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THE MAGAZINE

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ETP: The Magazine

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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 an evangelization 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 rely on the faithful designers at Startup Catholic 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! You can also mail us a check using the envelope inside of the issue. All donations are tax deductible.

Suffering, Sacrifice and the Cross

By Aidan Weber

Every day people sport symbols. People tout the logos of sports teams or their favorite brands. The American flag may be patched on a hat, or a favorite clothing logo draped on a shirt. However, one of the most common symbol people wear is a Roman torture device hanging from their necks. The crowning symbol of the Christian faith is Jesus tragically suffering on the cross. It's not a statue of Jesus healing, a symbol for the Trinity, or an image of the Creation of the world. We choose to display a man brutally suffering. There's a reason we choose the crucifix. It's because a man went through excruciating, unimaginable suffering and died for us, and he's who we owe our lives to.

When Christ came into the world he already freely gave himself to the world. Since we are sinful, that self-giving eventually meant death upon a cross. The Christian life is a call to fully give ourselves back to Christ, whatever the consequences are. Luckily for us it won't mean crucifixion, but it may mean hardships.

The cross has an incredible way of taking all we fear in this life and making it something beautiful. If we're in pain or fearful then we can offer our suffering to God and join in Christ's suffering on the cross. Just as Christ's suffering reconciled the world back to God, our suffering can save souls. St. John Vianney said it was revealed to him in a dream that his prayers and suffering saved 80,000 souls. St. Faustina noted that Jesus revealed angels only envy humans' ability to receive the Eucharist and to suffer.

Suffering is not a good thing and shouldn't be sought out, but how comforting is it that through Christ's suffering on the cross our pain can be turned into a beautiful salvific action for ourselves and others. A Catholic speaker and evangelist Chris Stefanick once said, "He didn't suffer so we wouldn't have to. He suffered so we'd know how to." Jesus draws near to us in our suffering and brokenness.

He doesn't just provide a good effect by aiding our suffering in being redemptive; he joins us in our suffering. As Christ said to St. Paul when he was persecuting the young church, "Why are you persecuting me?" (Acts of the Apostles 9:4). Christ does not abandon us in our suffering; it's actually the closest he will be to us. God became incarnate to reconcile the world back to Himself and to give an example to humanity of how to live. We may need to bear the effects of a sinful world, but Christ on the cross promises that suffering can restore the world.





Through Christ's suffering on the cross he also conquered the worst evil of our lives: death. Death should make us sad. Even Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. However, Jesus on the cross beat even death. Now the worst evil of our lives means that the person who dies has all their desires fulfilled in heaven. The cross conquered all that we fear in this life. It doesn't mean that there won't be pain, but what shall we fear when we're confident the cross saved us from eternal death?

Finally, Christ's suffering also healed our feeling of being alone or not loved. We plaster the world with crucifixes to know that even in times of despair we can be sure of the love of Christ. He died for you. Someone thought you were so valuable that they died for you. When one wants to display their love - it takes suffering. We hear about what people are willing to do to express their love in music and see people suffering to prove their love in movies. People love through actions. At any point during Christ's torture and mocking he could have broken free and stopped the unjust torment. However, he loved you too much to stop it.

So, gaze upon the crucifix for what it is. It's not just the stereotypical symbol of being a Christian. It's a torture device with the man who gave everything for you on it.

Through it, suffering and death can be made into something beautiful. Take comfort that no evil can defeat the cross. Jesus gave himself to humanity, and it meant death on the cross. Now the challenge is to allow that action to ground us in our suffering and breed a willingness to sacrifice everything out of love for God and neighbor.

Aidan Weber is a Long Island resident who is currently studying theology at the University of Notre Dame.





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The Triumph of the Tomb

By Mary Molloy

I have always loved the Easter Season - there is something about the first day of Spring warmth that just resonates in the heart after a long, dark and cold winter. Nature seems to be rejoicing in rebirth and resurrection from the icy grip of winter's death. The reality of life and suffering seem to have a harsher effect in winter months when the darkness of night extends its grip and the sun is rarely to be seen.

St John Paul II summarized this reality of the crushing feeling of death profoundly in his homily from the Easter Vigil in 1979: "Christ's death had entered deeply into the hearts of those closest to him, and the consciousness of the whole of Jerusalem. The silence that followed it filled the Friday evening and the whole of the following Saturday. On this day, in accordance with Jewish regulations, no one had gone to the place of his burial. The three women, of whom today's Gospel speaks, well remember the heavy stone with which the entrance to the sepulchre had been closed. This stone, of which they were thinking and about which they would speak the next day on their way to the sepulchre, also symbolizes the weight that had crushed their hearts. The stone that had separated the Dead One from the living, the stone that marked the limit of life, the weight of death. The women, who go to the sepulchre in the early morning of the day after the Sabbath, will not speak of death, but of the stone."

The solemnity of Holy Week speaks of the gripping reality of death but it leads to a hope that sinks even more deeply into the soul than death ever could. God takes on all our suffering and enters into the darkest reality of our lives: Death itself. I imagine that for the friends and family of Jesus watching the stone seal the tomb was the most crushing moment of their lives. The injustice, cruelty and trauma of Holy Thursday and Good Friday seem to be made permanent in the sealing of the tomb of Jesus. There must have been an utter finality to his burial.

How much greater the hope that the Resurrection brings compared to the despair of the sealed tomb. The tomb is broken open and Jesus the Light ends the dark permanence of death. Death is conquered forever. Jesus does not just return to things as they formerly were - He ascends into Heaven to prepare a place for each of us who follow Him in new life. He united himself to us in all of our sufferings: death, tragedy, betrayal, poverty, injustice and conquers all of it by rolling away the crushing stone and rising to the Father. The message of Easter is that the seal of death and suffering is no longer the end of the story.





The Baptism of Jesus is a great foreshadowing of his mission: to descend into death (the water) and rise again. He invites us into this Baptismal call that is rising not just to the banks of a river but to go with Him to Heaven to rest in the new life He gives us in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Pope Leo XIV in his General Audience in November echoed this hope of new life in the glory of Heaven because of the Resurrection beautifully:

“In the perspective of Easter, the *Via Crucis*, the Way of the Cross, is transfigured into the *Via Lucis*, the Way of Light. We need to savour and meditate on the joy after the pain, to retrace in the new light all the stages that preceded the Resurrection. Easter does not eliminate the cross, but defeats it in the miraculous duel that changed our human history. Even our time, marked by so many crosses, invokes the dawn of Paschal hope. Christ’s Resurrection is not an idea, a theory, but the Event that is the foundation of faith. He, the Risen One, through the Holy Spirit, continues to remind us of this, so that we can be His witnesses even where human history does not see light on the horizon. Paschal hope does not disappoint. To believe truly in the Passion through our daily journey means revolutionizing our lives, being transformed in order to transform the world with the gentle and courageous power of Christian hope.”

The reality of the event of the Resurrection is that suffering and death are now in union with Christ Himself. Even if suffering and death bury us under their weight in this life - like nature in spring time we will rise with Jesus who has gone before us into the new life that has been won through the same suffering that has crushed us. The Way of the Cross is the Way of Light because it unites us with Christ who loves us deeply and carries us out of the crushing despair of death and into the light of hope in the reality of the Resurrection.

This Easter, may we put out hope not in the goods of this world but in the love of God who refuses to abandon us to despair. The love of God changes everything because no matter the struggle, obstacle or cross, He is constant and will bring us to Himself if we accept His invitation to follow Him in the Way of the Cross, which is truly the Way of Light.

Pope Leo XIV in his December audience reflects on this union with Christ which gives us everlasting joy and hope. Let us reflect on the reality of the Paschal Mystery this Easter Season and how it transforms our crushing sorrows of this life into hope and joy in our Resurrected lives in Christ: “Dear friends,” the pope said, “here is the secret of the movement of the human heart: returning to the source of its being, delighting in the joy that never fails, that never disappoints. No one can live without a meaning that goes beyond the contingent, beyond what passes away. The human heart cannot live without hope, without knowing that it is made for fullness, not for want.”

Jesus Christ, with his Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection, has given us a solid foundation for this hope. The restless heart will not be disappointed, if it enters into the dynamism of the love for which it was created. The destination is certain, life has triumphed, and in Christ it will continue to triumph in every death of daily life.

Mary Molloy teaches Religion at a Catholic high school on Long Island. She received her BA & MA in Catechetics and Theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She has spent the last 15 years in ministry both internationally and domestically. Her favorite thing is to serve the poor and spend quality time with her loved ones.

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Remain at the Well

By Thomas Griffin

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4:4-42) is a beacon for our prayer lives and shines a spotlight on what it means to follow Jesus. This meeting is rich with themes regarding Jesus' identity as well as mercy and forgiveness. However, it is repentance (considered rightly) that brings the woman to see who Jesus is and it is conversion that brings her into intimacy with Christ. As we conclude Lent and enter the Easter season, there is no greater reminder that we need.

The woman is at the well in the middle of the day because she is ashamed of her life. She has been married many times and is currently living with someone who is not her husband. It is her sin that blinds her to who is in front of her. Despite her sin and ignorance of Jesus, he shows up to reveal himself more deeply to her - within her sin and shame.

St. Augustine writes the following of this encounter: "A woman came. She is a symbol of the Church not yet made righteous but about to be made righteous. Righteousness follows from the conversation. She came in ignorance, she found Christ, and he enters into conversation with her."

Jesus arrives on the scene of her life and in the midst of her sin. She is not in right relationship with God - but he still draws near. Here is our first lesson to be applied throughout the Lenten season and our entire lives: Christ appears to her in her routine. Every day she does the same thing. It is within her daily chore of gathering water, that Jesus appears to change her forever.

This means that it is in our daily routines of work, emptying the dishwasher, folding laundry, playing with our children or even going to the grocery store that Jesus seeks to be with us and meet us. He is sitting there waiting for us to give him a drink. It is our job to open our eyes and see him with us. Once she begins to notice Christ, then her conversion begins.

Here is our second lesson from the well: conversion only follows repentance. Repentance only begins when we allow this inbreaking of God and are attentive to how He is showing Himself to us. Then we can be moved to shed our former ways of life and move away from the shame of sin that keeps us from holiness.

In a speech at the Vatican in 2023, Fr. Timothy Radcliffe said “God thirsted for this fallen woman so much that he became human. He shared with her what is most precious, the divine name: ‘I AM is the one speaking to you.’ It is as if the Incarnation happened just for her. She learns to become thirsty too. First of all for water, so that she need not come to the well every day. Then she discovers a deeper thirst. Until now she has gone from man to man. Now she discovers the one for whom she had always been longing without knowing it.”

Prayer becomes life changing when we are astounded by the individual focus of Christ for our hearts. He went to the well, just for her. He enters into the routines of our lives, in fact he is always present to us, just so that he can be with us. But, he does not leave us where we are. In the meeting at the wells of our lives, he transforms us to become who we know we ought to be.

Once we have willingly chosen to receive the grace of conversion, we see that the heart of God has been deeply longing for us all along. For this reason, The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1431) says, “Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one’s life, with hope in God’s mercy and trust in the help of his grace.”

It is through the meeting of Jesus with this woman at the well that we can find the peace of knowing that he thirsts for us. He seeks to be with us and he seeks to renew us. That is the entire goal of the spiritual life and the reason why Lent invites us to dive more deeply into the everlasting love of Christ that quenches every desire for intimacy. For this reason, even beyond Lent and Easter - let us remain at the well. He is waiting for us there. He arrived there, just for us.

Thomas Griffin is the chairperson of the Religion Department at a Catholic High School on Long Island where he lives with his wife and three children. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine. He is the author of Let Us Begin: Saint Francis’s Way of Becoming Like Christ and Renewing the World.



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Why Assisted Suicide Is Not Medicine

By John Habert

In a few weeks, I will graduate from medical school. It marks another step in my career transition from a Marine infantry officer to emergency room physician. While I found my previous career deeply fulfilling and cherished the privilege of leading Marines, I ultimately felt called to a different kind of service: being present with people during the most difficult moments of their lives. In many ways, I saw medicine as an opportunity to live out Christ's commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself." That is why I was deeply disappointed to see Governor Kathy Hochul sign the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act this past February.



"Medical Aid in Dying" (MAID) is a value-neutral term for physician-assisted suicide, a practice in which a physician prescribes medication specifically intended to end a patient's life. This stands in direct contradiction to Catholic moral teaching and, as seen in other countries, risks setting society on a dangerous path.

The Catholic Church condemns both physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. In physician-assisted suicide, the physician prescribes the life-ending drug, while in euthanasia the physician administers it directly. Both contradict the Fifth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." The Catechism of the Catholic Church states plainly: "Intentional euthanasia, whatever its forms or motives, is murder. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of the human person and to the respect due to the living God, his Creator" (n.2324). Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia were long considered morally unacceptable outside the Church as well. Until the mid-20th century, the Hippocratic Oath contained the line: "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asks for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect."

Proponents of MAID often frame the issue as one of compassion and dignity. In her press release, Governor Hochul referenced the painful experience of watching her mother suffer from ALS. End-of-life care is understandably an emotionally charged topic. No one wants to see a loved one endure unnecessary suffering. Yet the real question is not whether suffering should be alleviated; everyone agrees that it should. The question is how we address suffering. Modern medicine already possesses powerful tools to relieve suffering without intentionally ending life. An entire medical specialty, palliative care, is dedicated to this mission. According to the Center to Advance Palliative Care 2024 Serious Illness Scorecard, over 91 percent of hospital admissions in the United States occur in hospitals with a palliative care team. In other words, the solution to suffering is not assisted suicide but compassionate medical care.

While we should do our best to minimize undue suffering, the Church teaches us that suffering is not meaningless. The Catechism states "By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion" (n. 1505). In other words, through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, Christ redeemed suffering and gave it salvific meaning. Consequently, through our own suffering he brings us closer to himself and invites us to participate in his saving work.

MAID advocates also argue that it allows individuals to "die with dignity." This argument assumes that dignity depends on qualities such as autonomy or independence. Yet a person does not lose their dignity because they become dependent on others or lose the ability to make rational decisions. For example, a newborn child possesses full human dignity despite complete dependence on their parents. Dignity does not come from autonomy or any other external quality. The Church teaches that human dignity comes from something deeper.



As the Catechism states: “The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God” (n.1700). Human dignity is therefore inherent and cannot be lost through illness or disability. This misunderstanding of human dignity is what drives the slippery slope we now see unfolding elsewhere.

Supporters of physician-assisted suicide argue that strict safeguards can prevent abuse. Governor Hochul’s announcement cited several protections, including a mandatory waiting period, mental health evaluations, and the ability for religious institutions to opt out. However, similar assurances were made when assisted dying was legalized elsewhere and yet the safeguards were gradually loosened and cases of abuse occurred.

In Canada, MAID was legalized in 2016 with strict eligibility requirements. Patients had to have a grievous and irremediable medical condition, intolerable suffering, and a reasonably foreseeable natural death. Just five years later, the requirement that death be reasonably foreseeable was removed. The expansion has been dramatic. In 2024, 16,499 MAID deaths were reported in Canada. This accounted for approximately 5.1 percent of all deaths nationwide. Disturbingly, some cases have involved individuals who were not terminally ill. One widely reported case involved 26-year-old Kiano Vafaeian, a Canadian man who received MAID. The reasons listed were complications of his Type 1 diabetes. His family states that he struggled with mental health challenges, yet he was still able to receive MAID despite the program’s supposed safeguards.

Canada is not the only country where the boundaries have expanded. In the Netherlands, euthanasia was legalized for adults in 2002 but has gradually broadened. It now includes minors, and recent policy changes allow euthanasia for children of any age with parental consent. Policies that begin with narrow intentions often grow far beyond their original scope.

As I prepare to begin my career in medicine, I cannot help but reflect on what it means to be a physician. Doctors hold an extraordinary position of trust. Patients come to us in their most vulnerable moments, when they are sick, afraid, and suffering. The promise of medicine has always been that physicians will stand with their patients through suffering, not eliminate the sufferer. Yet caring for the sick and dying is not the responsibility of physicians alone. In Matthew 25, the Lord reminds us that in serving the poor and afflicted, we are serving Him. As members of Christ’s body, we are called to defend the dignity of human life from the moment of conception until natural death.

John Habert is a fourth year medical student and an aspiring emergency medicine doctor. Prior to this he served as an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps. John lives on Long Island with his wife, Anna, and enjoys cooking, skiing, and spending time with family.



The Power of Theosis

By Mike Schramm

The best and worst kept secret in Christian theology is the doctrine of theosis. On the one hand, it lies at the heart of Scripture and Tradition. On the other hand, many Christians never encounter this teaching. Theosis is both simple and profound. In its most basic form, the doctrine teaches that human beings, by God's grace, are meant to become divinized.

At first glance, this claim seems to contradict the first commandment and the biblical warning against pride. From the temptation in Eden onward, the desire to be "like God" (Genesis 3:5) appears as humanity's great error. Yet theosis remained, and remains, central to the Christian understanding of theology, spirituality, and human person. These themes meet most clearly in the liturgy, where the union of divinity and humanity is enacted sacramentally. Through the life of the Church, God provides the means by which human beings can participate in the divine nature.

Theosis—also called deification or divinization—is "the process by which human persons are transformed in their being (and, consequently, in their actions) by grace" (Encyclopedia of Catholic Theology). The crucial words are "by grace." The transformation into God does not occur through grasping or self-exaltation but through gift. Adam and Eve sought the wisdom of God apart from God. They tried to seize divinity rather than receive it. If grace is a gift, it cannot be taken.

Theosis in Scripture

The Bible presents countless examples pointing to this reality. Moses offers a striking example. As mediator between God and Israel, he ascended Mount Sinai to receive God's commandments. When he descended, "his face had become radiant while he spoke with the Lord" (Exodus 34:29). Israel scarcely recognized him. Light often symbolizes divine presence, and Moses's radiance flowed from his encounter with God.

St. Paul compares this radiance to the "glory" given to Christians as "ministers of a new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:6-18). The theme reaches its climax in Christ's Transfiguration, when his "face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light" (Matthew 17:1-8). St. Thomas Aquinas interprets the Transfiguration as both a revelation of Christ's glory and a preview of the glory promised to believers united with him (*Summa Theologiae*, Part III. Question 45.).

Another key passage appears in Jesus's citation of Psalm 82 in John 10:34: "You are gods." In its original context the verse refers to Israel's judges who share in God's authority. For St. Augustine, however, it becomes an important witness to humanity's participation in divine life.

Finally, many theologians consider 2 Peter 1:4 the clearest statement of the doctrine. There, Peter writes that God's "divine power has granted us all things," enabling believers to become "partakers of the divine nature." The passage



describes salvation as adoption into God's own life. These texts are a small sample. Scripture repeatedly speaks of "glory," "fullness," and communion with God. Christian tradition understands this language as pointing toward deification. The early Church Fathers developed these biblical insights. One of the earliest examples appears in St. Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, where Psalm 82:6 is connected with divine sonship and baptism. Perhaps the most famous formulation comes from St. Athanasius of Alexandria, who linked the Incarnation and theosis with the striking line: "For He was made man that we might be made God." This long history of theosis in Christianity provides the basis for our own participation in the divine nature today.

Theosis and the Christian Life

The Catechism of the Catholic Church organizes the Christian faith into four parts: the profession of faith, the sacraments, the moral life, and prayer. This structure reflects a spiritual ascent. Belief in the Creed leads to participation in worship. Worship forms the believer for the demands of moral life. From this transformation flows deeper union with God in prayer.

Each stage leads further into communion with God. Faith unites the mind with the source of Truth. Worship through the sacraments communicates divine life. Moral action participates in goodness itself. Prayer then gathers the whole person into union with God. In the Eucharist, this union becomes especially concrete. If the consecrated bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Christ, then believers who receive them share in the life of the divine Word made flesh. As Peter writes, they become "partakers of the divine nature."

The moral life follows the same logic. Goodness is not merely an abstract standard but ultimately a reflection of God himself. To live morally is therefore to participate in divine goodness. The Church's moral teaching is not simply a set of rules but an invitation into deeper communion with the Good who is God. Prayer brings this process to its height. When faith, worship, and action orient the entire person toward God, life itself becomes prayer. The saints sometimes expressed this union through extraordinary experiences—visions, ecstasies, or levitations—but these phenomena only reflect a deeper reality: their entire being had become centered on God.

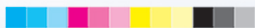
Christ stands at the center of our return to God. The Word took on human nature so that humanity might be carried back into divine life. To the degree that believers are united with Christ—through baptism, the Eucharist, moral transformation, and prayer—they share in the life of the Triune God.

That is theosis. That is, in fact, Christianity.

Mike Schramm is a theology and philosophy teacher living in southeastern Minnesota with his wife and seven children. He also is the managing editor of The Journal of Absolute Truth. You can also find his writing at Busted Halo, Deep Down Things, Catholic Insight, Catholic Exchange, and the Voyage Comics Blog.

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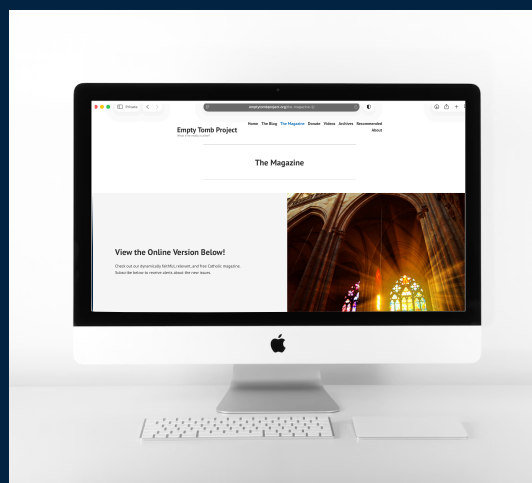
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