

## Ask Mason & Teo



### Help. My sister is a New Age agnostic

Hi Mason and Teo, My sister, who was confirmed as a Catholic, has gone to psychics. She now says she is agnostic. Is going to psychics, centering prayer, healing or therapeutic touch, transcendental meditation, yoga and similar "New Age" practices compatible with the Commandments and the teaching of the Catholic Church? Don't these things promote "New Age" spirituality and endanger one's soul and open one up to evil? (Concerned about New Age Deceptions)

Dear Concerned, Made in the image and likeness of God, human beings have spiritual souls that enable us to know and contemplate the truth and to do good.

The human intellect was made for truth. Humans are beings in search of truth. God gave us the power to know and understand truth so that we can seek and find the ultimate Truth which is God himself.

The human will is the power to choose the good, and therefore to love. As our intellect naturally seeks the truth, our will naturally seeks the good.

God reveals himself through the material universe. He also reveals himself through the natural moral law written in our hearts, often called the voice of conscience. Finally, God reveals himself through public revelation which includes Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, in essence the church.

While those who have been presented with the truths of the church have a greater advantage in knowing God's will for us, St. Paul tells us in Romans 2 that even non-believers have the power and ability to discern truth and the responsibility to do good.

Because of original sin, our intellect has been wounded and often goes astray in the pursuit of truth. Likewise, our will, because of its weakness, may choose a false or lesser good instead of the true good. The intellect and the will can each mislead the other. If the will is attracted to evil, the mind can distort the truth to make the evil seem more acceptable. If the mind mistakes something evil for something good, the will is in danger of making the wrong choice.

The New Age Movement is unlike most formal religions. It has no holy text, central organization, membership, formal clergy, geographic center, dogma or creed. It is a free-flowing spiritual movement that shares an eclectic mix of beliefs and practices.

Because of that, the movement cannot be easily characterized. But here is one general description: New Agers do not necessarily focus on meeting the transcendent God in the fullness of love, but rather turns their energies inward to experience an exhilarating sense of being at one with the universe, seeking states of con-

sciousness dominated by a sense of harmony and fusion with all existence.

For Christians, on the other hand, the spiritual life is a relationship with God that, deepened by his grace, leads us to a greater love for one another and a respect for all of God's creation.

The Vatican document, "Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age," warned that abandonment of the world and its perceptible things by being locked up in yourself is a real danger to one's soul. The true presence of God should always result in loving service to others.

Now, some New Age spirituality has been borrowed from the church tradition. Contemplation, centering prayer and meditation, for example, are ancient Christian traditions practiced by many saints and holy men and women over the centuries. They are fruitful when they lead us to become more like Christ. They are deficient when their purpose is self-absorption.

The church denounces participation in magical or superstitious practices that attempts to control nature (become like God) or that finds the meaning of life in something other than the God of Jesus. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "All practices of magic or sorcery ... are to be condemned" (CCC 2117). "They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone" (CCC 2116).

Your sister's quest for the truth could be seen as her path to future faith development. God is patient and gracious with all of his children. Your genuine love for your sister can only help in her search. Please continue to pray for her and continue to show the depth of your relationship with Jesus.

The appeal of Christianity is seen and felt in the witness of Christians themselves, in their trust, calm, patience and cheerfulness, and in their concrete love of neighbor, as the fruit of their faith nourished in authentic personal prayer.

Mason and Teo Matsuda are parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ewa Beach and have served in youth and young adult ministries for years. Write to them at [yaadvice@yahoo.com](mailto:yaadvice@yahoo.com).



Rick Collins

## More than a high school counselor

'I think I just had a desire to know more faces of God'

By Anna Weaver  
Hawaii Catholic Herald

St. Louis High School counselor Rick Collins flipped through a stack of end-of-the-year thank you notes to him from students on a quiet, late June morning in his office at the Kaimuki all-boys school. The notes — another teacher's class assignment — alternated between short, jokey and heartfelt, or at least as much as the nonchalance of high school boys will allow. Recognition flashed on his face as he reread the cards.

Collins, 28, explained how the writer of one note was "one of my toughest kids" this past school year. "I really fought to keep him here," he said. "He's had a hard upbringing ... I said, 'I think he'd be lost in a public school.'"

Revealing his concern for each of the 117 boys he saw for academic and personal counseling last year, and his anticipation of the 150 or so he'll counsel this year, Collins seems made for this job.

But it wasn't one he would have predicted back at the University of Dayton in Ohio where he started out as a chemistry major, ready to make some money with his aptitude for science. The image of himself as a lab chemist "making shampoo my whole life or teaching" made him reconsider.

Collins was also affected by the "profound cultural experiences" he had on mission trips to Mexico and Honduras during high school and a trip to India during a college summer break and working with street children.

"I think I just had a desire to know more faces of God," he said, "and to learn how different people were touched by God."

So Collins switched to a religious studies major and then went on to get his master's in counseling and psychology from Chaminade University in 2003.

"With counseling and spirituality I find a lot of overlap," he said. "When people are seeking counseling, they're asking deeper questions about life."

Before starting as a counselor at St. Louis last year, Collins worked in the Department of Education for two years and Child and Family Services in the foster care system for three years. He also has a license in marriage and family counseling and works part-time in counseling and spiritual direction through his own side practice, Ho'omaluhia.

At the Marianist-based St. Louis, Collins enjoys being able to share his faith and incorporate that into his stu-

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Movie reviews



**Funny People** (Universal): Told he has only a short time to live, a successful but isolated Hollywood comedian (a pitch-perfect Adam Sandler) hires a struggling comedy novice (Seth Rogen) as his assistant and sidekick, but their budding friendship is threatened by the protegee's disapproval of his mentor's potentially destructive reunion with a now-married ex-girlfriend (Leslie Mann). Under a thick crust of raunchy humor and ostensibly misguided sexual attitudes, mature viewers willing to endure a barrage of vulgarity may discern a moving affirmation of moral courage, marital fidelity and the pursuit, however halting, of a meaningful, committed life in writer-director Judd Apatow's overlong but generally effective seriocomic tale. Brief graphic nonmarital sexual activity, adultery, upper female nudity, pervasive rough and crude language, and a half-dozen uses of profanity. L (R)

**G-Force** (Disney): 3-D fantasy adventure, combining live action and animation, in which a team of three guinea pigs (voices of Sam Rockwell, Tracy Morgan and Penelope Cruz) and a mole (voice of Nicolas Cage), all trained and equipped as government agents by an innovative scientist (Zach Galifianakis), work to foil the plans of a sinister industrialist (Bill Nighy) bent on world domination. As directed by Hoyt H. Yeatman Jr., this exuberant, at times spectacular, rodent romp portrays the crime-fighting team, which eventually includes an enthusiastic but inept pet-store guinea pig (voice of Jon Favreau), as an improvised family, sustained by cooperation, self-sacrifice and forgiveness; these are positive lessons for all but the most impressionable viewers, who might be frightened by repeated scenes of peril. A-I (PG)

**Orphan** (Warner Bros./Dark Castle): Atmospheric but ultimately exploitative thriller about a couple (Peter Sarsgaard and Vera Farmiga) who adopt a 9-year-old Russian-born girl (Isabelle Fuhrman) from a Catholic orphanage, only to find that her inexplicable, manipulative behavior is tearing their marriage apart, and may pose a physical threat to their two other children (Jimmy Bennett and Aryana Engineer). Director Jaume Collet-Serra's horror outing begins promisingly enough by relying on Fuhrman's ability to unsettle the audience, but interludes of excessive violence and distasteful psychosexual complications soon take hold, leading to a conclusion that plays on viewers' most visceral emotions. A few scenes of gory violence, brief graphic sexual activity, fleeting images of upper female and rear nudity, some rough

and crass language, and a couple of uses of profanity. L (R)

**The Ugly Truth** (Columbia/Relativity): Low-minded relationship comedy in which a romantically inept TV producer (Katherine Heigl) enlists the help of the boorish new star (Gerard Butler) of her morning news program — a shock jock who proclaims the supposed ugly truth that all men are sex-obsessed animals — to inveigle her gentlemanly neighbor (Eric Winter) into a relationship. As directed by Robert Luketic, the formulaic odd-couple proceedings feature a relentless barrage of raunchy humor. Brief graphic premarital sexual activity, fleeting rear nudity, pervasive sexual humor and references, much rough and crude language, and a few uses of profanity. O (R)

**The Collector** (Freestyle): Grue-

Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I — general patronage; A-II — adults and adolescents; A-III — adults; L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O — morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G — general audiences, all ages admitted; PG — parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R — restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 — no one 17 or under admitted; NR — no rating.

- Aliens in the Attic**.....A-II (PG)
- Bruno** .....O (R)
- The Collector**.....O (R)
- Funny People** .....L (R)
- G-Force**.....A-I (PG)
- The Hangover** .....O (R)
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince** .....A-II (PG)
- Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs** .....A-I (PG)
- I Love You, Beth Cooper** .....O (R)
- Orphan**.....L (R)
- The Proposal**.....A-III (PG-13)
- Public Enemies** .....A-III (R)
- Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen** .....L (PG-13)
- The Ugly Truth**.....O (R)
- Up!**.....A-I (PG)

More than a high school counselor

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dent counseling “without feeling like that is looked down upon.” This year he’ll be working with incoming seniors and freshmen, talking to them about not only school but family, friends and their faith life. He’ll continue for the second year the Big Brother, Little Brother mentoring program that partners 11th graders with younger students at St. Louis.

And because he was first “stirred up” during high school working with the poor and marginalized on service trips, Collins hopes to widen his own students’ experiences at St. Louis through more service learning opportunities.

Collins recently did a Marianist “urban retreat” in New York City where he lived as a homeless person. That has inspired him to plan an on-campus “shantytown” project to teach students about homelessness this school year. He’s hoping to bring a small group of students to New York to work with the homeless and to gain an international perspective at the United Nations. Collins has also been talking with the Diocese of Honolulu’s Office for Social Ministry about other potential student projects.

“My high school experiences rattled me and made me question things ... and I think that’s a gift I can bring here,” Collins said.

To keep himself spiritually grounded, the University of Hawaii Newman Center parishioner participates in hospital ministry, meets regularly with a spiritual director and is himself a Lay Marianist. Collins is discerning whether he’s called to be a Marianist religious brother and will begin the order’s aspirancy program next summer.

But his focus remains on his students. “When they say thanks to me, I say thanks back because they’re helping me to be a better person,” Collins said. “They challenge me to be more in-tuned with myself and reflect on my own shortcomings.”

some horror tale in which a handyman (Josh Stewart) breaks into his employer’s (Michael Reilly Burke) isolated country home, believing it to be empty, but finds that the boss, his wife (Andrea Roth) and their daughter (Karley Scott-Collins) have all been taken captive by a sadistic lunatic, who also has booby-trapped the house with killing devices. Director and co-writer Marcus Dunstan’s pitch-black painfest leaves aside the fish hooks, barbed wire and bear traps only long enough for a gratuitous teen sexual encounter. Pervasive gory violence, including dismemberment and torture, graphic nonmarital sexual activity, upper female nudity, some rough language, and a few crude terms and uses of profanity. O (R)

Twenty Something



Christina Capecchi  
Traveling light: storing up treasures in heaven

“**W**ife have too many shoes?” The billboard on Interstate 94 caught my eye. The solution it advertised, off the next exit, was not a Goodwill or a therapist, but a storage unit. Why get rid of the stilettos when you can pay \$50 a month to stash them somewhere else?

Millions of Americans have purchased storage, locking up the Hummel dolls, tax returns and soccer trophies they don’t need

but can’t quite part with. At the end of 2008, self-storage facilities occupied 2.35 billion square feet, making it physically possible for every American to stand under the total canopy of self-storage roofing.

My canopy of choice has been the ping-pong table in my parents’ basement, beneath which you’ll find Mead spiral-bound notebooks detailing my introduction to the Pythagorean theorem and the periodic table. Those royal blue and Kelly green pads signal such youthful diligence that they have not yet made their way to the recycling bin they warrant.

Last night I examined the bins below the staircase. I was struck by how many years were mixed together, how time was com-

pressed in a single cardboard box. Baseball cards, birthday cards, report cards. A rhyming dictionary and a cookbook. Crinkled newspapers stacked on a busted Gateway laptop.

These days, it’s not just physical stuff we store. It’s also digital: documents, pictures, spreadsheets, Power Points, mp3s, pdfs. “Current statistics show that one in every 10 hard drives fail every year,” warns the online storage site Mozy, which claims more than 1 million users. “Unfortunately, computers are vulnerable to hard drive crashes, virus attacks, theft and natural disasters, which can erase everything in an instant.”

That appeal to fear drives us to buy 100 gigabytes or 1,000 or - what the heck - unlimited space.

It seems we cannot discard or delete, and we do not want to sift through our stuff and make those tough judgment calls about what to keep and what to give. So we shove it in attics, garages and hard drives, protected with padlocks and passwords. We don’t have to deal with it, except for the monthly bill to remind us it’s there.

This hunter-gatherer-hoarder impulse is a cultural and spiritual malady: overconsumption with no accountability. Our baggage is heavy and dusty and jumbled, and we cannot manage it. We do not even try.

As disciples of Christ, we must travel light so our hands and hearts are free to build his kingdom. When we are attached to our stuff and our homes and our petty evidence of success, we cannot respond to our Christian mission and its many demands: to help our neighbors, to serve the poor and to catch each spiritual lesson in our path. We are distracted, occupied.

St. Matthew would’ve abhorred the sight of our stuffed storage units. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal,” he admonished. “But store up treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”

He was calling for a bigger picture, an attachment and investment in the divine, unmarred by cobwebs and sin. “If you wish to be perfect,” Jesus told the young man who heeded the 10 commandments, “go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

That billboard motivated me. I’m downsizing my shoe collection. The stilettos were slowing me down.

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