



My friend thinks my images of Jesus are meaningless

Hello Mason and Teo, My family and I receive and enjoy the Hawaii Catholic Herald and reading your column. A few weeks ago a childhood friend and I were having lunch and sharing our feelings on religion. I was born and raised in the Catholic faith. My friend considers herself as a "Christian." She fellowships with all "Christian" churches.

My husband has collected pictures of Jesus and Bibles through the years. He has over a dozen pictures and Bibles he's found at garage sales and other places. He's come to treasure them.

I told my friend about my husband's collection and was shocked by her response: "I don't have any pictures of Jesus nor do I want any because we don't really know how he looks."

I could feel myself getting angry. I said, "Well, my pictures and visions of Jesus are the only ones I know. This beautiful picture I have in my memory was instilled in me since I was old enough to pray."

She nodded her head as if knowing how strongly I felt. Did I overreact? Is she right? Is this true? Should I have responded differently? I value your opinion and look forward to hearing from you. (Saving Face)

Dear Saving Face, Thank you for your confidence in our ministry. Personally, we believe you handled the situation quite well. We, too, would defend something that we are passionate about.

Each person is uniquely made and has life experiences that form one to see things differently. We must respect the freedom of others to assent to the truth as they understand it. However, we cannot refrain from practicing or defending the faith. Such moments are a good opportunity to share Christ.

Amazingly, the face of Jesus is one of the most recognizable in the world, yet no one today really knows what he looked like. Nevertheless, our vocation in life is to draw near to Christ and to see his loving face.

As the Word becomes flesh in John 1:14, no longer was God invisible. No longer was the Lord hidden within a "mystery cloud." We now have a human face of God revealed in Jesus Christ who joined us in our struggle to live in holiness and who won victory over sin and death.

In John 14:9, Jesus says, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." If Christ is the sacrament of God, then the church is the Sacrament of Christ. The church's sole purpose is to make present and to reveal the face of Christ to every person.

We can see the face of Christ in the infant Jesus. When we gaze on the face of baby Jesus, we see the human face of the Eternal Son of God, full of beauty and truth that is infinitely beyond words.

We can see the face of Christ in the suffering Jesus. We see the expression of incomparable grief and spiritual pain because of his love for us. We witness Christ clinging to the Father who loves him for

offering his life as a gift. We discover that in imitating Christ's self-emptying we become a gift for our own salvation as well as for our neighbor's growth into holiness.

And we can see the face of Christ transfigured. Dwelling on the mountain with the Lord and contemplating his radiant face becomes a foretaste of our future reunion with the beloved of our heart's longing. When Jesus comes again in glory at the end of time, he "will change our lowly bodies to be like his own in glory" (1Corinthians 15:53-54).

A lifetime of turning to the face of Christ and allowing his mysterious power to reshape us from within will move our hearts to become increasingly open to the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and love that keeps the divine flame alive in our hearts.

"All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2Corinthians 3:18). Moving from glory to glory helps us to see clearly the role we are to play in God's plan for the small part of the world in which we live in and for the local church in which we live out our faith.

In essence, every human face reveals the presence of divine beauty, the splendor of the face of God, who is all light and love. Our real face is not the aspect we show others. Rather, it is the image of our moral personality in its response to be faithful to who we truly are and what we should become that is the resemblance of Christ.

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Among the more than 140 thousand applications for Apple's iPhone -- or "apps" as they're better known -- are several aimed at helping Catholics bolster their faith.

CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec

Catholics get app-y

A virtual rosary is just one way the iPhone is being used for faith-based applications

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON

In a world that boasts continual technological change, the iPhone by Apple has gained near-iconic status. Even Apple boasts there are more than 140,000 applications — or "apps," in Apple-speak — that users can obtain for their phones.

It only follows that there would be some clever Catholics who have devised apps to bolster people's faith.

Dave Brown of Bend, Ore., invented a virtual rosary-beads app as a sign of thanksgiving after doctors found a successful bone-marrow match for his kindergarten-age daughter in 2008, curing her of her leukemia.

Brown and his wife, Jackie, prayed the rosary frequently through their daughter's treatment, even though one parent was in Bend keeping the home fires burning while the other stayed with the desperately ill girl in Portland, Ore. How? With iPhones that Dave Brown bought so they could talk and send photos and video.

As an information technology manager at a window and door company, Dave Brown used his know-how to design an iPhone app that allows the user to pray the rosary. The small screen has animated beads that can be moved with a touch. Corresponding prayers pop up on the screen, along with devotional images. The application knows which mystery to pray on which day. It even knows where the user left off if the rosary is interrupted. The app also has Spanish and French capability.

Brown told the Catholic Sentinel, Portland's archdiocesan newspaper, that within a year of its introduction, more than 20,000 sales of the app had been recorded. The Browns decided to keep the price low — 99 cents — to get as many people as possible praying.

A similar rosary app, known as the Prayer Beads App, was designed by Premier Christian media in England in advance of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Great Britain later this year and made available in March through Apple's online store.

Richard Smart, the firm's marketing director, told the Telegraph, a

daily newspaper in England, he got papal encouragement to develop the app. "He has been encouraging young Catholics to use social media to share the message of Christ," Smart said. "We want to support that. In a way, you could say that we made this app for the pope."

The rosary beads for this app appear to sit on a lush bed of velvet. "The Prayer Beads App is intended for anyone who meditates or prays. Using the app is a tactile experience," Smart told the Telegraph.

In California, the Riverside Press-Enterprise daily newspaper reported that a San Bernardino priest will use an iPhone app to deliver daily inspirational video messages.

Divine Word Father Michael Manning, who hosts a show on cable television's Trinity Broadcasting Network, will make his iPhone debut in April.

According to the Press-Enterprise, Father Manning will record his daily messages at the San Bernardino studios of Wordnet Productions, a Catholic television ministry the priest founded.

The app is sponsored by the Vatican Observatory Foundation. The organization supports the work of the Vatican Observatory, which has telescopes near Rome and in the Arizona desert. Proceeds from the app's sales will help fund the observatory's research and education efforts.

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Movie reviews



CNS photo/Disney

Alice in Wonderland (Disney): Very loosely inspired by, but not recklessly departing from, Lewis Carroll's famous books, this 3-D fantasy-adventure mixes animation and live action as it follows its plucky Victorian heroine (Mia Wasikowska) — here a 19-year-old — down the rabbit hole into a strange, nonsensical realm where she conspires with the Mad Hatter (Johnny Depp) and various frazzled fauna to end the despotic rule of the Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter). Although younger viewers will be frightened by certain sequences, director Tim

Burton refrains from indulging in the more macabre or avant-garde aspects of the tale; and yet, while it conveys a salubrious message with vaguely Christian echoes, the film's aesthetic impact is lessened by the lack of a coherent visual style. Sequences of fantasy action and violence, including a skewered animal eyeball, human characters striking one another; images of mild animal cruelty, some discussion of beheadings, a character smoking a water pipe and one instance of light profanity. A-II (PG)

Brooklyn's Finest (Overture): Seamy New York police drama chronicling a week in the lives of a cynical patrolman (Richard Gere) on the verge of retirement, an undercover operative (Don Cheadle) desperate for promotion to a safe desk job and a narcotics officer (Ethan Hawke) tempted to steal drug money to provide for his ill wife and growing family. Though Catholic imagery pervades director Antoine Fuqua's grim journey through Gotham's criminal underworld, faith provides no meaningful guidance to the conflicted characters as they cross legal and moral boundaries, and as the obscenity laden-script lurches from bloodshed to explicit scenes of sexuality. Frequent bloody violence, including beatings, shootings and strangulation, graphic nonmarital sexual activity, upper female nudity, a few uses of profanity, unremitting rough and crude language. O (R)

Green Zone (Universal): Idealistic but raw combat drama, set in the early days of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, as a dedicated Army officer (Matt Damon) tries to discover why his unit's search for the Saddam regime's weapons of mass destruction continually comes up empty, and finds himself caught in a power struggle between a Defense Depart-

ment intelligence agent (Greg Kinnear) who's indifferent to the justification for American intervention and a rogue CIA station chief (Brendan Gleeson) who believes the whole operation rests on a foundation of lies and fabrications. Director Paul Greengrass' uneasy mix of political conspiracy yarn and action adventure, loosely inspired by journalist Rajiv Chandrasekaran's 2007 best-seller "Imperial Life in the Emerald City," increasingly takes on the qualities of a personal crusade by its hero, thus blunting its ability to dissect larger questions of real-life morality. Considerable action violence, some of it bloody, torture, several uses of profanity, frequent rough and crude language. L (R)

Our Family Wedding (Fox Searchlight): Scattershot comedy, prone to physical gags, about the culture clash between two families when a Latina (America Ferrera) marries an African-American (Lance Gross). Director Rick Famuyiwa, who co-wrote along with Wayne Conley and Malcolm Spellman, leaves no stereotype untouched in this wildly uneven combination of "Father of the Bride" and "Abie's Irish Rose," but mostly manages to stay within tasteful boundaries. A fleeting instance of crass language and the

implication of a premarital relationship. Probably acceptable for mature teens. A-III (PG-13)

Remember Me (Summit): Less than memorable romantic drama about the relationship between an angst-ridden twentysomething New York bohemian (Robert Pattinson) and the university student (Emilie de Ravin) he initially dates as a practical joke to get back at her policeman father (Chris Cooper) for roughing him up and arresting him, but for whom he eventually falls in earnest. Director Allen Coulter's young sophisticates play cutesy when not dwelling on the losses — his brother's early death and her mother's murder — that help them bond. Along with glamorizing the couple's premature sexual union, as well as their eventual shacking up, Will Fetters' script moves toward a climax related to real-life events that many will find distastefully manipulative. Cohabitation, passionate, but nongraphic premarital sexual activity, a couple of uses of profanity, some sexual references and jokes, including a promiscuous character, frequent smoking, at least one drug reference, a few rough and numerous crude terms. A-III (PG-13)

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.

- Alice in Wonderland*A-II (PG)
- Avatar*A-III (PG-13)
- Brooklyn's Finest*O (R)
- Cop Out*O (R)
- The Craziest*O (R)
- Green Zone*L (R)
- Our Family Wedding*A-III (PG-13)
- Remember Me*A-III (PG-13)
- Shutter Island*O (R)
- Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief*A-II (PG)
- Valentine's Day*O (PG-13)

Catholic apps

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The foundation chose Father Manning for his ability to effectively convey the church's message, according to Robert Thorne, CEO of a Beverly Hills firm that co-manages global licensing and media for the foundation.

And, just in time for Lent, Ave Maria Press has developed its own app: a Stations of the Cross app. While already available free at Apple's online iTunes app store, it was to be unveiled during the Los Angeles Religious Education Conference, to be held March 19-21.

An announcement by Ave Maria said the app works on both the iPhone and the iPod Touch, another Apple product.

The app features artwork by Michael O'Brien. It is based on a biblical-based Way of the Cross conceived by Pope John Paul II in 1991.

"We are delighted to explore creative digital ways of keeping our readers connected to God through prayer. It's our hope that many will take advantage of this free prayer resource," said Ave Maria Press publisher Tom Grady. The Ave Maria Press announcement called its app a "perfect pocket devotional."

Contributing to this story was Ed Langlois in Portland.

Pauline Books/Media release saintly app

Pauline Books & Media released an iPhone/iPod Touch application called Saint-a-Day. The app gives users a biography for a different saint each day along with a prayer to that saint. Also available is the option to search for a particular saint to find out for whom or what they are the patron saint.

Users may also search for an occupation or need to find their patron saint and offer a prayer to the saint or discover more about him or her. The application also includes a full liturgical calendar, a reflection for the day at the end of each biography.

Additionally, you can email prayers to friends and those in need and/or e-mail a prayer request to the Daughters of St. Paul community.

Cantcha, Inc. (makers of iMissal) and the Daughters of St. Paul have partnered to produce the Saint-a-Day app, now available through iTunes. The Saint-a-Day app can also be accessed through <http://www.pauline.org> under the "Downloads" tab.

OUR TURN



Therese J. Borchard | Four ways the church could be more Christian

In his newest book, "If the Church Were Christian," Quaker minister and bestselling author Philip Gulley probes his readers to think about our Christian churches today and whether or not they reflect the values of Jesus.

As a Roman Catholic — and a

quasi-good one, especially during Lent — I am much more conservative than Gulley. However, his 10 suggestions for a more Christian church did prompt me to raise a few questions like, Would Jesus really have wanted my second-grader to watch the video "Ricky's First Reconciliation," where the priest looks like a hit man for the mafia with an earring (and probably a black skull tattoo the white collar is hiding)? Maybe not.

Here is a sampling of four of

Gulley's recommendations. If the church were more Christian:

1. Reconciliation would be valued over judgment.

Gulley asserts that churches today get too caught up in condemning folks for less-than-perfect behavior, skipping the redemption and healing that were crucial to Jesus' ministry. Where there is a diagnosis there must also be a cure in order for hope to thrive.

2. Gracious behavior would

be more important than right belief.

Writes Gulley: "When Jesus was asked to boil down the law to its essential element, he didn't hesitate. Love. Love your neighbor. Love the Lord. Love yourself. Jesus never, not once, went to the mat for doctrine."

3. Inviting questions would be valued more than supplying answers.

When my husband Eric went through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, he noticed that whenever we got to a tough question, we Catholics pulled out the "mystery" card: "It's a mystery!" Because sometimes when we try to wrap our human brains around the paschal mystery, we don't have the language to explain.

Gulley encourages us to go to the awkward places of our faith — to ask the hard questions — and to entertain all kinds of possible answers!

4. Meeting needs would be more important than maintaining institutions.

Gulley maintains that Jesus didn't give a whole lot of thought or waste too many words describing the kind of institution that he wanted his church to be. "Though the church eventually became the means by which the story and witness of Jesus spread," writes Gulley, "neither its genesis nor continuance seemed a priority to him. Time after time, meeting human needs took center stage in his life and ministry."