

WHY GOD MATTERS

How to Recognize Him in Daily Life

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DEACON STEVEN LUMBERT



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DEDICATION

*To Socorro Milagros Vicenty Lumbert,
wife and mother.*

*By your selfless giving,
you inspire us.*

*By your example,
you taught us to serve.*

*By your love,
you made us who we are.*

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K A R I N A

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D E A C O N S T E V E

THERE HAVE BEEN many influences in my life, but none so great as that of my wife, Socorro. She has been my strength in everything I do, standing beside me and sometimes leading me.

And to my daughter Regina, who always seemed to be there to pick up her dad, whether he is getting bit by black widow spiders, or "crashing and burning" while skiing. I am so proud of what she has accomplished in life.

I'd also like to acknowledge my extended family, especially within the Church, who for so many years supported me in all my endeavors.

Finally, I want to recognize my parents, Rex and Ruby Lumbert, who taught me to be the person I am and how to pass that on to my children.

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FOREWARD

Early in the life of the church, Christians faced an interesting pastoral dilemma: how should new disciples be added to the church? After coming to faith in Christ, what should happen to signal this new relationship with God and God's people? Over time, a sophisticated catechumenate, consisting of several stages, developed.

Often lasting several years, this catechumenate consisted of instruction and gradual immersion into the life of the Christian community, culminating with, but not ending in, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation either at the vigil of Easter or the vigil of Pentecost.

What is most important for us to remember about this ancient catechumenate, however, is that the length of the catechumenate was not caused by the amount of material these future Christians had to learn, but rather how much they had to change their lives before they were admitted to the sacraments.

The other important thing to notice is that our ancestors in faith realized that such a life change was not a single step or a single decision, but a series of small conversions along life's path.

The authors of the present work adopt this same view: progress in discipleship is a gradual, progressive and life-long process. It is critical to appreciate these small steps on the way of conversion and to

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recognize the constant presence of God within them. Just as ancient catechists recognized this gradual transformation, so too do modern catechists. The ancient catechumenate, which unfortunately had fallen into disuse, was revived at the direction of the Second Vatican Council; we now refer to this renewed catechumenate as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Within RCIA and its several phases, stages, and liturgical rites, we find again the wonderful and practical understanding that God works through a series of small conversions through the signs and symbols of daily life.

The fundamental lesson of the church's catechetical life, reflected both in the ancient catechumenate and today's RCIA, is that Christian discipleship is an ongoing developmental journey. Christianity is not simply a system of doctrinal and ethical claims to which one simply subscribes in order to be "Christian."

Rather, it is truly a way of life. Western cultures have often developed a rather compartmentalized approach to religion: religious practice is often simply "what we do on Sunday," while the rest of the week—and the rest of our lives—often remains untouched and unaffected by our Sunday faith.

Pastoral and spiritual leaders have always tried to overcome this compartmentalization by exhorting parishioners to live the demands of discipleship in the everyday dimensions of their lives. It is precisely to help face this challenge that this valuable contribution

Foreward

by Karina Lumbert Fabian and Deacon Steven Lumbert is offered. Grounding their reflections in the everyday lives of Christian disciples, they give us a way, as Karina and Deacon Steve suggest, echoing St. Patrick, to "breathe with God's breath."

This breath, the Spirit of God, creates, inspires and sustains all believers, and it is through this breath of God that God's own Word—Christ—is proclaimed to the world. In other words, the very everyday life of Christians can be the most fundamental and effective form of evangelization itself.

Through their lives, Christians not only proclaim the Word of God, they live the Word of God in the world. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that the people of God are to serve as the "soul and leaven" of the world, and it is through this breathing with the breath of God that this mission becomes possible.

We owe Karina and Deacon Steve a debt of gratitude for their sensitive and inspirational message. Like the catechists of the ancient church, they remind us all that being a disciple must be something that permeates every aspect of our being.

Being Christian is not something we do, but a relationship we nurture and live out every day of our lives. And following the lead of those many catechumens of the ancient church, we too are called to continuing, radical conversion of mind, heart, and spirit.

May Karina and Steve's words, coupled with the Spirit of God poured out during this sacred triduum,

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renew all of us in our living of the Gospel in ourselves
and in every facet of our daily lives.

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Holy Thursday, 2010

INTRODUCTION

*The affairs of God are accomplished little
by little and almost imperceptibly. The
Spirit of God is neither violent nor hasty.*

— ST. VINCENT DE PAUL —

K A R I N A

MY CLEAREST religious childhood memory of my dad was his telling me that you went to church to love God. He wasn't Catholic at the time, and he took us to Mass to support my mother and to fulfill the promise he'd made when he married her. At that time, religion was not a big deal in our house. Yard work could take precedence over Mass. I memorized Bible verses for a nondenominational girls' club I belonged to. Still, faith was in our house—in the crucifixes, the rosaries of my mother, the example of my parents' generosity to others.

The words of my father stuck with me, and as I grew older, I wanted to love God more and found myself following Dad's advice and turning to the church. In my freshman year of college, I made a survey of different faiths with a good friend of mine and returned to the religion I'd grown up in. While in the Air Force, I received my Confirmation; I brought my husband to Mass when we were dating, and he found he loved our faith. Our children are growing up

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with Sunday Mass and religious education. My first writing job was for a diocesan newspaper, and I still write for religious organizations and am active in the Catholic Writers' Guild. This past year, I even started attending daily Mass. My journey to truly living my faith has been one of small steps ever forward, and coincidentally, as I journeyed, my Dad began a similar but far greater journey of his own.

D E A C O N S T E V E

I GREW UP thinking faith wasn't a priority. My journey began when I met my wife. She introduced me to the Catholic faith. I resisted joining for many years. I fulfilled my marital promise and brought up our children in the faith, but when Karina asked questions, I couldn't answer them. She mentioned that I told her that we went to church to love God. I realize now there is so much more I should have said.

As my girls grew up and went to college, I admired and even envied Karina's perseverance in exploring our faith. I was proud of her. She was a model for me of what my faith should be. Even so, it wasn't until after the death of my little brother that I began to seek answers to the questions in my own heart. I, too, found the answers in the Catholic faith. My journey is far from over. I am now a deacon and an associate director of the Deacon Formation Program for our diocese. Every day I find new things in the faith. Karina and her writings continue to be a great

Introduction

inspiration for me and my homilies. Although my own journey has gone far beyond anything I could have imagined, Karina still makes me proud in her strength of faith. When she asked me to co-write this book with her, I didn't hesitate.

KARINA & DEACON STEVE

WHEN TRIBUTE BOOKS put out the call for a small book on Catholic living to fill a last-minute opening in their product line, it seemed like the perfect way for us to share our faith journeys, not just with others, but with each other. The stories you'll find here are ordinary, because quite often, we find our faith in the day-to-day living. After all, what could be more ordinary than taking a step—or a breath? Yet, as St. Patrick said, "Christ's breath in mine."

As you read this book, know that you are in our prayers. May what you read help you on your small steps toward great faith. May you breathe in Christ's breath.

Life Lesson

Breathe in Christ

IF YOU ARE reading this book, you already have at least a fledgling faith. Take some time and consider where that faith came from. Who has influenced you? What words or actions have drawn you closer to Christ and his church? Where would you like to go from here?

As you think on this, try this single-word prayer: as you inhale say, "Je-" as you exhale, "sus." While not necessarily a Catholic prayer, it does help you calm and focus. As you breathe in and out, open your heart to the Holy Spirit. Breathe in the breath of God.

Introduction

Know that the LORD works wonders for the faithful; the LORD hears when I call out. Tremble and do not sin; upon your beds ponder in silence. Offer fitting sacrifice and trust in the LORD. Many say, "May we see better times! LORD, show us the light of your face!" But you have given my heart more joy than they have when grain and wine abound. In peace I shall both lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me secure.

— Psalm 4: 4–9 —

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The human person: with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material," can have its origin only in God.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
PARAGRAPH 33