

FR. GLENN SUDANO, CFR

We Live in a Castle

*Stories, allegories, and commentaries about
the most wonderful religion in the world.*



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About the Book

“Blue collar ecclesiology” or “kitchen table catechesis” is how the Father Glenn Sudano, CFR describes his way of presenting some interesting ideas about what is considered by many to be a little known yet fascinating subject. *We Live in a Castle* is Father’s first book. The title is taken from one of its twelve stories, each of which, like an array of spotlights, illumines its subject from different angles.

The subject of the book? The Church—its nature, history and mission. Father describes his work as “friendly yet provocative.”

He challenges the reader to dig into the Church’s history and discover a valuable treasure which he calls “the most wonderful religion in the world.” He uses modern day parables, some based his real life experience, each with an introduction and spiritual reflection.

We Live in a Castle is well suited for teachers and young students participating in religious education. It will be especially useful for adults who are considering or preparing to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church (RCIA).

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Chapter X: Il Maestro

Readers who have a nodding acquaintance with Church history will immediately understand the allegory of “Il Maestro”. In this story, I am not so much making a comment on any particular player in the Protestant Reformation. Rather, the story attempts to highlight some of the human dynamics which shape history—in this case, Church history. Often enough, we tend to make some people angels and others devils. The truth is, in most of us there’s a bit of both.

The image of the Church as an orchestra works particularly well when we consider that beautiful music doesn’t simply happen. Bach, Beethoven and—believe it or not—even the Beatles had to work hard in order to create something wonderful. Few things in life happen through the efforts of one person. Most human endeavors—good or evil—are the result of the combined efforts of more than one individual. And even when something extraordinary is discovered, it is often preceded by the ordinary accomplishments of others.

In much the same way, the Church is made up of many different members, each offering their own unique gifts. As the Church is apostolic, all its members follow a score composed long ago. And, as in a modern symphony orchestra, the members of this holy band are called to play and perhaps interpret the score—but certainly not rewrite it.

I hope you enjoy “Il Maestro” and perhaps have some fun picking it apart!

Il Maestro has only a little time before making his grand entrance. Taking a final glance in his dressing-room mirror, he likes what he sees. The word “stately” comes to mind. He smiles. He leans into the mirror, adjusts his black bowtie, and runs his palms across his belly from front to sides. His satin cummerbund is now without a wrinkle. Feeling his slightly flabby gut he tells himself, “No dessert tonight”. As grand maestro, he must frequent only the finest restaurants and the most exclusive clubs. He is often heard to lament that frequenting such places is one of the more disagreeable demands of his office. While he often voices this complaint, few who hear it believe him.

His name is Alexander. But since he received the silver baton as grand maestro, none of his close associates in the music world dare call him “Alex”. Indeed, with the exception of his elderly mother, he even expects his family members and friends to call him “Il Maestro”. He reasons that he has worked long and hard for this title, so respect for the dignity of his office is only his due.

Il Maestro hears the sweet cacophony of musicians tuning their instruments. He savors the sound, for it awakens the excitement of the audience, and is the harbinger of his entrance onto the concert stage.

The stage manager gives three sharp taps on the door—the traditional signal used only for grand conductors. His moment has come; the orchestra and audience are ready for his entrance. Il Maestro is particular in following age-old customs, even those whose original intent have been forgotten. All must be as it should for Il Maestro; formalities must be observed. After the signal, he turns to a table on which rests a leather box with burnished brass corners and an ornate lock. Embossed on the cover in gold lettering, are the words “Il Maestro”. Almost ceremoniously he opens the box to reveal his conductor’s baton resting on crushed red velvet. This is no ordinary baton, but one that befits his position: it is pure silver. Taking it in his hands, he runs his fingers over its polished surface. Then he gazes at it in a way that suggests something profound; a look of pleasure, intimacy, even adoration. Turning to the mirror, he bows slowly and with great dignity, and offers an ever so slight smile. Such is his trademark which he has honed to perfection through countless repetitions. Yes, he likes how he looks.

The concert hall is especially full, for today he is leading both the Symphonic Orchestra and the Grand Choir of the Royal Academy. Once again it is the Easter season and everyone is eager to hear Handel’s famous oratorio, the Messiah. The crowning moment is, of course, the beloved Hallelujah chorus. While the audience is bristling with anticipation, the concert hall employees, the orchestra, and even the choir are more than annoyed. Their continued complaints

about the poor condition of the concert hall have been ignored yet again. The hall is in desperate need of repair. Water stains and bubbling paint on the walls indicate water leakage, while white plaster flakes fall from the ornate ceiling. Not only are the window sills layered with dust, the panes are filthy. Some are cracked and others covered with cardboard.

The truth is, the concert hall is not the only thing in disrepair: the morale of the employees, especially the musicians, is a wreck. The orchestra and staff are poorly compensated; they are required to pay high union dues. Yet no effective union exists, as there are no meetings, no representatives and no contract. Finally, the cost of admission is deemed unreasonably low by most. The owners merely shrug and say “We’re doing our best to keep ticket prices low and the lights on”.

What really fuels the fires of discontent is the exorbitant salaries of the owners and especially that of Il Maestro. Even among his peers it is thought scandalous. And to make matters worse, everyone knows the conductor’s family is wealthy thanks to investments and real estate. Why so much money is spent on himself rather than the concert hall is an uncomfortable question, dodged even by Il Maestro’s most devoted followers. While he is aware of this simmering discontent, Il Maestro’s strategy is simple: “Stay the course, They’ll stop complaining”. Yet, just when everyone thinks things can’t get any worse, they do.

In order to raise money he does the unthinkable: He solicits funds from the podium during intermission. His smile and smooth style work well, but the more people give, the more the roof still leaks. In his apparently insatiable need for revenue, rumor has it that he is considering having food concessions in the lobby. He insists “We’ll do whatever works.”

Every battle begins with one shot but on one fateful day few expect a battle to erupt into a full-blown war.

The concert hall is packed and the atmosphere laced with excitement. The maintenance crew has done their best to adjust the lighting so as to hide the water damaged walls and crumbling ceiling. However on this day, the lighting isn’t the only thing that is adjusted: something happens to the score itself. Everything goes superbly until the famous Hallelujah chorus. As the special lights bathe the walls and ceiling in their false beauty, the choir begins to sing: “Maa-lay-luya! Maa-lay-luya! Maa-lay-luya! Maa-lay-ay-ay-luya!

At first, no one in the audience notices the change. But, as the choir goes on, Il Maestro fumes. He knows he cannot stop the performance and continues to conduct as if nothing is amiss. However, at the finale the audience finally realizes what is going on. Soon people here and there

are talking as they point at the ceiling and walls. The final crescendo is fabulous and enthusiastic cheering erupts from the audience. However tonight Il Maestro doesn't offer the audience his signature bow and smile. He storms off the stage ignoring the applause. Meanwhile, a number of musicians and singers quickly leave their seats and make their way to the far corner of the hall. There, standing on a folding chair, is a man with a musical score rolled in his hand which he waves in the air directing people to gather around him. Soon a small circle of listeners grows larger and becomes more animated.

Enraged would be too weak a word to describe Il Maestro. His snow white hair makes his crimson face appear incandescent. Audience members are astonished by his hasty departure from the stage in the midst of the applause. Many are now standing wide-eyed looking at the damaged walls and ceiling. Il Maestro storms into his dressing room and slams the door. In an almost irreverent way he tosses the silver baton into its case, slams the lid and exits the room barreling towards the circle of "malcontents". As Il Maestro makes his way to the back corner of the hall, the man on the chair jumps down and begins to tap his tightly rolled up score on his fist. This is to be a classic showdown.

Il Maestro approaches the man and his enthusiastic supporters and recognizes him, knowing him more by reputation than acquaintance. He is Cal Huszwig, not only an accomplished musician, but a composer himself. Many thought he had the makings of a grand maestro—and so did Cal. As Il Maestro approaches the group, Cal shouts with an air of sarcasm: "Can I help you, *Maestro*?" "Mister Huszwig", the maestro answers icily, "I was about to ask you the same question."

Il Maestro, well aware he is in the middle of the enemy camp, attempts to sound conciliatory. Unfortunately, he can do little to bridle his anger. He squeezes out an awkward smile and asks, "Mister Huszwig, what's with the "Mallelujah"?"

"You can call me Cal, *Lex*". Not only does the lack of respect take the conductor aback, but the crowd lets out an audible gasp. Not giving Il Maestro a moment to reply to this unexpected insult, Cal shouts "We're singing it the way it was written!" The group begins to applaud and cheer but is silenced when Cal raises a scroll of papers and thrusts it toward the maestro: "Look, here's the original text. It is not the one you use. It reads *Mallelujah*—NOT *Hallelujah*!." Pointing to the page he says, "See for yourself—that's an *M*—not an *H*!"

"Who taught you how to read?" the maestro demands through clenched teeth. His lips quiver and his neck is mottled red with rage. He snaps the papers out of Cal's hand and quickly

scans the text. Then he pokes the page with his finger and shouts, “That’s *not* an *M*, it’s an *H*, you idiot! That’s how they wrote the letter H in Handel’s time!” Then seizing the opportunity to compound the insult, he growls, “And you call yourself a *professional* musician, Cal?”

Ignoring the maestro’s explanation of the ancient script, Cal shoots back, “Well, that’s your opinion”. He then points out deviations and what he called “accretions” made to the original text. As Cal speaks, Il Maestro gives out a derisive laugh and says “That’s ridiculous!” Finally, he shouts: “Enough! You’re not just insulting me but the Orchestral Academy! Your uninformed opinions, go contrary to the practice of a long line of distinguished composers and musicologists.” When he begins to list them Cal changes the topic.

Cal begins to talk about the maestro’s lavish lifestyle, the impoverished condition of the symphony hall, the poor wages, and the undue pressure for more money. He even intimates that the entire Orchestral Academy is corrupt. What began as a critique of the maestro and the interpretation of a musical score soon spills over into a condemnation of the entire organization.

All during Cal’s tirade the maestro stands perfectly still, his arms folded on his chest and his white head bent. As the diatribe escalates from problems with him to problems with the Academy, Il Maestro flinches. Even some in the circle are stunned as they feel that Cal is going too far. “You’re so full of yourself with that stupid smile and pretentious bow. You think you’re something with that magic wand. Look at the people who fill these seats of this hall: they’re starving—not like you with your pot belly! Why not dip into your family fortune and shell out some money for renovations? Or maybe you like it looking like a barn? Everyone knows where you live. Your roof certainly doesn’t leak!

The maestro bites his bottom lip, turns on his heel and begins marching, almost running, towards the stage steps. In a moment he is gone. Cal and the small assembly hear the maestro’s door slam, and then someone from the crowd says “Good job, Cal!” The group breaks into applause.. As Cal puts his papers in order and the crowd begins to disperse, he calls out: “Don’t forget: Tonight at seven. Don’t be late!

The meeting starts at seven on the dot. Standing on a chair before the gathered assembly, Cal feels a warm current of energy running through him. Looking out at the attendees he sees a diverse but united group—musicians, singers, maintenance men, cleaning ladies, and ticket takers. “Different people united for the same cause” is the catch phrase Cal uses often. Everyone looks to him— and he feels very special.

“We did it!” Cal cries and the room goes wild. Appearing to take no note of the cheering, Cal takes a deep breath and a thought races through his mind: “This is what it’s like to be a major maestro.” He gestures and the shouts and whistles go silent. He begins his speech:

“Friends, thank you for coming. We’re here tonight because we know that changes must be made. I know that your very presence here is dangerous; we’re all putting our jobs on the line. However, some things—like truth, justice, and indeed, beauty—are more important than money. It’s obvious that Lex is less concerned with music than he is with himself. We all have read about the Our First Master—the real Maestro—who founded this orchestra many years ago,. When he began in that first orchestra hall, which was outside on the edge of the sea, he didn’t stand on a big platform or wear a tuxedo, and he certainly didn’t conduct with a sterling silver baton!” At these words the people burst into another round of cheers.

Raising both arms for quiet, he continues, “You have read how, in the beginning, he wanted everyone to be part of the orchestra and choir! Even those who couldn’t read a score or who sang off key, he found a place for them—he found a place for everyone! Today, when someone in the audience wants to sing along they are told to be silent. Is that what Our First Master did?” Extending his hands to the crowd they respond “NO!” He continues: “He always talks about the Royal Academy. Who gave them the authority to tell us what and how to sing?” Someone in the back of the room yells “NO ONE!” Another explosion of applause rocks the room. Cal then shouts: “Give us the Master’s music, and we’ll sing the Master’s music! He then begins to sing: Maa-lay-luya! Ma-lay-luya! And the crowd—men, women, workers, musicians, and singers—join in: “Maa-lay-luya! Maa-lay-luya! Maa-lay-ay-ay-luya!”

The rally is a success but Cal knows a lot of work needs to be done. He forms a workers union, organizes an election and installs a board of officials and representatives. A committee is formed to write a petition, or as some call it, “a manifesto” with which they will confront Il Maestro. This is mostly composed by Cal who has been “thinking about” what he wants to say for a long time. After two days the document is finally complete and presented at another general meeting of the members. Some think of it as divinely inspired. Cal calls it “the People’s Petition” despite having written almost all of it himself. He plants seed of discontent by intimating that some members feel if Il Maestro doesn’t accept the terms of the petition, everyone should resign, find a new maestro, and open their own symphony hall. Cal claims to have “grave reservations” and “be personally opposed” to such a “radical proposal”, yet quietly notes that many do not seem to have strong feelings about this revolutionary idea.

After a public signing of the petition, Cal makes these remarks: “Friends, let us not forget the humility of the Our First Master. He taught us that to conduct an orchestra means to serve the music and the listeners—not be served by them! Our First Master wore no tuxedo nor did he have his own dressing room, or special platform.” Then he shouts: “And never...never... did he ever use A SILVER BATON!” The room explodes in cheers. Cal is hoisted on the shoulders of several men and carried around the room. He beams as he waves his index fingers up, down, and around as if he were conducting an orchestra. And the crowd begins to chant: “Cal! Cal! Cal! Cal!”

The petition is submitted to Il Maestro, who submits it to the Royal Academy. As Cal suspected, the “People’s Petition” goes nowhere although the whole affair drags on for months. Cal and the union officials even meet with the Royal Academy but the meeting turns ugly. Concessions and promises are made but the discussions bog down in details and legalities. Some renovations to the concert hall are begun but progress drags along. Salaries and benefits are increased but not enough to satisfy anyone. Meantime, Il Maestro appears insensitive to the situation and continues to do his best to anger his enemies and infuriate his friends.

One day, Cal receives an envelope from the Royal Academy. It is quite large and stamped with many seals. His hands tremble as he pulls the letter opener breaking the seals. In short, the message is clear: “Cease and desist”. The letter states that the People’s Petition was not only illegal, but “the actions of those involved were indicative of disrespect for the Academy”. Cal could almost see the face of Il Maestro smiling, as the language of the text was patronizing and oppressive. Anger wells up from deep within, accompanied by excitement and a sense of duty—and opportunity. He can almost hear the chant echoing somewhere in his head: “Cal!” “Cal!” “Cal!”

No one could have imagined the drama that followed. Musicians, singers, management, and maintenance all submit their resignations to the Royal Academy. The concert hall seems more abandoned than ever. It limps along with fewer musicians and workers and a much smaller audience.

Meanwhile, those who had signed the People’s Petition form their own orchestra, which rapidly grows in size and reputation. Thanks to the generosity of wealthy benefactors, a beautiful concert hall is constructed on the other side of town. Extraordinary new talent makes its way into the ranks of the new orchestra. This new hall becomes a model workplace. An innovative sliding-scale pricing for patrons is established for students and the poor. Within one year Cal

becomes a noted name in the business. About this time that he requests that “for the dignity due the new orchestra”, his colleagues should now refer to him as “Mr. Huszwig”.

In order to establish its own identity and reaffirm its departure from the Royal Academy, the new orchestra sets aside many of the more archaic accretions required by the Academy. The title “Il Maestro” is replaced by the more humble “Head Conductor”. Eschewing the traditional black tuxedo, Cal instead wears a plain black suit and bow tie. The conductor's stand is lowered while the age-old custom of signaling the maestro with three loud knocks; is changed to one moderate tap.

Cal refuses a silver baton, choosing instead one made of pine. In fact, in the very beginning he declined a baton at all, conducting with his hands, “like Our First Master himself”, he said. In time, however, he surrenders to the continual complaints of the orchestra who struggle to comprehend his gestures. When he finally agrees to use a baton a group protests, saying he is returning to the ways of Il Maestro. Cal tries to reason with these people but they are so committed to the principles of the People’s Petition that they resign to begin their own orchestra which strictly follows the way of the First Master. In fact, they perform only out of doors and only by the edge of a body of water. Their conductors wear informal attire; suits and ties, in fact, are prohibited.

This is not the only group to get mad and leave. One day, a handful of singers complain to the Head Conductor that the repertoire is too reminiscent of the old orchestra hall. They want to perform simple songs without the “frills and fluff” so typical of the pieces favored by the Royal Academy. As these could reach no resolution with Cal, they also leave. This group actually becomes quite popular as the patrons feel more comfortable in its small, barn-like halls. In time, because of the homey atmosphere, the friendliness of the performers, and cheap tickets, many “neighborhood halls” begin to spring up. They are able to attract musicians who, although they lack formal training, exhibit wonderful natural talent. As years pass, new initiatives emerge, each with its own complaints, each with its own inspiring ideas and extraordinary talent. Many eventually take root and grow.

At the age of eighty-five Il Maestro dies. According to the age-old tradition of the Royal Academy, his fine silver baton is ceremoniously handed to a newly elected Maestro. It is evident from the very beginning that the new maestro is different from his predecessor. The new Maestro is not a dramatic presence but soft-spoken, almost shy. Coming from humble roots, he has simple tastes, and a Spartan lifestyle. He is quite kind and a good listener. Although he is extremely

knowledgeable, he doesn't flaunt his intelligence, but applies it wisely and efficiently. The new maestro is unabashedly saddened by the dilapidated condition of the concert hall and draws up a practical plan to restore the magnificent structure.

Cal does not attend Il Maestro's funeral. The scheduled performance is not cancelled nor is any mention made of Il Maestro's death. When such is suggested, Cal simply says, "The show must go on." Yet before heading for the stage he sits in his dressing room reading through yet another petition from yet another group threatening to leave. This group insists upon the right of the audience to play with the professionals in the orchestra pit "as they were encouraged to do in the early years with the First Master." Cal tosses the petition on the table and sighs. Despite the abandonment of the traditional three loud knocks, one day his head stagehand personally reinstates it protesting "With the musicians tuning their instruments, you don't always hear my signal!"

As for the baton, the plain pine one is eventually set aside but not without a battle that costs Cal some fine musicians. Believing that "clarity brings quality", the orchestra overwhelmingly voted for a silver plated-baton as there is good evidence that silver not only reflects best in low light but is lighter and more responsive to the delicate motions of the conductor. In order to keep the musicians happy, and at home, Cal gives in to their request. He consoles himself by thinking at least it wasn't pure silver like Il Maestro's.

With every instrument in tune and everything silent, the stagehand steps up to the dressing room door and loudly raps—three times. Cal is jarred and gives a nasty glance at the door. He then turns to the mirror, tightens his tie and buttons his black sport jacket which he hopes hides a bit of a paunch. Then, taking his silver-plated baton from its smooth mahogany case, he stops, smiles at the mirror and walks to the stage. The world awaits him.

AS I SEE IT

As mentioned above, some of our readers may have a good deal of knowledge of Church history. If you do, you may have smiled recognizing the character I named "Cal Huszwig". The somewhat clumsy name is an amalgam of the names of significant people associated with the Protestant Reformation, namely, John Calvin, John Huss, and Ulrich Zwingli. While the story may seem to incriminate particular people, it is intended to be a mirror by which we see ourselves. Don't think so? Haven't we all enjoyed the applause or more than appreciated receiving the accolades of others? What about positioning ourselves to be the center of attention? What about taking advantage of opportunities wherein we become the hero for justice and valiant defender of the truth? If we're honest, we'll admit our ego is alive and well and ready for action.

Human history changes but human nature does not. Those who lived centuries ago were not terribly different from us. Indeed, those involved in the drama called “the Reformation” could not be called evil. However, they were people. While we cannot judge the conscience of another, we can judge their choices. From where I sit, one popular expression says it all: They “threw the baby out with the bathwater”. I believe with all honesty, a little was gained from the Protestant Reformation and much was lost. From a distance of five centuries, can we not see the whole picture quite clearly?

No doubt, in every age the Church is in need of spiritual renewal. Yet this necessary on-going renewal must be the action of God working through man. When we read of the events which so shattered the unity of the Church, we can immediately see what was sorely missing on both sides: humility and charity. If anyone is so inspired to make the world better, they ought to begin right at home. The most dangerous people in the world are those who want to change others but not themselves. Stated another way, the Church is reformed by saints not reformers.

Sanctity is the answer to whatever ails this world. This is because holiness has a ripple effect; as when a pebble is tossed in a still pond, its ripples extend outward. We only have to consider a few recently canonized saints like Pope Saint John XXIII, Pope Saint John Paul II, and Saint Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Talk about effective reformers! Talk about bringing spiritual renewal to the Church and world! These and others like them not only get rid of the Church’s dirty bathwater, but leave us with a clean and beautiful baby!

History attests to the fact that during the Church’s darkest times men and women of great sanctity emerged to light the way. While Newton’s famous third law of motion states that “every action has an equal and opposite reaction”, in the spiritual realm, the activity of grace is greater than the action of sin. So, the message is clear as crystal: authentic evangelical renewal in the Church begins and ends with holy saints not hot tempers. We have only to look at real reformers like Saint Catherine of Sienna and Saint Francis of Assisi who, by allowing God to change their lives, changed their world.

By evaluating the lasting fruits of the Protestant Reformation and considering the questionable virtues of those in the center of the action—including the pope—we can say God readily makes up for man’s mistakes. It would be unjust to turn a blind eye to the extraordinary expressions of faith in the Protestant churches. The missionary activity alone of various confessions is impressive indeed; especially in areas of the world which could only be called “God forsaken”. We not only recognize expansive efforts of evangelization to save souls, but also

substantial material assistance for the poor and the needy here and abroad. While Protestant spirituality is not known for spawning great works of art, it has offered the world a rich treasury of wonderful religious hymns and spiritual writings. We must remember that God gives his grace to anyone who sincerely asks for it. This is why we can say that the Anglicans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Calvinists, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Pentecostals and others all have made their positive contribution to the world. Yet, here I must ask. "If so much good could come out of so much division, then how much greater good could have come from unity?"

Finally, if we can return to our orchestra: While many people view the Catholic Church as a monolithic structure which demands uniformity, in fact the very opposite is true. As it embraces many cultures with their languages, particular law and local customs, it is still very much a single reality. As many musicians with their various instruments and voices make for beautiful music, so too the Church. In regards to the universal Church, Saint Augustine said it well: "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, diversity. In all things, charity."

My prayer: "May the unity and diversity of the angelic orchestra in heaven one day be enjoyed right here in the Church. Amen!"

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