

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 author describes his methodology in presenting some fresh ideas about what is considered to many, a very stale subject. The title of Father Glenn’s first book, *We Live in a Castle*, is taken from one of twelve stories which, like spotlights, illumine one subject at different angles.

The subject of the book? The Church.

The author describes his work as “friendly yet provocative” as he challenges the reader to dig into history and discover a valuable treasure; which he calls “the most wonderful religion in the world.” Father Glenn utilizes creative stories - both allegorical and personal – each with an introduction and commentary. Questions are also provided for personal reflection and group discussion.

No doubt, this book is most especially suited for teachers and students participating in some form of catechesis, especially those who are considering or preparing to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Introduction

“Ecclesiology” isn’t an everyday word. It’s certainly not bandied about the home or office or classroom. Unless, of course if that classroom sits somewhere in a seminary. Simply put, “ecclesiology” is the study of the Church – its identity, history, and mission. Now you know why you never heard the word at the office or in your favorite restaurant or bar. Quite honestly, most people aren’t that interested in the subject. So, why read a book about it?

Well, the way I see it, the Church is an institution which has played a major role in shaping Western civilization – indeed, the world. No matter what field of human endeavor – science, medicine, law, education, literature, music, art or architecture – the Church has made more than a nominal contribution. Indeed, historically this two thousand year old institution is undoubtedly “a major player” in world affairs. No doubt, the mere mention of the words “the Church” elicits such a wide spectrum of responses, both positive and negative - often enough a visceral reaction. So, you ask, why did I write a book about “the Church” and why should you read it?

I believe that our society is in the midst of a major identity crisis. No doubt, this can be traced to philosophical trends which have affected education and everything which makes up the popular culture. Nevertheless, we have found ourselves in confused state in which age old foundations have been exposed and extricated. Long accepted ideas, values, and institutions like human life, gender, marriage and family have been redefined or rejected. It appears we are living in an age when no one knows who or what they are. Today, “what is” is determined not by objective reality but rather subjective perspective. Therefore, identity is no longer determined by nature but decided upon by public opinion. This is what I call a crisis and a half.

I believe this mode of perceiving and identifying reality has also affected Christianity. Here I am speaking about believers understanding and accepting the true nature and mission of the Church. This subject is particularly relevant as this year marks the five hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. While a whole host of ecumenical celebrations are planned for this year, it is my opinion; such a tragic chapter in Church history should not be celebrated but rather, commemorated. One celebrates something good, and the events which began the continued unraveling of Christendom can by no stretch of the imagination be considered “good”. The scandal of division and dissension and doctrinal diversity is only equaled by the deep silence it engenders.

This book is not written by a scholar for scholars. In fact, I choose not to include quotes and endnotes while keeping biblical references to a minimum. At first flush you might assume I am presenting an apologia for institutional religion – I am not. The reason being, the authentic identity of the Church is not “institutional”; it is rather, “incorporated”. The former term relates to form while the latter underscores its essence. The Latin word “corporis” indicates a body, thus, the ecclesiology I am presenting is what the Church actually is – not what people perceive or believe it to be. The Church what the New Testament indicates it to be; namely, it is historic, apostolic, hierarchical, human in its members and divine in its head and heart. While one can reject or redefine this truth, one can also surrender to it, discover its beauty, imbibe its wisdom, and be transformed by the most wonderful religion in the world.

I hope this book will be provocative as it challenges the reader to pursue a personal investigation of the Church. I have included an addendum entitled “Go Google” which I hope the reader will use in their own spiritual quest. This book was not written to answer every question or defend every apostolic doctrine. This book has little to do with spoon feeding and much to do with digging, This is the very reason why the book begins with a story entitled, “The Two Brothers”. One is industrious and the other indolent. Which one will you be? The choice is yours - roll up your sleeves and sweat or lean on your shovel and snooze. Either way, I hope you enjoy the book and become a better person for reading it.

Chapter I

This story was originally written for young people in England participating in a conference for vocations. I wanted to present in a creative and enjoyable manner a challenging message. I wanted to motivate them to put some “uumph” in their efforts in discovering their call in life. It is my opinion that too many young people can often have an unrealistic assessment of the demands of life. These can easily settle for what is easy to reach and close at hand. Being raised in a computer culture, young people expect to get what they want with a “click”. While many in past generations were raised in a school of hard knocks, today’s generation graduate from the school of quick clicks.

Our first story does not directly address the nature and mission of the Church. But I hope it encourages the reader not to be lazy or prideful when it comes to discovering truth. When it comes to things of religion, most adults don’t appear to expend much energy and effort. They develop a “belief system” which is as comfortable as it is shallow; capacious as a puddle.

The way I see it, our present culture continues to become increasingly allergic to anything dogmatic or definitive in its nature. Not only beauty, but now even truth is found in the eye of the beholder. Thus, reality is not what is but rather what I want it to be. When such a perspective is applied to religion, we indeed become not the beneficiaries of divine revelation, but rather, its arbiter and interpreter. Enough said, let us begin our book with a simple story entitled, “The Two Brothers”.

THE TWO BROTHERS

Our story begins at a family farm in the Midwest. A mother and her eight grown children are gathered at the dining-room table for the meal that ends the workday. Ben, the youngest son, sits at the end of the long table. Unlike the others, who are engaged in lively conversation, he appears sullen. None of the rest of the family seems to notice Ben's distress. Perhaps they make an effort not to do so. This does not please him.

"This stinks!" Ben finally yells, flinging his fork into his plate. "I'm tired of being cooped up – I've gotta get out of here!" The eldest brother, Sam, who occupies the seat at the head of the table that was once his father's, sighs and glances at his mother as she shakes her head wearily. They are more than familiar with Ben's dramatic outbursts.

"I've got to get off this stupid farm and start to live my life!"

The others stop eating and look at Sam, who is tight-lipped and staring into his plate. One of the brothers crumples his napkin and tosses it onto the table. Sarah, the youngest girl, silently prepares herself for yet another display of Ben's immaturity, something which always upsets her.

Sitting bolt upright Ben looks across the table at his eldest brother and says: "I'm moving to Montana!"

One brother makes an audible sigh; another mutters "Good!" All the girls remain silent, but Sarah—who has not finished her dinner—jumps up to clear the table. No one says a thing. As usual, the family leaves it to Sam to deal with their youngest brother's outburst. Sam states: "We'll talk about it after dinner."

Later, the two brothers sit in the living room. Anyone unaware of their relationship might assume this to be a father-son chat, for fifteen years separate Sam from Ben. Those years and the hard work he had done during them are visible on Sam's lined and rugged face. By contrast Ben seems little more than an adolescent; thin and boyish, he appears almost frail next to his eldest brother. In fact, Ben seems different from all his brothers, lacking the physical strength they have developed through hard work on the farm. By the time Ben was old enough to help, his brothers had things well under control, so computers – not combines – captured the youngest boy's attention. While the rest of the family worked to make the farm a big success, Ben developed other interests. He felt disengaged from the farm . . . and maybe from the family.

Sitting on a wooden chair, Sam was speaking with—or maybe "at"—his brother, who was slumped on a couch. Sam presented every logical position, but he knew he was making little

headway. The net result of his efforts tonight would be a wasted evening and a splitting headache, Sam feared.

“You tell me you’re old enough to be on your own,” I understand that,” Sam reasoned, “but living alone on a mountain doesn’t make sense.” The young man shrugged and stated: “I have some savings that will carry me for a while. I’m thinking of opening a store to sell supplies for climbers. I came across a great price on the Internet for a store that they say is really popular with climbers.” When the older brother asked who are, “they”? Ben stated, “The people selling the business!” Sam sighed. This was going to be worse than he thought.

The rest of the family was cleaning up in the kitchen, but that didn’t stop them from listening to the conversation. It was obvious to everyone that their youngest brother’s plan— like so many others he had concocted—would fail miserably. They were well aware of his many attempts to prove himself—and his many failures.

Sam’s headache appeared, just as he knew it would. At that point he gave up, urged his brother to think carefully before making a decision, and climbed the stairs to his bedroom.

During the following week Ben made no further mention of his plan, a fact that surprised and pleased everyone. They all surmised that he had dropped the idea. However, one morning they came down for breakfast to find a note on the kitchen table which read: “Left for Montana. I’ll call when I can.”

Weeks passed, but no call came, and every attempt to contact Ben proved futile. But Sam eventually tracked his little brother down. He even found on-line photos of Ben’s new store, as well as aerial photographs of the mountain on which it was perched. It was evident to everyone that the location wasn’t right for a business; the landscape seemed better suited to a movie shoot about an outer-space adventure. Deeply worried, Sam gave the situation a great deal of thought and finally came up with an idea which might not only save his brother’s doomed project but could even become a blessing for the family. After some study and financial advice, he quietly purchased the adjacent property, thinking it may have a different kind of value than anyone thought.

Despite the purchase, Sam kept his distance, knowing that Ben desperately wanted his independence; but, protective by nature, he kept an eye on his younger brother. In about six months he learned that Ben had put the business and property up for sale—a fact that didn’t surprise him. Another few months passed, and Sam checked again. He learned that there were no prospective buyers. In fact there hadn’t been a nibble. After another couple of months, Sam

purchased Ben's store and property anonymously and waited for the failed entrepreneur to come home. Instead, he received a text message which read: "Things didn't pan out; but I made a good profit selling my land—heading to the Southwest."

Dismayed, Sam grabbed the phone. But, not only could he not convince the young man to return home, he learned that Ben was now buying a farm in New Mexico! "Listen," Sam pleaded, "If you want to farm, come home. I'll give you plenty of land! Besides, who farms in New Mexico? It's too dry!" To this Ben replied, "It's really not a farm; It's a fruit orchard. They say it's a money-maker".

Thanks to finding some other investors, Sam's purchase of the property in Montana turned out to be a bigger blessing than he expected. Meanwhile his kid brother once again went off the grid. A word search led Sam to the "Fortune in Farming" website, which was filled with photos of smiling orchard owners holding baskets of lemons, oranges, and kiwis. It was obvious the photos, which featured rows upon rows of fruit trees, were not taken in New Mexico. Angry at his kid brother's naiveté, Sam ran the cursor to "Purchase land" and clicked. Finding available and adjacent property was easy, as few people would fall for the website's exaggerated claims for financial success. Expecting his brother's farm to fail, he decided to make another anonymous purchase, get Ben out of his financial hole, and maybe – maybe – bring him home.

It wasn't six months before Ben's property was for sale. Sam bought it. In fact, he not only acquired his brother's land but some adjacent fields, as well. An hour after the purchase, Sam was surprised to receive a text from Ben: "No rain, no fruit — heading for Texas." After a few phone calls, he went to inspect his new property in New Mexico, although by this time his brother was already far away.

Locating Ben was not difficult; Sam had only to search for some "get rich quick" sites on the internet. It didn't take long before he found a company called "Cash & Cattle". The business logo was a steer branded with a dollar sign accompanied by a banner which read: "Feed 'em! Water 'em! Sell 'em!" He knew he was right when during their next phone call Ben shared news of his latest business venture. When asked: "What do you know about raising cattle?" The answer came quickly, "What's to know? You just feed 'em, and water 'em - and then you sell 'em".

"Raising cattle isn't that easy," said Sam, "there're a whole load of hidden costs—not only feed but medicine. Cattle can get sick. Vets are just as expensive as doctors— maybe more!"

Ben tried to change the topic and talk about "the sucker" who bought his property in New Mexico. Getting a better price than he paid, he had the capital to purchase his new ranch. Sam

offered his brother a proposal to manage a possible business venture in Texas: “I’m thinking of buying some property down there also, perhaps we can work on something together.”

Ben’s answer was a definitive “no.”

It wasn’t very long before the novice cowboy-cattle rancher realized that more money was going out than was coming in. In time, collectors were visiting. More than once Ben cowered in the hay loft as they pounded on his front door.

Reality slowly sank in. Things were becoming desperate, and the young man knew only one banker would bail him out—his brother. Thank God Sam had purchased property on the other side of the valley. Ben climbed into his pickup. When he finally reached Sam’s property he turned on to a gravel road which wound up and down gentle rising hills. “No fencing...no cattle...not even a barn...” he mumbled as he drove. The ten-minute journey ended in a clearing with a log cabin surrounded by a porch. As if expecting a visitor, Sam was leaning in the open doorway sipping a mug of coffee. Jumping from the cab, Ben shouted: “Where’s your cattle? I’ve got fifty head!”

“I guess you do” Sam shouted, but under his breath added, “At least for another week or so.” Having done his research, he was well aware of his brother’s financial dilemma. While pleased to see Ben finally making a visit, Sam had no illusions about the reason for it. Stepping onto the porch, Ben removed his hat, and followed his brother into the house.

Even before he was seated Ben was blurting out his financial problems. But before he got very far Sam took him by the shoulders saying: “Do you know that Ma’s sick?” Stunned, Ben went pale. “No, is she dying?” Taken aback by the question Sam replied, “Well, no, but she’s getting old. Her arthritis is really acting up. Things are hard for her now.” Ben said, “Ah, she’ll be fine. Mom’s a fighter.” Then, after a second, he added, “Listen, I’m . . . having a problem and could use some cash.” Near speechless at his brother’s insensitivity, Sam felt like escorting him out of the house; instead, he squeezed out one small sentence: “Let’s go on the back porch and talk.”

As the afternoon sun dropped beyond the tree line, bathing everything in a bright pinkish hue, the two brothers sat on the porch. As usual, Sam had to “negotiate” his brother, scouting out a way to work around his immaturity. Sam hoped that Ben’s business failures might have given the young man some insight and humility. “Nothing makes a man wiser than when he admits his own ignorance,” his father had said. Yet, another of his maxims came to his mind: “Sometimes we have to hit the bottom of the barrel before we bounce out of it.”

“You know, dad taught me that life is not easy; sometimes it’s even unfair, Sam began. He would say, “Son, life can be disappointing, but boy, can it be beautiful!” The older I get the more I understood that “beauty” is often hidden. In fact, there are a lot of things in life that are ugly. Even running a farm can sometimes get ugly; especially when the weather is real bad. But after the harsh storm comes the harvest. The Bible tells us that after the fall of Adam and Eve, things got ugly. Easy street came to an abrupt end. No longer could fresh fruit always be plucked from trees. No more free lunches, no more sleeping in; now they had to work. Genesis says: ‘By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread’.”

Turning towards his brother, he continued. “That meant from that day on, man had to dig in the dirt to live. The way I see it, it also means that man had to dig into everything; farmers got to dig in the ground, fishermen have to dig in the ocean. Think of it, astronomers sort of dig into the sky, doctors dig into the body and psychologists into the mind. What I’m saying is this: you left the family farm because you said nothing was there; you said the same with Montana, New Mexico, and Texas. But how can you really know what’s there until you dig. If dad taught me anything, he taught me to how to dig.

“Listen, I know what you’re saying, but I need money,” Ben said. Then he laughed. “Hey, I’m just asking you to dig into your pockets and help me.”

Ignoring the comment, Sam continued, “Listen, the word which sums everything up is this: “sacrifice”. This means you have to give up something good to get something greater. Life is about sacrifice: We have to sacrifice our time, our energy, our pleasures and our preferences. Look at mom and dad, they may never have gone to school but they both got doctorates in the same subject: sacrifice.”

As Sam was speaking, Ben was nodding his head as if he was pondering his brother’s words. Then he said: “Hey, aren’t I sacrificing my evening coming here and listening to you?”

Ben was just not getting it. So Sam decided to take off the gloves. Raising his voice, he said, “You may have a university degree, but let me tell you something: you know very little. You didn’t go to college to learn about life but to party and get a piece of paper. I’m grateful to God you had an opportunity to go to school, but boy, you blew it. I’m sorry to say this, but you wasted dad’s money. Life isn’t about getting more, it’s about giving more. It’s not about quick cash and looking for easy street. I will help you. I can’t give you what you want, but I will give you what you need!”

With that Ben shouted, “I need ten thousand dollars!”

Sam simply buried his face in his hands.

By now the sky above the ridge was washed in dark blue ink. One by one fireflies appeared and bullfrogs began conversing in a nearby pond.

Looking up, Sam whispered, “I’m sorry you never met dad” If you did, I know you’d be a different man.”

“You mean *better* – like you.”

Sam sat there numb unable to speak.

“Can I ask you a question?” Ben asked.

“What?”

“Did you make any money in Montana and New Mexico?”

“Yes.”

“How’d you do that? There were no climbers on the mountain and the land was bone dry.

“I dug”

“What do you mean, dug?”

“Actually I’m the one who bought your property; in fact, I own the whole mountain. I got some good advice and I’m leasing the property to a mining company. It’s making more money than I thought. I’m also the “sucker” who bought your fruit farm. I purchased the adjacent property, too and installed a solar-powered irrigation system. You see, you can grow kiwis in the desert if you know what you’re doing. Like the mines, the orchards are doing well.

Ignoring his brother’s ingenuity and accomplishments, Ben asked, “What are you doing here in cattle country? You have no livestock.”

“Digging”

“Digging for cattle?”

“For oil. Beyond that tree line I have rigs. I suspect your property has oil too. I asked if you wanted to a part of my project, but you said no.”

The sounds of the night began in earnest as bullfrogs competed with crickets. As it was dinner time for the mosquitoes, both knew their conversation had crashed. The two men stood, and Ben pulled out his keys indicating he was ready to go home.

“Thanks”, Ben said. “What you said made me think. You know, sacrifice and digging and stuff. Maybe you’re right: maybe I’ve got some learning to do.”

Sam’s heart skipped a beat. Seizing the opportunity he turned to his brother and said, “Okay, I’ll buy your property, so you can get out of debt. You’ll get your ten thousand and more.

Then we can see what you have sitting under that land. Either way, I'm gonna need someone to keep an eye on the operation." Then he playfully poked his finger in his brother's chest saying, "And that man could be you!"

Ben's face lit up but after a minute or two he started to frown. Turning his attention from his brother to his boots he said, "Well, buying the property would be helpful. But I'd like to use the cash for something I'm really excited about. I found a great business on-line which just became available; it's a real steal."

Dumbfounded, the older brother put his hand flat against his brother's back escorting him out the door. He said to himself, how is it possible that a young man in such desperate need would pass up an opportunity like this?

As his brother was exiting, Sam said: "Know what? I'm not interested in buying your land, I have enough oil here."

As Ben walked down the porch steps he turned, aimed, and fired one last shot: "I bet Dad would have helped me."

To that his brother flatly said, "Good luck with the ranch."

Sam watched his brother walk towards his pickup. At the last minute he yelled, "Hey, what's your next big move?"

Ben turned and shouted, "When I get the money...I'm opening a surf shop!"

Sam laughed. "Well, my brother, you'll be happy to know, there's no way I'm buying land in California - even Hawaii!" As he started the pickup, he leaned out the window and yelled: "Oregon! It's in Oregon! I saw on the Internet."

Watching the red tail lights slowly melt into the dark night, Sam said aloud: "Is that boy foolish, lazy, or just plain stupid?" He stood staring through the screen door and listened to the competing chorus of crickets and bullfrogs. Struck with wonder he asked himself: "Is this my imagination? No doubt, the answer came to him loud and clear: All three! All three! All three! All three! His broad smile broke into a chuckle. Then, shaking his head, laughed out loud as he closed the door and switched off the light.

AS I SEE IT

“Dig We Must!” Any New Yorker who has any gray hair in their head might remember this pithy slogan. For a number of years it accompanied an ad for Consolidated Edison – or “Con Ed” - the city’s utility company. Evidently the company saw the need to creatively respond to the complaints of many motorists annoyed at all the traffic jams due to road work. “Dig We Must!” was a clever and effective way of telling drivers, “Listen, if you want to have power in your homes, then stop complaining and let us do our work!”

Digging into the ground is necessary work for plenty of people – not just power companies, but archeologists, landscapers, and even grave diggers! While most people are not keen on breaking a sweat or certainly one’s back, digging is work indeed. In our story, we are introduced to two brothers who besides blood, appear to have little in common. The older is mature and industrious, the younger, immature and impetuous. Both represent two contrary approaches to life as only scratches the surface, while the other digs towards the center.

So, what does all have to do with the Church? Perhaps I might ask the question, “What do *you* have to do with the Church?” Is it possible that your understanding and relationship with the Church is somewhat truncated? Do you have a general working knowledge of its history and development? Have you ever attempted to dig and discover the truth of its identity or have you passively accepted what others say about it? Finally, is it even possible to uncover and discover the Church’s authentic identity? To answer the last question, I say, “yes”. No doubt, it will take some time and effort, patience and perseverance - but I believe it is possible.

From what I can see, too many people - including many Christians – are quite ignorant of the historical development of the apostolic Church. These have a “pop up” storybook understanding of ecclesiology which, often enough, is not simply a harmless characterization but an unhealthy diminishment and deformation of the truth. Thus it is the hope of the author that every person reading these words will put some time, effort, and thought into discovering the true identity and mission of the apostolic Church.

I am proposing that the community of believers of which we read in the pages of the New Testament begun over two thousand years ago continues in our times. It is evident to me that too many people – including Christians - dismiss the Church as a human institution rather than what it claims to be - a divine incorporation. Finally, can it be that the real challenge and crisis in Christianity is not a pervasive materialism, but rather, its opposite. The problem lies in a certain

“spiritualization” of the Church which is purified and unfettered from anything which bears the stamp: “Man-made” - authority, organization, doctrine, and dogma.

So, for those who are interested in ecclesiastical archeology, no need to pick up your shovel, just move your mouse. Thanks to the internet information which was inaccessible to most is now available to many. There’s no need to get a passport or learn a new language. No need to visit a monastic library on some island in Greece or brush up on your Latin. You will discover the “secret archives” in the Vatican are not so secret and what you think would be squirreled away is only a click away. I will only point to the treasure is buried; but *you* must do the digging!

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