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# ✠ Contra Mundum ✠

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The Congregation of St. Athanasius

A Congregation of the Pastoral Provision of Pope John Paul II for the Anglican Usage of the Roman Rite

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## THE TYRANNY OF OUR PASSIONS

**I**N THE WHOLE of Sacred Scripture, there is no scene that appeals to the imagination of children better than Noah's Ark. The drawings that decorate the walls of Christian primary schools all over the world tend to depict smiling giraffes stretching their necks out of the windows of Mr and Mrs Noah's well-appointed living quarters while lions and sheep stand shoulder to shank in bucolic harmony on the deck.

The reality must have been somewhat less idyllic, after Noah and his family had sealed themselves into the damp and dark, and huddled in close confinement with malodorous ill-tempered beasts while the rising torrents thundered and crashed all around them.

During Lent we are encouraged to batten down the hatches against the temptations of the world and the devil from without and to do battle with the wild beasts of our own vices within. Meanwhile the Ark, which is the Church, transports us on the forty-day journey into the Paschal Mystery of Good Friday and Easter. For the same period that Noah and the animals were shut up in the Ark, we are to apply ourselves



with greater intensity than usual to what, as disciples of Christ, we are meant to be doing all the year round: praying, alms-giving and mortification.

Say the word mortification, in polite society, and the reaction will most likely be negative. The post-Freudian mindset in which modern opinion has been formed tends to associate the idea of Christian mortification with a warped, unwholesome view of human nature.

Obviously this is a case of double standards in operation. The same metropolitan sophisticates who shiver with disapproval at the mention of Christian mortification will gladly spend mind-boggling sums of money on starvation, diets and self-torture regimes in Teutonic spas, all in the cause of body beautiful. At the more fashionable of these

places the menu is likely to consist of formidable doses of Epsom salts and pieces of stale bread, each morsel of which has to be chewed forty times. Presumably the calories burnt in exercising the jaw exceed those consumed in the food. .

Dare to suggest that it is a good Catholic practice to fast and discipline our bodies for the sake of our immortal souls, however, and the response will be an embarrassed silence.

Perhaps this has something to do with a suspicion that the Catholic Church has contrived to make a cult out of suffering for its own sake -a prejudice which has been exploited and reinforced in our age in novels like *The Name of the Rose* and *The Da Vinci Code*. But nothing could actually be further from the truth. The suffering which Christians voluntarily embrace is very much a means to an end. Through self-denial we detach ourselves from enslavement to earthly preoccupations so that, as St Peter says, "your prayers may not be hindered." (1 Pt 3:7) We endure discomfort so that our wayward appetites might learn obedience to our reason and to our will. In this sense, mortification serves to

liberate us from the tyranny of our passions.

None of this is unique to Christianity. We only have to reflect on the ascetic traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism to realise that the practice of self-denial is a feature of many religions. Where the Christian's understanding of mortification is perhaps unique is in the fact that it is woven so inextricably into the very Mystery of Redemption itself.

In the words of Our Lord: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone. But if it dies it bears much fruit." (Jn 12:24) Although these words obviously refer to His own Passion; they also apply to us, because while His Passion and Death pay in full the price for our sins, we are invited to unite ourselves to and participate in that work of Redemption. This is surely what St Paul means when he says "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His Body that is the Church." (Col 1:24) There can be no suggestion that the Sacrifice of Calvary is in any way deficient. Less than a drop of the Precious Blood would be more than sufficient to save the whole human race: What St Paul is saying is that when our own sacrifices and sufferings are united with those of Our Saviour, then they take on the supernatural value that merits rewards not only for ourselves' but also for Christ's Mystical Body the Church.

There can be a temptation to assume that real mortification is just for a chosen few—those

spiritual champions and heroines who retire from the world to the cloister and the hermitage. But the truth is that we all receive the vocation to die to ourselves when we are baptised. To understand this better it might be a good idea at the beginning of Lent to read and reflect on the sixth chapter of the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?" asks St Paul; "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Rom 6:3-4) After Baptism, we are to continue dying to ourselves, so that the life of the Resurrection might take ever greater possession of us: We are to *dethrone* the ego and all self-centredness so that He might be *enthroned* in our hearts forever.

The Sacrifice of all sacrifices that He made on the Cross was a gift of His own self, and herein is the key to any genuinely Christian mortification. For our self-denial and sacrifice to be pleasing to Almighty God, they cannot consist in a sterile exercise in self-improvement. They must be accompanied by an increase in charity. For this reason, in Lent, the Church also enjoins us to give alms. And surely whatever we are able to give materially is meant to be a mere token of a growth in the virtue of charity. Whether or not we have managed to lose an inch or two around the waist by the time Good Friday arrives will be of little interest to God. What will be pleasing to Him will be a heart that has been expanded by loving, giving

and forgiving with ever greater generosity and self-sacrifice.

The Church, then, is like a great Ark, and Her Liturgy is the seascape through which She transports us. During the forty days of Lent, we are carried towards and through the Mysteries that are central to our Redemption. If we make a serious effort to deny ourselves, to pray more and, most importantly, to be more charitable and giving, then we shall take part in this voyage not so much as passengers and spectators but as participants. Through our own mortifications, our prayers and our growth in charity we shall be more effectively united to the Passion and Death of Our Lord. Having died to ourselves, we shall be better prepared to participate in the joy and the glory of His Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

The Provost

¶This article appeared in the February, 2015 (Vol 92, No. 1125) issue of The Oratory Parish Magazine, the parish paper of the Brompton (London) Oratory.



IN CASE OF SNOW on Sundays, please be careful. The church parking lot will be scraped and treated prior to the 9:00 A.M. Mass. If there is any problem, the property manager will call Fr. Bradford at home. You should make your own assessment of driving conditions before driving to Mass.

## SHORT NOTES

✠ Many thanks to Deacon Michael Connolly for his singing the *Noveritis* at the Feast of the Epiphany. This is a solemn announcement of the moveable feasts during the coming year.

✠ Thanks also to Taras Leschishin who sang “The Kings” by Peter Cornelius at the Epiphany Mass.

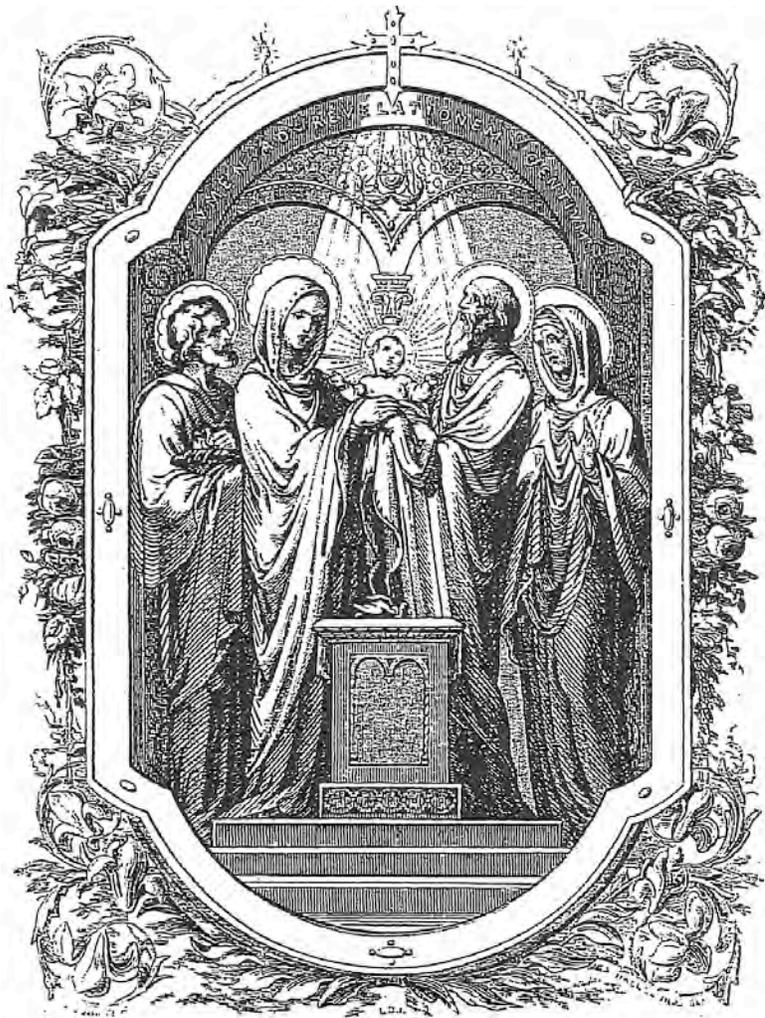
✠ We have begun using the Mass promulgated for the Anglican Ordinariate and mandated for the Anglican Use as well. Updated copies of the Mass booklet are available for use.

✠ Monsignor Steven J. Lopes becomes the first bishop of the Anglican Ordinariate of the Chair of St Peter, at a Consecration Mass in Houston on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Congratulations to bishop-designate Lopes and prayers and best wishes to him as he takes the helm of the Anglican Ordinariate in North America.

✠ Copies of *The Magnificat Lent Companion* are for sale and available in the tract case. Lent begins February 10<sup>th</sup>.

✠ Many thanks to Steve Cavanaugh, Judie Bradford, Eva Murphy and anyone else who has helped provide food and drink for the special receptions after the Christmastide services.

✠ Speaking of special Christmas services, it was a joy for us all to have Les Hunt in performance with his wife Jennifer and sister Dr Janet Hunt, at Lessons and Carols. Les, who suffers from Parkinson’s disease, had not performed in public in over a year. He is a professional flute player (and maker).



### The Presentation of CHRIST in the Temple

*or*

### THE PURIFICATION OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN

*commonly called*

## CANDLEMAS DAY

Blessing of Candles & Procession

Solemn Mass & Sermon

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

7:30 P.M.

You may bring unused household candles for blessing.  
The Blessing of Throats will be given at the conclusion of this service.



## WHY CATHOLICS DO THAT

Throats are blessed on February 3<sup>rd</sup> in honor of Saint Blaise. He is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and believed to be Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century. Blaise is said to have healed a boy with a fishbone stuck in his throat. When St Blaise was later imprisoned (later martyred) the mother of the boy brought him food and candles. We anticipate St Blaise Day by blessing throats on Candlemas after Mass.

## ENTERING NEW LIFE

**H**AVING SET OUT on the mission entrusted to Him by His Heavenly Father, Our Lord Jesus decided that it was now time to give His disciples some idea of the message they would be hearing. After all, as His disciples, they would be asked to accept their Master's mission. So on a nice day, Jesus selected this level plain and gathered a large crowd of (mostly) supporters, and told them what it would mean to follow Him. Following Christ means more

than carrying a membership card! It means accepting a new way of life, new proportions and new values. In many ways these new values would run counter to conventional wisdom.

The opening beatitude is a case in point. To say "Blessed are those of you who are poor" has lost its shock value. After 2000 years we know at least something about the virtues of "holy poverty." But to the Jewish audience on that hillside in first century Palestine such a remark was ridiculous and absurd. To them and their ancestors, *wealth* was a sign of God's blessing. Poverty showed divine disapproval. Our Lord saw it differently. *Anything* that could get in the way of our relationship and total dependence upon Our Heavenly Father was a barrier to entering the kingdom. For many, it would be necessary to be poor in order to gain Heaven, poor in spirit if not also poor financially. In this and in so many ways Jesus completely reversed the normal standards. No wonder the Christians at Thessalonica were described as "those men that have turned the world *upside down*."

Our Lord Jesus really was, and is, quite a hardheaded and practical teacher of morality. Hardheaded in that there is no compromising divine law. Instead of backing down when He came upon opposition to His teaching, Christ said, "will ye also go away?" Yet, the Lord was practical. The Beatitudes seem impossible. But Jesus never operated from the assumption that we could not keep God's law, or that the Almighty made bizarre demands labeled

"religious" yet were impossible to keep.

Everything was eminently practical, and reasonable. It was revealed in creation and by the Incarnation. For Jesus, a human being is capable of doing right. Because he is the child of God the human person *has* to do right. If he doesn't, it is due to his rebellion and the temptation to live totally for himself. Both are contrary to man's design by his Creator. And if he persists in rebellion and living only for himself, the full enjoyment of life as God has created it will escape him. Our Blessed Lord once said, "I have come that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly." Which means that it is something we cannot have without Him.

The human task according to Our Lord Jesus is to affirm the created order in a world all too ready to deny it. To live without God and His commandments is living *inhumanly*. Jesus had a story about that. It began, "Once there was a judge who cared neither for God or man." There were people like that in first century Palestine. And there are people like that today.

To follow Christ does not mean business as usual with a few higher standards tacked on! It means to enter a new life, one that makes continuing to exist in the old world both *hard* and *dangerous*. But that is what Jesus was offering on the hillside: a life totally conditioned by our faith and our confidence in God and in His good purpose.

Father Bradford

¶ This sermon was preached on February 14, 2010. The text was Saint Luke 6:17, 20-26.



February 10, 2016  
**FIRST DAY OF LENT**

**Imposition of Ashes,  
 Penitential Order  
 Solemn Mass**

8:00 P.M.

*Begin Lent in Church on  
 Ash Wednesday!*

**NEVER LOSE  
 HEART**

**W**HEN A MAN engages in a fight with another man, the one who is afraid of his adversary, the one who is wounded, who falls to the ground and sheds his blood is considered to have lost the fight, to have been defeated. However, in the battles of life, he who trembles before this same God against whose strength nothing is of any avail, for everything yields to his word, everything vanishes at a mere sign of his will, he, I say, who is bowed beneath the weight of tribulation, who is crushed by the sight of the wounds produced by his own failings and drags himself along face downwards in the dust, who humbles himself, weeps, sighs, and prays, this man triumphs over God's justice and obliges God to show him mercy: "She besought him with tears and was powerful."

No matter how great the trial to which the Lord is to subject you, no matter how unbearable your spiritual desolation at certain moments of your life, never lose

heart. Have recourse with more childlike trust to Jesus who will never be able to resist bestowing on you some little solace and comfort. Turn to him at all times even when the devil tries to cast a pall over your life by showing you your sins. Lift up your voice loudly to him and let it express your spiritual humility, your heartfelt contrition, and your vocal prayer.

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

¶ *Padre Pio lived from 1887–1968, was an Italian Franciscan friar renowned for great sanctity even during his lifetime and canonized in 2002.*

*This excerpt is taken from a collection of Padre Pio's Letters, published in 1997.*

**IN TIMES OF  
 EXHAUSTION**

**T**HE SIMPLEST THING to be done at this moment is to 'let go' deliberately. In traditional language it was expressed in words like 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit'. If words like these help you to pray at such moments, use them as fully as you can. If you are not accustomed to them or helped by them, find the shortest phrase that expresses for you the entire act of putting yourself into the keeping of the Other. It may be done with such words as 'I/we are in your hands', 'we are yours' or simply reflecting 'let go' while you permit your body to relax. It is probable that we should learn to do this regularly and not just leave it to the times of exhaustion, but if we are going to learn to do it at all, we can begin with those desperate moments.

But it is not easily learned: all of us carry to the point of exhaustion the accumulations of problems and difficulties. Yet praying is a necessary part of truly living, and nowhere is this



With his  
 stripes  
 we are  
 healed

**THE FIRST  
 SUNDAY  
 IN LENT**

February 14, 2016

Litany in Procession,  
 Sung Mass & Sermon  
 Fourth Communion Service  
 11:30 A.M.

Solemn Evensong &  
 Benediction  
 5:00 P.M.

*A reception will follow  
 Evensong.*



more true than in respect of the tired, beaten condition which active people find themselves in again and again. To be able to pray ‘let go’ is so important a part of our life that it deserves all the practice that it requires to become part of our maturing way of living, and its connection with final letting go should not be forgotten.

Alan Ecclestone

¶ *Alan Ecclestone (1904–1992) was an Anglican clergyman and a leader of the Christian-Marxist dialogue in vogue after World War II. He ran (unsuccessfully) six times for city council on the Communist ticket. But as a spiritual writer he had a wider following. His classic Yes to Prayer won the Collins Religious Book Prize in 1975. This excerpt is from Spirituality for Today (1968).*

## RESURRECTION OF THE TRUE SELF

**F**AITH IS an orientation of our existence as a whole. It is a fundamental option that affects every domain of our existence. Nor can it be realized unless all the energies of our existence go into maintaining it. Faith is not a merely intellectual, or merely volitional, or merely emotional activity—it is all of these things together. It is an act of the whole self, of the whole person in his concentrated unity. The Bible describes faith in this sense as an act of the “heart” (Rom 10:9).

Faith is a supremely personal act. But precisely because it is supremely personal, it transcends the self, the limits of the individual. Augustine remarks that nothing is so little ours as our self. Where man as a whole comes into play, he transcends himself; an act of the whole self is at the same time always an opening

to others, hence, an act of being together with others. What is more, we cannot perform this act without touching our deepest ground, the living God who is present in the depths of our existence as its sustaining foundation.

Any act that involves the whole man also involves, not just the self, but the we-dimension, indeed, the wholly other “Thou,” God, together with the self. But this also means that such an act transcends the reach of what I can do alone. Since man is a created being, the deepest truth about him is never just action but always passion as well; man is not only a giver but also a receiver... Faith is a perishing of the mere self and precisely thus a resurrection of the true self. To believe is to become oneself through liberation from the mere self, a liberation that brings us into communion with God mediated by communion with Christ.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

¶ *This excerpt is taken from Gospels, Catechesis, and Catechism (1997). Cardinal Ratzinger reigned as Pope Benedict XVI from 2005–2013.*

## FIRST TO CONFESS HIS FAITH

**O**UT OF THE WHOLE WORLD one man, Peter, is chosen to preside at the calling of all nations, and to be set over all the apostles and fathers of the Church. Though there are in God’s people many bishops and many shepherds, Peter is thus appointed to rule in his own person those whom Christ also rules as the original ruler. Beloved, how great



and wonderful is this sharing in his power that God in his goodness has given to this man. Whatever Christ has willed to be shared in common by Peter and the other leaders of the Church, it is only through Peter that he has given them to others what he has not refused to bestow on them.

The Lord now asks the apostles as a whole what men think of him. As long as they are recounting the uncertainty born of human ignorance, their reply is always the same.

But when he presses the disciples to say what they think themselves, the first to confess his faith in the Lord is the only one who is first in rank among the apostles.

Peter says: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Jesus replies: *Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* You are blessed, he means, because my Father has taught you. You have not been deceived by earthly opinion, but have been enlightened by inspiration from

heaven. It was not flesh and blood that pointed me out to you, but the one whose only-begotten Son I am.

He continues: *And I say to you.* In other words, as my Father has revealed to you my godhead, so I in my turn make known to you your preeminence. *You are Peter:* though I am the inviolable rock, *the cornerstone that makes both one,* the foundation apart from which no one can lay any other, yet you also are a rock, for you are given solidity by my strength, so that which is my very own because of my power is common between us through your participation.

*And upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* On this strong foundation, he says, I will build an everlasting temple. The great height of my church, which is to penetrate the heavens, shall rise on the firm foundation of this faith.

The gates of hell shall not silence this confession of faith; the chains of death shall not bind it. Its words are the words of life. As they lift up to heaven those who profess them, so they send down to hell those who contradict them.

Blessed Peter is therefore told: *To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.*

The authority vested in this power passed also to the other apostles, and the institutions established by this decree has been continued in all the leaders of the Church. But it is not without good reason that what is bestowed on all is entrusted to one.



**STATIONS  
OF THE CROSS  
BENEDICTION  
OF THE BLESSED  
SACRAMENT**

Fridays in Lent at 7:30 P.M.

beginning February 19<sup>th</sup>

Services in Saint Lawrence Church except February 26<sup>th</sup> in St Theresa of Avila Church, West Roxbury

For Peter received it separately in trust because he is the prototype set before all the rulers of the Church.

Saint Leo the Great

¶ *Saint Leo reigned as Holy Father from 440–451. The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter is February 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is the feast of title of the Anglican Ordinariate in North America. A special Mass will be offered in St. Gregory the Great Ordinariate Parish in Stoneham at 7:30 P.M. that evening. Father Bradford will preach.*

**The Congregation  
of Saint Athanasius**

The Revd.  
Richard Sterling Bradford,  
Chaplain

Saint Lawrence Church  
774 Boylston Ave.  
Chestnut Hill, Mass.  
(Parking lot behind church.)

Sundays 11:30 A.M.  
Sung Mass  
Fellowship and Coffee in the  
Undercroft after Mass

Rectory:  
767 West Roxbury Pkwy.  
Boston, MA 02132-2121  
Tel/Fax: (617) 325-5232  
<http://www.locutor.net>



**SATURDAY ANGLICAN USE  
MASS at 8:00 A.M**

Marian altar in St. Theresa Church,  
West Roxbury

Year's-mind Mass for Mary Marks,  
February 20<sup>th</sup>

Year's-mind Mass for Janet Ray,  
February 27<sup>th</sup>

St. Lawrence Church, 774 Boylston Street (Route 9).

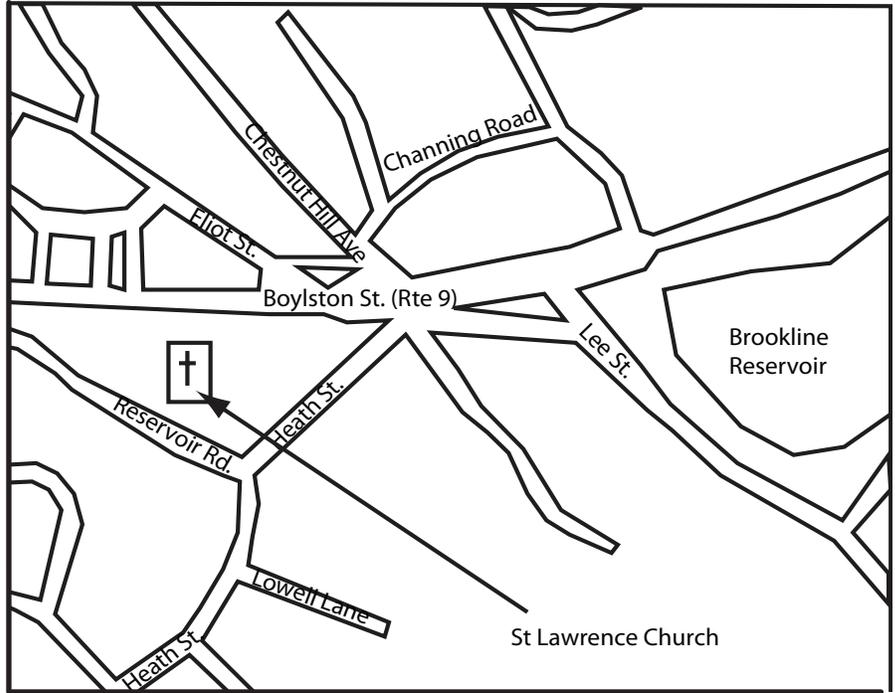
Park in the church parking lot behind the Church, off of Reservoir Rd.

Directions by Car: From the North or South: Route 128 to Route 9. At signal for Reservoir Road, take right; Church parking lot is a short distance on left.

From Boston: From Stuart/Kneeland St., turn left onto Park Plaza. Drive for 0.2 miles. Park Plaza becomes St James Avenue. Drive for 0.3 miles.

Turn slight left onto ramp. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Route-9. Drive for 3.5 miles. Turn left onto Heath Street. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Reservoir Road. Drive for 0.1 miles. Parking lot is on your right.

Directions by Public Transportation: From Kenmore Square station board Bus #60, which stops in front of the Church. Alternatively, the Church is a 15-minute walk from the Cleveland Circle station on the Green Line C-branch.



**Contra Mundum**  
 The Congregation of St. Athanasius  
 10 St. Theresa Avenue  
 West Roxbury, MA 02132

