: do not think of them as Catholics. Unless they repent (and by now mere private repentance is no longer a legitimate option for them), they will go where St. Paul promised that they would go. Think, rather, of the saints. If you are to judge us at all we have the right to ask that you judge us, not by our worst, but by our best. Compare Catholic saints to even the most scrupulous individuals whom the anti-Catholic world has to offer. How many Gramscis would there need to be to equal, intellectually or morally, one Aquinas? How many Cecils equal one Campion? How many La Pasionarias equal one Teresa of Avila?"

"And remember this too: no genuinely Catholic instructor will ever force you into faith. Ultimately it is up to you. That is what free will means. But it would be inadvisable to reject the faith automatically without studying it. There are too many myths doing the rounds, deriving from vague memories of nineteenth-century pamphleteering scuttlebutt. Find out what Catholics actually must uphold, not what their sworn foes imagine Catholics must uphold."

"Above all: be prepared to have your power of reason exercised, as it has never been exercised before. Some Catholic teachings seem, to most non-Catholics, presumptuous. Properly examined, they are not. If you want

arrogance, do not seek out Catholic doctrine. Seek out, instead, the surrealistic nostrums peddled by your local newsagent's weekly rags: salvation through Princess Di; the divinity of Nicole Kidman; Brad Pitt's freedom from original sin. Anyone who's been tempted to worship those strange gods in the past, might well be impressed, not by Catholicism's impudence, but by its modesty."

The Authors Last Comment: **What detours I might have been spared, had someone spelt these things out to me.**

Jesus wants you to know and learn about the Church He FOUNDED.



St. Faustina, Our Lady's Prophecy, and the 'Great Sign' of Mercy

The Final Warning

God is asking our help in the destruction of Satan's empire! And it is through sacrifice and mercy that Satan will be defeated, and then will come justice. Jesus said to St. Faustina:

"You will prepare the world for My final coming. Speak to the world about My mercy... It is a sign for the end times. After it will come the Day of Justice."

St. Faustina writes about a vision she received showing her how powerful the Chaplet of Divine Mercy prayer is for saving sinners: "I saw a great light, with God the Father in the midst of it. Between this light and the earth I saw Jesus nailed to the Cross, and in such a way that God, wanting to look upon the earth, had to look through Our Lord's wounds and I understood that God blessed the earth for the sake of Jesus... I saw an Angel, the executor of God's wrath... about to strike the earth... I began to beg God earnestly for the world with words which I heard interiorly (the Chaplet of Divine Mercy). As I prayed in this way, I saw the Angel's helplessness, and he could not carry out the just punishment." As with the Third Secret of Fatima, this prophetic vision concerns the coming of God's just wrath for the sins of humanity, of Our Lady's intervention, and the heavenly calling for victim souls to offer sacrifices and reparation for sinners. What a motivation this is to us!

In addition to these words of Our Lord, the Mother of Mercy, the Blessed Virgin, gave to Faustina this prophecy and instruction:

"You have to speak to the world about His great mercy and prepare the world for the Second Coming of Him who will come, not as a merciful Savior, but as a just Judge. Oh, how terrible is that day! Determined is the day of justice, the day of divine wrath. The angels tremble before it. Speak to souls about this great mercy while it is still the time for granting mercy."

To St. Faustina, Our Lord stated, *"I am prolonging the time of mercy for the sake of (sinners)," while warning, "But woe to them if they do not recognize this time of My visitation."* So, let us cry for souls!

St. Faustina received a prophecy from the Lord about the end times, about a coming event for the whole world – a divine Warning of Mercy. Jesus spoke to St. Faustina **about a great darkness and a Great Sign of the Cross**, explaining what would accompany it, saying:

"Before I come as a just judge, I am coming first as 'King of Mercy!' Let all men now approach the throne of my mercy with absolute confidence! Some time before the last days of final justice arrive, there will be given to mankind a great sign in the heavens of this sort: all the light of the heavens will be totally extinguished... There will be a great darkness over the whole earth. Then a great sign of the cross will appear in the sky. From the openings from where the hands and feet of the savior were nailed will come forth great lights which will light up the earth for a period of time. This will happen before the very final days. It is the sign for the end of the world. After it will come the days of justice! Let souls have recourse to the fount of my mercy while there is still time! Woe to him who does not recognize the time of my visitation..."

In the Old Covenant I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My people. Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My merciful Heart. I use punishment when they themselves force Me to do

so; My hand is reluctant to take hold of the sword of justice. Before the Day of Justice, I am sending the Day of Mercy."

This prophecy of the coming divine Warning of the "Great Sign of the Cross" in the sky is supported by Christ in Scripture, when He says:

Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven; then, too, all the peoples of the earth will beat their breasts; and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matthew 24:30



The Final Warning is a Sign of God's Mercy.

When you see it in the sky, ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins. This sign is for sinners. Trust In Jesus's Mercy.

**The International Catholic Family Newsletter
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Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.



The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. – St. Padre Pio

St. Paul Ministry