

Sanctifying media

Social media can be a place of madness. “Cesspool” is one of the words that is not infrequently used to describe places like Twitter and Facebook. It can be a place that encourages our worst instincts and makes that overwhelmed feeling worse. If you’re feeling anxious, lonely or angry, it’s not the first place I’d suggest to go. And yet there are exceptions. Truth be told, I could list many people who encourage the good and focus on more enduring things than what the president is tweeting about. But lately two Twitter accounts have made for something of a retreat for anyone following them.

One is Sister Theresa Aletheia Noble, FSP, one of the Daughters of St. Paul ([@pursuedbytruth](#)). #MementoMori (“Remember your death”) is her campaign, and she’s even managed to send some of us in the media her new prayer journal along with a skull, which now sits on my desk at National Review, making my office look like it’s perpetually decorated for Halloween.

I’m using her journal too, with its not-so-subtle quotes from saints and Scripture. All promptings focus you on death. One day’s quote from St. Alphonsus Ligouri says: “It is folly to be unwilling to think of death, which is certain, and on which eternity depends.” The day before, Sirach 7:36 instructs: “In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin.”

The journal has me thinking how peaceful so many saints were about death, even desiring it. It’s because they had already died to the world and all that is perishable.

Another account that can help with holiness is from Msgr. Brian Bransfield. Unlike Sister Theresa Aletheia, whose charism is evangelization through media, Msgr. Bransfield has a day job. He’s a priest of Philadelphia and the current

general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops – no stranger to all of the evil the Church is confronting in the world and within its own walls. His tweets are an invitation to listen to God constantly in prayer and in all of creation. His focus on light, in particular, implores a Church-wide participation in the purification the Holy Spirit must be insisting on right about now.

“Consider light,” he tweets, with images of the sun peeking through trees – often around the neighborhood of his office in “Little Rome,” D.C. “Mystery draws us into the depths of reality.” “Light is God’s first miracle. It also remains something of his favorite.” “Light forbids control. So does beauty.” “Light imparts something of its fearlessness to those who listen to its brilliance.”

Images include sunrises and sunsets, church candles and other reminders of the Creator and the truest and deepest reality there is.

If we are constantly aware of the Father, Son and Spirit, we will live as people prepared to meet our maker, desiring to see the face of God for all eternity.

Early one morning, with an image of moonlight, Msgr. Bransfield tweeted: “The early morning quiet goes on for miles. It is as if the world surrendered from sound and abandoned noise, returning once again to the healing sanctuary of deep silence.” It all seems so very far away from Twitter, and yet that is exactly where we are.

I find both [@BrianBransfield](#) and [@pursuedbytruth](#) drawing me away from my phone and toward the Blessed Sacrament as they sanctify the place. I’m praying that with their every tweet, people are finding themselves plunging deeper into the Trinitarian life. And I definitely pray more than a few bishops are remembering their deaths and being freed for courage by divine light.

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