



# The Catholic Citizen

CATHOLIC CITIZENS OF ILLINOIS

Fall 2025

## This issue:

- ♦ Youth Was Not Made for Pleasure, But for Heroism
- ♦ Traditionalists Rejoice that Top US Cardinal Allowed to Celebrate Old Latin Mass at St. Peter's
- ♦ Why Are Catholics So Happy?
- ♦ Annual Benefit Dinner—Sept. 16, 2025
- ♦ Symbols of Disruption: The Demonic in an Age of Uncertainty
- ♦ Why Is Bad Language a Sin?
- ♦ Is the Catholic Church Growing or Shrinking in America?
- ♦ Poetry and Catholicism
- ♦ Autumn
- ♦ Upcoming Luncheon Speakers for the 2025–26 Season

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## Tom Roeser: God's Watchdog in Illinois

by Terry Sullivan

*Following is an e-mail exchange that took place two months before the death of Thomas F. Roeser (1928–2011), co-founder of Catholic Citizens of Illinois.*

**ME:** Are you okay? (*having heard that he had been hospitalized*)

**HE:** Not really. I had a terrific pain in my chest ... they gave me morphine. Really, you ought to try some. You get the feeling you don't care if school keeps or not. Give some to your board; you'll get a raise big time. *TR*

Such was the humor with which Tom Roeser endeared his friends and disarmed his adversaries.

A short bio for the uninitiated. Mr. Roeser was a conservative commentator, in print and on the airwaves. Evanston-born, he began a rich journalism career in Minnesota as city editor of the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, where an early assignment was to interview Eleanor Roosevelt. (Young and inexperienced, he was so nervous that day that Mrs. Roosevelt, having noticed it, gently turned the tables and suggested questions that he might ask of her.) In time, he rose to the post of news secretary for the state government. Roeser later taught political science at Loyola University of Chicago and at Harvard, where he was a John F. Kennedy Fellow. He also taught at DePaul, Northwestern, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and St. John's College, Oxford. The Nixon Administration

recruited him to serve as assistant to the Secretary of Commerce, running a program to boost minority-led businesses. President Nixon eventually fired him, an event that, he loved to claim, "rose higher on my resume as the years progressed."



Tom Roeser wrote op-eds for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Wall Street Journal* and articles for the Catholic weekly *The Wanderer*, and later founded his own online news outlet, the *Chicago Daily Observer*. He read voraciously.

In his spare time he worked as vice president for government relations at Quaker Oats, served on the board of the Haymarket Center (an addiction treatment center), hosted a weekly talk show on WLS Radio (for 17 years), and served as president of the City Club of Chicago and the local program chairman of Legatus, an organization of Catholic CEOs.

Far dominating these accomplishments, however, was his love of his wife and four children and his fierce advocacy for the unborn.

*E-mail communication of August 2010, when his wife was recovering from hip surgery:*

Lil is home now and hobbling with a cane ... I told her that as she recovers I

*continued on page 2*

**Roeser** *continued from page 1*

don't expect her to run the power mower over the entire spread of grass but just do, say, the front lawn one day and the back lawn the next. Isn't that considerate of me? I insist that she not over-do. *TR*

Knowing Tom Roeser, I have said, was like knowing G.K. Chesterton. I met him while working as a young staffer at Chicago's Newberry Library, organizing an event to revive soapbox oratory in so-called Bughouse Square opposite the library, a park known for its history of spontaneous speechifying and debate. It was easy to find speakers of the Left to participate, and difficult to find conservatives. "Call Tom Roeser," someone said. I did. He was a spectacular debater. The Bughouse Square Debates became a popular event to which Tom returned annually. We talked over lunch. He learned that I had strayed from the faith during college. At our next meeting, he presented me with a rosary. It was pink. I have it to this day, though can hear him barking from Heaven, "You're not using it enough!" I was an unwitting target of his good-humored evangelism, though he would not have used that word.

One day he steered me to St. John Cantius, a traditionalist parish known for the beauty and reverence of its liturgies. He was right. I needed red-meat Catholicism. St. John Cantius became my parish home. No doubt he similarly guided others toward the faith.

For at least a decade, Tom presided over a post-Mass breakfast group like a robed Sorbonne professor teaching from the hillside. I continued to learn from him. He was a huge admirer of Teddy Roosevelt, whose sheer vigor and good humor he apparently emulated. (He signed his messages "TR," as did President Roosevelt.)

Two primary things I took away from him: First: the enormity of the evil of abortion. Catholic Citizens honored Tom posthumously at its October 2011 annual benefit dinner. The printed program carried testimonials,

including one from writer Pat Hickey, who called Tom Roeser "God's watchdog and fearless intellectual combatant," referring particularly to his pro-life stance.

The second takeaway was that you can be a "fun" Catholic. One day Roeser recited aloud to me this quatrain of Hilaire Belloc:

Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine  
There's always laughter and good red wine,  
At least I've always found it so,  
Benedicamus Domino!

Except he preferred Scotch.

Tom Roeser opened the ears of many who disagreed with him by making them laugh. Gloomy Catholics do not represent the Church well. Though deadly serious on the important issues and at times gruff, Tom generally led with humor. He had friends on both the left and the right. He didn't just welcome debate with those of opposite views; he craved it.

It's curious to imagine what Tom Roeser would say about the current state of American culture and the Catholic Church. Were he magically to re-appear at the Sunday breakfast table, I would want to ask his "take" on transgenderism, the policies of Donald Trump, the massive influx of young men to the faith, cardinals making lifetime achievement awards to pro-abortion senators—and so much more.

No doubt he would curtail any discouragement with wisdom. He would certainly be delighted to see that Catholic Citizens of Illinois endures, and to see the lengthy list of excellent speakers it has hosted over time, enriching us all.

*E-mail of March 2011:*

It is likely I have heart failure ... Missed Cantius for two Sundays. I have come to the conclusion Ms. Sullivan that none of us are going to get out of here alive. *TR*



*Miss Terry Sullivan is a long-time friend to Catholic Citizens of Illinois, associate director of Midtown-Metro Achievement Centers in Chicago, jazz chanteuse and free-lance writer.*

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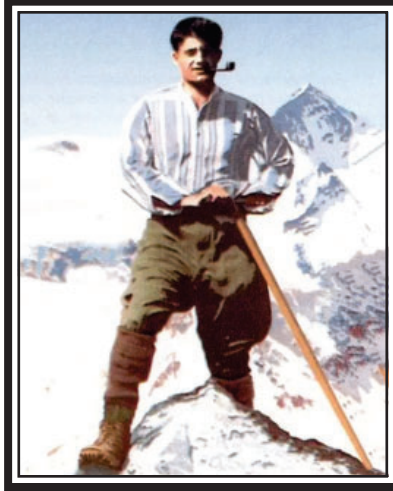
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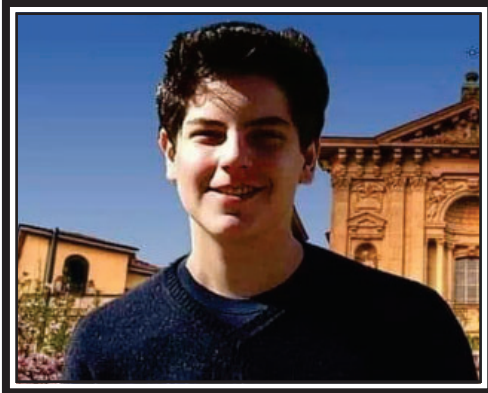
# Youth Was Not Made for Pleasure, But for Heroism

by Catholic Poet Paul Claudel

Within the space of three days, the attention of the world was drawn to the lives and deaths of three young men. Two of them, Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, were formally canonized as saints by Pope Leo XIV on Sept. 7, 2025. The other was Charlie Kirk, a young Evangelical Christian (who, by multiple accounts, was very open



to the Catholic faith into which his wife was baptized) assassinated at the age of 31 in Utah while engaging in cordial debate with both supporters and detractors on the campus of Utah Valley University. Despite the denominational difference between them, there were strong parallels between those Catholics and that Protestant. All three of them died far too young. Both St. Pier Giorgio and Charlie Kirk impressed others with their vigor, charm and abiding good cheer. St. Carlo Acutis and Charlie Kirk both harnessed the potential of the internet and all aspects of modern technology to bring the Gospel to a world desperately in need of hope and meaning.



Strong, young, courageous Christian men like these three are precisely what is needed as an antidote to the discouragement and ennui of many of today's youth. For reasons too various to be enumerated, young men today are less likely to go to college, to be meaningfully employed, to

be married and to have hope for the future than any generation in the past. In the media, good men are belittled, caricatured and criticized. Their natural energy and healthy aggression are disparaged and called toxic. For lack of worthy role models and a meaningful and esteemed place in the home and society, many young men fall into

habits of pornography, video gaming and self-indulgence. Seeing this, many young women turn to careerism, vanity and political activism.

In the face of false ideas of masculinity, these three men exemplified in their lives the lofty role God intended for them as servant leaders, guides and providers for their families and protectors of the defenseless in all circumstances.

By the grace of God, their merits have been recognized and celebrated around the globe. May their lives of Christian witness, love of the Gospel and sacrifice on behalf of their families and communities be an example to all young men and act as a catalyst for the evangelization of Christian culture in our world. ~MJM~

# Traditionalists Rejoice that Top US Cardinal Allowed to Celebrate Old Latin Mass at St. Peter's

by Nicole Winfield

4

Traditionalist Catholics celebrated news Monday that the Vatican under Pope Leo XIV had given them permission to celebrate the old Latin Mass in St. Peter's Basilica during their upcoming pilgrimage.

U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, a figurehead of the conservative and traditionalist wing of the church, will celebrate the Mass on Oct. 25, the pilgrimage organizers said.

The development was significant, given Pope Francis had alienated many traditionalists and conservatives with his years-long crackdown on the ancient liturgy. His reform greatly restricted its celebration globally and at the Vatican and fueled conservative opposition to his pontificate.

Burke, who became a high-profile critic of Francis, has met at least twice with Leo in formal audiences, most recently on Aug. 22. Burke was believed to be a key behind-the-scenes player rallying conservative votes in the May conclave that elected the former Cardinal Robert Prevost pope.

Leo has said his aim is unity and reconciliation in the church, and many conservatives and traditionalists have urged him to heal the liturgical divisions that spread over the Latin Mass, especially in the United States, during Francis' 12-year papacy.

Una Voce International, a federation of groups that promote the Latin Mass, is organizing the pilgrimage to Rome. In a statement, it said the green light for Burke to celebrate the Mass in the heart of the Vatican "is the first concrete indication of the attitude of Pope Leo XIV to the Traditional Mass."

"We are all delighted by this development, which shows Pope Leo's true pastoral heart," Joseph Shaw, president of the federation, said in an email. "More remains to be settled about the place of the traditional Mass in the church, but this is a clear indication that, as we have always desired, we can be united with the pope in our love of the ancient liturgy."

Francis outraged much of the conservative and traditionalist wing of the church in 2021 when he reimposed restrictions on celebrating the old Mass that his conservative predecessor Pope Benedict XVI had relaxed. Even though only a small percentage of Catholics celebrate the old rite, Francis said he had to act because its spread was dividing parishes.

Francis said he was responding to "the wishes expressed" by bishops around the world who had responded to a Vatican survey. But in recent months, parts of the survey were posted online and suggest the majority of bishops who responded had a generally favorable view of Benedict's reform. They warned that suppressing or weakening it would "do more harm than good" and lead traditionalist Catholics to leave the church and join schismatic groups.

In the year immediately after Francis' crackdown, the annual Latin Mass pilgrims were allowed to celebrate their old liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica as they had done before. But they were prevented from celebrating the Mass in 2023 and 2024, though they were allowed to celebrate prayers there.

*This article was published originally by the Associated Press—Rome.*

# Why Are Catholics So Happy?

*The following is an excerpted but faithful transcript of remarks delivered by Professor Arthur C. Brooks of the Harvard Business School to this year's incoming class of freshman at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas on Sept, 3, 2025.*

... When people ask me what I do for a living, I tell them I teach at the Harvard Business School. And they suppose that I must teach something that sounds business-like—finance, accounting, management—and I say, “No, I teach happiness.” And they think I’m lying. That doesn’t sound like a business-like topic, but it is. Why? Because the real business of life is about being the best person that you can be. And what you want to accumulate is not money or power or the fortune of the earth. It’s love and happiness grounded in your Catholic faith ... My personal mission is to lift people up and bring them together in bonds of happiness and love using science and ideas ... [B]y the end of my remarks, I’m not just going to tell you how. I’m going to tell you why.

**HINT:** it’s not about you. It’s about the people that you can lead as a Catholic missionary with your joy.

Now, on my first day of class ... I start with a question to my students ... You must know what happiness is ... What is it?” ... It’s like deer in the headlights. “Um, I can’t quite put words to it, but I know it when I feel it.” ... “It’s how I feel when I’m with the people that I love.” ... “It’s the feeling I get when I’m doing what I truly enjoy.” And I say, “That’s beautiful. That’s poetic. That’s wrong ... [H]appiness isn’t a feeling ... Happiness is not a feeling any more than the smell of your turkey is your Thanksgiving dinner. The smell of the turkey is evidence of dinner. The feeling is evidence of happiness. Happiness is something tangible, something real, something you can get better at and understand ...

[T]he right definition of your Thanksgiving dinner, given the fact that it’s not the smell—[It’s] a list of macronutrients ... [T]hat’s the same idea behind happiness.

Happiness has three macronutrients. These are the things that you need to be paying attention to and get good at:

- **Enjoyment**
- **Satisfaction**
- **Meaning**

... Let’s start with **enjoyment**. Everybody thinks they know what it is, but they don’t. People mistake enjoyment for pleasure. And that’s one of the big problems in our world today ... Pleasure is an animal phenomenon. It starts in a part of the brain called the limbic system ... This is where you produce your feelings. So when my students say ... “I want to have more good feelings and fewer bad feelings,” I say, “Wrong.” There’s no such thing as bad feelings. You have emotions that are produced by your limbic system, and it’s just a bunch of information about what’s going on around you. When you sense that there’s a threat, you have negative emotions and that’s your alert, your alarm that you should avoid those things ... And when you have positive emotions, it means that you have sensed that something’s an opportunity and you want to approach it. That’s great. And that’s all pleasure is—it fits into that scheme of limbic activity.

That’s the reason that people ... whose life strategy is to feel good all the time—as much pleasure as possible—it never ends well, does it? That road leads to addiction and subjugation ... Now, I’m not against pleasure. On the contrary, I’m a Catholic. We believe in feeling good too, right? ... [W]e’re not against things that feel good. We’re against the strategy of *living only* to feel good.

See, here’s what we want to do: take pleasure and add two things, and then it will

*continued on page 6*

Speech

5

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***I’m not against pleasure. On the contrary, I’m a Catholic. We believe in feeling good too, right? ... [W]e’re not against things that feel good. We’re against the strategy of living only to feel good.***

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**Happy** *continued from page 5*

become part of happiness. Here are the two things: people and memory. Pleasure plus people plus memory—that’s enjoyment. Because that’s not just the limbic system, that animal thing. Then it moves the experience of these pleasures into the prefrontal cortex, the human part of your brain right behind your forehead. That’s where you can manage your pleasures and they don’t manage you. And you can remember the experiences so they can continue to enrich your life. Enjoyment is truly part of happiness ... [O]ver the next four years: you want to enjoy your life? Here’s the rule. If there’s something that gives you pleasure, and if it can be addictive, which many things can, even innocent-seeming things like food and the internet, if you’re using it alone, you’re using it wrong. That’s the rule ... This is the way to think about it: to be social, to do things with love, to use your brain, and to manage your pleasures. This will bring more happiness.

Part two is **satisfaction**. Satisfaction is a weird part of human happiness. Here’s the definition: satisfaction is the joy that you get from an accomplishment after struggle. Only humans want to struggle. No other creature wants to struggle ... [Y]ou will not get sweetness from your accomplishments unless they’re hard. And the more that you lean into that, the happier person you’re going to be. That’s what it comes down to ... It’s a real mystery how that works, but it’s true. The mystery gets even deeper with satisfaction when you get that thing that you want. When you get that job or that diploma or that raise or that relationship or that house or that car—you think that satisfaction will last forever, but of course it doesn’t ... I’ve got the solution for satisfaction that lasts. It’s the Catholic loophole. Here’s how it works: your satisfaction is not just about having more—more of all of it. Your satisfaction is all the things that you have divided by

what you want. Haves divided by wants. And so what you need is not just to have more for the rest of your life. It’s also to manage what you want in this life. You need not just a “have more” strategy. You need a “want less” strategy, which is what the Bible has taught us forever. And by the way, so has every good philosophical and religious tradition all throughout the world. Manage yourself, manage your wants, and your satisfaction will rise.

Now, the biggie: **meaning**.

You can go a long time without enjoyment ... But I defy you to go ten minutes without understanding the meaning of your life and still be a happy person. And that, my friends, is the crisis of our time ... Why is it now a big problem? Well, because we’re using our brains in the wrong way. When you spend all day and all night looking at screens and using technology, you literally push your brain to focus on activity in the left hemisphere. That is the hemisphere that does not deal with questions of meaning. You want to find the meaning of your life? ... [You need to live in the right hemisphere of the brain ... So, how do you get to the right side of your brain? ... [A]sk two questions. These are deep questions, complex questions, philosophical questions. You’re not going to have immediate answers, but you’ll use the part of your brain that you need to discover and understand the meaning of your life.

**Question number one:** Why am I alive? ... For what purpose?

... **Second question** is harder. For what would I give my life right now? For what would I die happily right now?

The wrong answer is “Nothing” or “I don’t know.” The right answer—well, that’s the path of discovery ... I challenge all of us to answer this question. When I see people grappling with those questions, I see a miracle unfold of happiness and meaning.

*continued on page 7*

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**Why am I alive?  
... For what  
purpose? For  
what would  
I give my life  
right now? For  
what would  
I die happily  
right now?**

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## Happy *continued from page 6*

Now, if you're ready for it, here's what to pay attention to ...

### Number one: **Family**

All happy people are serious about their family life. They just are. Now, why is that not obvious? Here's why: one in six Americans today is not talking to a family member because of politics. I kid you not. Now, don't let that be you.

### Number two: **Friendship**

One of the saddest things that I see—because I work with CEOs and industrialists and entrepreneurs and successful people all day—they're the loneliest people I've ever met. They just are. They're lonely. Not because they don't have people around them. They're not isolated. And they have a lot of friends. The problem is that they have a lot of *deal* friends, not that many *real* friends.

And you know the difference between real and deal, by the way? Want to know the difference? Deal friends are useful. Real friends are useless.

You need useless people. And they're sitting around you right now. They're extremely useless.

I don't mean worthless. They're not that ... Cultivate your useless friends whom you actually only love, and don't let it get away. That's a big part of the project of getting happier between now and graduation day.

### Number three: **Work**

There's a lot of ways to work. Raising a family is work. Going to a job is work. Being a volunteer is work. There's a lot of ways to do it. But what they have in common to bring you joy is simply two things:

You earn your success by creating value through your merit and hard work and personal responsibility. More importantly, you serve other people with your work—because people need you.

That's what to look for when you're out in the workforce or when you're simply taking care of your family: earning your success and serving others. Then you'll find joy.

### Number four: **Faith**

... This is the best possible incubator for you to become the Catholic person that you're supposed to be and carry it with you for the rest of your life. Because, trust me, as a scientist, that is going to be the source of your happiness on your worst day ... People ask me all the time, "Professor, why are you so serious about your Catholic faith?" Because I'm serious about wanting to be a happier person. I'm a selfish man. And this is one of the ways that never fails.

The more that you pay attention to the work of the soul, the happier you'll be. Father said in the homily, "Be holy." And I say, "Be happy." And it's the same thing. They're equivalent. They lead to the same place if you do it right and understand each one ... So that's your strategy ...

And this brings me to my last point ... People say, "I feel so selfish just thinking about my own happiness." Wrong! You're missionaries. And by that I mean all of you—and me too.

But you know what Catholic missionaries do? They don't knock on doors that much ... we do it differently. We're service missionaries ... But do you know the real apostolate of the mission that's your life? It's when people just want to follow you because there's something about you. They just want to follow you. And what are they going to follow? ... They're going to follow your happiness—because they're going to want that. That's what people find magnetic ... You have an obligation to work on your happiness so that you will magnetize yourself and the world will follow you.

Where will they follow you? They'll follow you toward faith, family, friends, and work. And they will get happier. And guess what? If they really follow your life and you're really doing these things, they might just follow you to heaven. And that's the goal ...

God bless you and thank you.

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***The more that you pay attention to the work of the soul, the happier you'll be. Father said in the homily, "Be holy." And I say, "Be happy." And it's the same thing. They're equivalent. They lead to the same place if you do it right and understand each one ...***

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# Annual Benefit Dinner— Sept. 16, 2025

8

➔ *China expert Steven W. Mosher speaks at the CCI Annual Benefit Dinner.*



➔ *From left to right: Cris Dosev, Vera Mosher, Steven Mosher, Mary Anne Hackett, Madonna Muscarello, Gerard Haderlein, Steven Bock.*

➔ *Dozens of our guests joined the Candlelight Vespers Service preceding our Annual Dinner. Left to right front row: Ellen Kowara, Cecilia Meyer and Rich Meyer*



This ad from the Chesterton Academy of the Holy Family was to have been included in our ad booklet for the annual dinner on Sept. 16, 2025 but was inadvertently omitted. We express our apologies to Chesterton Academy. And once again, we wish to acknowledge the generosity and support of all our advertisers.



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## Symbols of Disruption: The Demonic in an Age of Uncertainty

by Anne Hendershott

10

While Satan and his legions are known for their subtlety, of late it would seem they have become rather bold. From the Minneapolis shooter drawing a picture of himself staring into a mirror with his reflection not human but a beast with horns, to the recently resigned senior physician at the Centers for Disease Control proudly displaying photos of himself on social media ... with the same horned demonic image tattooed on his chest—affirms the point that Satan is having a cultural moment.

Baphomet, the horned goat-like figure that evokes centuries of occultism and demonic possession, stands as a symbolic embodiment of inner torment, moral ambiguity and an identification with evil. For the Church of Satan, the goat-like figure is a symbol of occult power and rebellion.

While Baphomet itself is not mentioned in the Bible, it is associated with themes that the Bible condemns, including idolatry and the worship of false gods like Baal or Molech. In Genesis 3 we are warned about Satanic deception; and in Deuteronomy 18, sorcery and divination are strongly forbidden. Yet, none of this appears to have dissuaded anti-religious zealots from adopting the image as a symbol of evil resistance to the good, the true and the beautiful.

The resurgence of Baphomet is not just aesthetic. Rather, it is reflective of deeper cultural tensions around tradition, identity and the sacred ... In 2018, The Satanic Temple temporarily erected (on the grounds of the State Capitol in Little Rock, Arkansas) an 8-foot bronze statue of Baphomet flanked by two children. Intended to protest the use of public property to display the Ten Commandments, Lucien Greaves, co-founder of The Satanic Temple, told the cheering crowd that had gathered for the First Amendment rally:

“I present to you Baphomet.” Refusing to denigrate the satanic representation, NPR downplayed the symbolic weight of the event, framing The Satanic Temple’s intent not as an endorsement of devil worship but as a strategic push for religious pluralism, free expression and the preservation of church-state boundaries.

At the root of the growing fascination with Baphomet, pentagrams and satanic imagery is a cultural shift that signals a deeper rejection of traditional religious institutions—especially Christianity. These symbols, once confined to the margins, are increasingly gaining traction as potent expressions of hostility toward traditional religious frameworks. Their rise reflects a broader cultural moment in which spiritual authority has become diminished, leaving a void for hateful expressions of symbolic resistance.

To begin to overcome the rise of hateful spiritual symbolism requires a renewed commitment from people of faith to speak truth into the cultural void that remains. For Catholics, the growing embrace of satanic imagery by troubled individuals is a reminder that Satan is real; and, as the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel reminds us, he “continues to prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.” Despite our “modern” culture, we no longer can deny the reality of demonic forces operating in our lives here on earth.

Religious writers have often called Satan an “evil genius” because of his ability to hide in plain sight and tempt us in subtle ways. C.S. Lewis offers a compelling description of the ways in which the “Father of Lies” cunningly tries to convince us to turn away from God. In his satirical *Screwtape Letters*, Lewis creates a senior demon named

*continued on page 11*

# Why Is Bad Language a Sin?

by Fr. William Saunders

In answering this question about bad language being a sin, we must first clarify what is meant by “bad language.” For some people, bad language includes everything from taking the Lord’s name in vain, to cursing, to blasphemy or to just plain old profanity.

In general, the Second Commandment governs this area: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Ex 20:7; Dt 5:11). Specifically, a person must have respect for God’s name. Throughout Sacred Scripture, God’s name is held sacred. He reveals His name to those who believe, and through this revelation, invites them to an intimate and personal relationship ... Therefore, we rightfully use God’s name

in prayer or in other ways to bless, praise and glorify Him. The respect for God’s name reflects the respect a person owes to God himself (Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶2143–4).

Given this foundation, certain forms of abusive language are sinful. First, to abuse God’s name, whether the word *God*, *Jesus*, or in some other form, is objectively mortally sinful. The same rule applies to abusing the name of the Blessed Mother or the saints. One has to ask oneself, “Why would someone use the name *Jesus* as an expletive when angry or impatient? Would not such an action show an arrogant and disrespectful attitude toward God, whom

*continued on page 12*

Christian,  
Remember  
Your Dignity

11

**Symbols** *continued from page 10*

Screwtape who is instructing Wormwood, his young protégé, on how best to capture a soul for Hell. In Letter VII, Screwtape tells the young demon that the most effective thing he can do to bring souls to Hell is to convince people that Satan does not even exist. [In Screwtape’s words], “The fact that “devils” are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that, he therefore cannot believe in you.”

In the increasing prevalence of the Baphomet symbolism, no one is thinking of Screwtape’s little demon in red tights. Most of us are finally acknowledging evil in our midst. Our late Holy Father, Pope Francis, often warned of this evil. At a memorable Mass in the Vatican’s St. Martha guesthouse in 2014, he warned the faithful that they must always be on guard against deceit. He warned against the seduction of demonic

evil. He cautioned that there is a battle, and a battle where eternal salvation is at play: “Satan always seeks to destroy man: that man whom Daniel saw there, in glory, and who Jesus told Nathaniel would come in glory. From the beginning, the Bible tells us about Satan’s seduction to destroy. Perhaps out of envy .... The battle is a daily reality in Christian life, in our family, in our people, in our churches .... Unless we fight, we will be defeated.”

The horrific symbolism of today’s demons posted clearly on the social media pages of troubled individuals provides a clear picture of the darkness we are warned of in the Bible—the one who prowls about the world seeking the ruin of souls. We need to fight this evil with prayer. And if the growing embrace of Satanic symbolism has revealed anything, it is an affirmation that spiritual forces—both good and evil—remain deeply relevant in our world.

*Excerpted from an essay originally published in The Imaginative Conservative, Sept. 25, 2025.*

**Language** *continued from page 11*

we should love above all things?” I often wonder what a Muslim must think when he hears a Christian use God’s name in such an irreverent and improper way.

Second, blasphemy is also a sin. Blasphemy is contempt for God, expressed in thought, word or action. To use words either vocally or mentally against God which show hatred, reproach, disrespect or defiance is sinful. This prohibition also applies to the Blessed Mother and the saints as well as sacred things or Church-related practices. Moreover, blasphemy includes invoking God’s name to legitimize crimes or harmful actions against others. The Catechism notes that blasphemy is a grave sin. (CCC 2148)

Third, cursing is to call down evil from God, and usually involves specifically invoking God’s name, not just His power. For instance, all of us have heard someone say, “G-d d--n it,” or even “G-d d--n you.” Here a person is commanding God, who is all powerful, all good and all just, to damn someone (or something) in Hell for all eternity. Who are we to ask God to damn anyone or to bestow some evil upon them? Objectively, this act is a mortal sin.

Finally, profanity itself is wrong, even though such words may not specifically involve the name of God. God gave mankind the gift of language which should be used positively. Language should build good relationships with other individuals, and enable people to share their lives intimately with each other. Sadly, more and more, we hear in normal conversation profanity especially

those four letter words, like s\*\*\* and f\*\*\*. We also hear people speak profanely about good and holy topics; for example, they profane human sexuality or the act of marital love. Such language is not only negative, vulgar, impolite and offensive, but also debases the dignity of each human being. Moreover, this language reveals not only a person’s bad attitude and lack of respect for others, but also his own immaturity and insecurity in dealing with others. In using these words, the person builds barriers rather than bridges with another person ...

Each of us needs to be careful in our use of language. Objectively, using God’s name in vain, cursing and blasphemy are mortally sinful, although lack of due reflection or habit can diminish culpability. Profanity too can be mortally sinful when done with great anger or viciousness against another person. Each of us needs to control our tongue, and prevent a bad language habit from becoming part of our person. St. James wisely admonished, “Every form of life, four-footed or winged, crawling or swimming, can be tamed, and has been tamed, by mankind; the tongue no man can tame. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. We use it to say, ‘Praised be the Lord and Father’; then we use it to curse men, though they are made in the likeness of God. Blessing and curse come out of the same mouth. This ought not to be, my brothers!” (Jas 3:7–10).

*This article is excerpted and reprinted from an article originally appearing in the Arlington Catholic Herald.*

You know that from the beginning of my Pontificate I have insisted on the crucial significance of the links between the Church and culture. In my letter on the occasion of the foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture [16 Jan 1982], I recalled: “*a faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived.*”

—John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture, March 18, 1994*

# Is the Catholic Church Growing or Shrinking in America?

by Eric Sammons

State of the Church

13

Back in March I wrote an article entitled “Catholics Are Rapidly Losing Ground” in which I commented on a recent Pew Survey showing dire numbers about Catholicism, including the fact that for every person who becomes Catholic, over eight leave the church. I didn’t try to sugar-coat the news and bluntly stated that this was very bad news for the church, and that radical changes were necessary. The article went viral and many other articles quoted it; in particular, many non-Catholics quoted me as a Catholic source proving that Catholicism was dying in this country.

However, since that article there’s been a growing narrative that the Catholic Church in America is on the upswing; in particular, that it seems like the number of converts to Catholicism is exploding. Just this week Catholic Michael Knowles was interviewed on the *Tucker Carlson Show*, and Carlson joked that “everyone is becoming Catholic.”

So was I (and Pew Survey I based my article on) wrong? Is the church shrinking, or is it experiencing a revival with a new wave of converts?

Actually, the answer is that both are true. The church is definitely shrinking, and there does seem to be an upsurge in conversions to Catholicism. The reality is that millions of cradle Catholics, particularly young Catholics, are leaving the church. At the same time, an increasing number of non-Catholics, particularly young non-Catholics, are becoming Catholic. Yes, the former number dwarfs the latter number (by eight to one), but the latter number is becoming more significant.

But how can these two apparently disparate things both be true? The cross-traffic into and out of the church is due to each person’s personal experience of Catholicism.

Consider the average cradle Catholic growing up in the church today. His primary experience of Catholicism is his local parish, which is sadly often effeminate, non-threatening, and weak. It’s full of 1970s musical ditties and insipid homilies and hordes of older women dominating parish life (picture the army of extraordinary ministers invading the altar when it’s time to distribute Holy Communion). There’s nothing about this experience to suggest that Catholicism has the answers to today’s nihilistic culture. It doesn’t fight against the lies young people experience every day—lies about human sexuality, lies about the family and lies about the purpose of life. Instead it just tells them to be nice. When the average young cradle Catholic thinks this is what Catholicism represents, he simply leaves as a young adult in his search for real answers to today’s problems.

Now consider the average young non-Catholic today. He’s never stepped foot in a Catholic parish. He might know a few Catholics, but most of them aren’t serious about the faith so they don’t talk about it much. But he does encounter and interact with Catholics online. And these Catholics are far more likely to present a Catholicism that’s masculine, robust and offering real answers (the Church’s answers!) to today’s problems. It rejects the weak Catholicism that became dominant starting in the 1970s. This is attractive, and so a growing number of those non-Catholics are deciding to become Catholic. Further, they’re much more likely then to enter the church through a parish that’s more traditional and more unapologetic about being Catholic.

So yes, the Catholic Church is shrinking—far too many souls are leaving Christ’s church. But there’s much room for hope,

*continued on page 14*

# Poetry and Catholicism

14

Poetry is the language of Catholicism; God himself chooses to communicate with us through figurative language ... God the Father was *the* poet. By sending his son into the world through Jesus Christ, He put flesh on the ineffable. He made tangible the ungraspable. He explained the inexplicable. And, fundamentally, that is what any poet is trying to do...The truths of the faith have always been transmitted through poetry, because it is memorable; because its images embed in our hearts and minds; because some things are too complex for stark prose ... The poet is concerned with the human imagination pitted against chaos. Poets are looking for form and connection—a search that, more often than not, leads them to beauty and truth ... In this sense, they (and their poems) are reaching out to the divine ... In other words, poetry, above all literary genres, has a special relationship not only with truth but with *transcendent* truth.

*Excerpted from the Introduction to 100 Great Catholic Poems, edited by Sally Read, Word on Fire Press*

## Autumn

*Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926)*

The leaves fall, fall as from far,  
Like distant gardens withered in the heavens;  
They fall with slow and lingering descent.

And in the nights the heavy Earth, too, falls  
From out the stars into the Solitude.

Thus all doth fall. This hand of mine must fall  
And lo! the other one:—it is the law.  
But there is One who holds this falling  
Infinitely softly in His hands.

**Growing?** *continued from page 13*  
because more and more people are recognizing that Catholicism has the words of eternal life, words given to us by Christ himself. Our challenge now as Catholics is to transform more and more parishes to become hubs for the revival taking place, to

become those masculine, robust, traditional parishes that answers today's problems. Then we'll have far fewer cradle Catholics leaving and increase the already-growing number of non-Catholics entering.

*This article was published originally in Crisis Magazine, Sept. 5, 2025*

# Upcoming Luncheon Speakers for the 2025–26 Season

- **Oct. 10, 2025—Faith, Wisdom and a Pope! St. Augustine and Pope Leo XIV’s Pontificate** Bishop Daniel Turley, O.S.A., brother Augustinian, fellow missionary in Peru and close friend of Pope Leo XIV, will explore how the new pope—through his words, gestures and actions—has revealed the profound influence of St. Augustine in his life. Drawing on the pope’s coat of arms and his deeply Augustinian motto, Bishop Turley will help us discover the rich spiritual and theological connections between the saint of Hippo and the Holy Father who now leads the Catholic Church.
- **Nov. 14, 2025—Three Ingredients for a Beautiful Liturgy** Christopher Carstens, director of the Office of Sacred Worship in the Diocese of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and co-founder of the new Institute for Liturgical Formation at Christendom College, will speak about ongoing efforts to restore reverence and integrity to the Catholic liturgy. His talk will address the “art of celebrating” called for by recent popes. When a liturgy centers on God, celebrates the rite in such a way that God’s glory appears and trains the people to encounter Christ in the rite, true beauty appears in our midst and in our world.
- **Dec. 12, 2025—Annual Advent Luncheon and Speaker** In keeping with our tradition of hosting Advent-themed speakers during the month of December, we will host **Judy Sunvold**, director of campus support and conferences at Loyola University, with a talk on Loyola University Museum of Art’s magnificent James and Emilia Govan Christmas Crèche collection of Nativity scenes from around the world.
- **Jan. 9, 2026—Why the Catholic Conversions?** Dr. Kenneth Calvert, professor of history, Hillsdale College, will address the question of how to understand the surprising number of Catholic conversions in the United States and other parts of the world, particularly among young people taught to reject Christianity and Catholicism. Dr. Calvert will discuss this remarkable era in the history of the Church by way of the robust number of conversions at Hillsdale College.
- **Feb. 13, 2026—A Catholic Lawyer Responds to the Bishops about Mass Immigration** Attorney Kevin Kijewski is seeking the Republican nomination for Michigan attorney general. He has served as superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Archdiocese of Denver. Drawing upon the richness of Catholic teaching on the topic, he will offer a nuanced analysis of the issue of immigration that avoids the radical partisan positions of either side of the political spectrum.
- **March 13, 2026—Understanding AI: Challenges and Opportunities?** Dr. Eric Jenislawski, professor of theology and philosophy at Christendom College and a computer buff from a young age, will provide a non-technical introduction to the technology of artificial intelligence with an emphasis on the moral and intellectual threats it may pose to the Catholic understanding of the human person.

Luncheons are held at The Carlisle, 435 E. Butterfield Rd., Lombard, Ill., beginning at 11:30 A.M. Parking is free. Business attire. Reservations can be made at the website or by calling 708–334–2627.

## Fall 2025 Update

As president of Catholic Citizens of Illinois, this is my first opportunity to compile our quarterly newsletter. Mary Anne Hackett is in this, as in every way, a very hard act to follow, so I beg your indulgence and welcome your suggestions.

We begin with a marvelous piece by a loyal friend of CCI and free-lance writer Miss Terry Sullivan. Miss Sullivan was a close friend and protégée of Thomas Roeser. Many of us never had the good fortune to meet Mary Anne's co-founder. But the author's delightful account of her memories of "TR" allows us all to experience vicariously this great man's strong faith, evangelical zeal and hearty good humor.

The other articles in this newsletter cover a broad range of topics including, just in time for Halloween, the very real and increasingly brazen presence of the power of evil in the world, the happy report that Cardinal Burke has been given permission by Pope Leo XIV to celebrate the traditional Latin Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in October, the damage that bad language—whether blasphemy, profanity or mere vulgarity—causes to our souls and to social concord and comity, and an analysis of the real state of the Church in this country.

Another entry in this year's newsletter, and one I hope will be appealing to the young people you either are or know and love, is an excerpted transcript of a talk on the topic of the happiness of Catholics! As Terry Sullivan, prompted by Tom Roeser, reminds us, Catholics must be "fun"—"happy"—if they are to draw others to Christ and to have success promoting the Catholic faith—the best of "good news"—in the public square.

As you know, the mission of CCI has recently been restated in a way that recognizes the need to transform the culture if the Catholic faith is effectively to be brought into the public square. One of the most effective ways the Church over the millennia

has refined society has been through its literature. Poetry may be the literary genre best suited to this purpose. Indeed, it has been called the "language of Catholicism." So, in this most bittersweet season, we offer a very short poem, *Autumn* by Rainer Maria Rilke. As we reflect on the natural but sometimes unsettling changes that occur every year in these tawny weeks, every evening with the setting of the sun and in the course of every life as it moves to its final reward, this poem reminds us that the Lord of Life holds all the created order which He made—and pronounced—good in His loving Providence.

We are happy to share photos commemorating our recent Annual Benefit Dinner. It was a great success—and great fun! Our speaker Steven Mosher, author most recently of the book *The Devil and Communist China*, spoke of the persecution of Christians at the hands of the Chinese Communist party. Nonetheless, he left us with the hope that that godless government's days are numbered and that economic and demographic decline will lead to its eventual demise. We are grateful to our supporters, benefactors, advertisers and those who joined us for the festive event.

Finally, please do have a look at the list of our upcoming speakers who are currently booked through March of 2026. Each one has something important to say about the ways the Catholic faith and culture can and should be brought into the public square.

On behalf of the board of CCI, I encourage you to send us your suggestions as to how our programs generally and this newsletter specifically can improve to meet your expectations. If you are inclined and able to help us in our mission, may I ask you to visit our website at [catholiccitizens.org](http://catholiccitizens.org). Donation opportunities may also be accessed with the QR code to the left.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us.

