

# How to Deal with **ANNOYING** People



and other helpful suggestions

**HILARY WALKER**

---

# *How to Deal with Annoying People*

## *And Other Helpful Suggestions*

By Hilary C.T. Walker  
Copyright 2017 Hilary C.T. Walker

Cover Design: Hilary C.T. Walker

All Rights Reserved

WARNING: This book is not transferable. It is for your own personal use. If it is sold, shared, or given away, it is an infringement of the copyright of this work and violators will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

No portion of this book may be transmitted or reproduced in any form, or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher, with the exception of brief excerpts used for the purposes of review.

Published in the United States of America.

\* \* \*

## **Disclaimer**

The author and publisher are not responsible for the reader's use of the information contained in this book.

Although the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information in this book was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

## **Contents**

[Foreword](#)

[How to Deal With Annoying People](#)

[Home Is a Strong Word](#)

[Look Up - Not Down!](#)

[At How Many MPH \(Miles of Personal Humility\) Do You Usually Drive?](#)

[Horse Riding Courage & Catholicism](#)

[From Seeming Futility to Utility](#)

[The Pursuit of Joy versus Happiness](#)

[Miffed by the Mother's Day Mint](#)

[God Working through Airplanes](#)

[Be Acknowledged by the Son of Man](#)

[Learning from Hurt](#)

[Humility under Fire](#)

[About Yours Truly](#)

[Discover Other Books by Hilary Walker](#)

[Connect with Me](#)

## Foreword

This booklet contains a selection of my [Christian blog posts](#) on handling various life challenges.

My hope is that you will find these ideas useful and be able to adopt them or adapt them to your own circumstances.

Warning: you will find that horses feature at times, as they are a big part of my life!

We're all on this journey together, and the more we help each other find the narrow path, the easier it will be for us to take up our daily cross for Christ.

I hope you find the following pages helpful!

God bless,

Hilary

<https://hilarywalkerbooks.com/>

# How to Deal With Annoying People

---



Our fellow humans aggravate us every day.

A guy cuts you off at the intersection and makes the light - and thanks to him you don't.

A woman ahead of you in the checkout line that clearly says '12 Items or Less' has at least treble that amount. *You* made sure *you* had less than 12 items - it's seriously annoying!

How can we Christians deal with these situations without going crazy? And without judging these infuriating people. (After all, 'judge not, lest ye be judged' Matthew 7:1-3)

Here are some ideas.

***Why do people think we all want to hear their ring tones and loud conversations?***



## Empathize

Have you ever noticed how hard it is to be nice to people when things aren't going well in your own world? It's very difficult to care about others' feelings when you're in a bad place.

If people are rude and inconsiderate, I ask myself what might be going wrong in their lives to make them behave that way. I try to believe they normally wouldn't be so obnoxious and that something must be upsetting them.

Remember the man who was mad when a father got on the bus and let his three children run rampant without a single word of admonition? When challenged, that parent replied, "I guess I should do something. But their mother has just died and we're all wondering how to cope with it."

The angry passenger felt sudden compassion for the man and realized that what we see is not the full story.

Because of this, I make up something to help me feel empathy for people who bug me.

That guy who just cut in front of me at the traffic might have a wife about to give birth in hospital and he's desperate to get there as fast as possible.

The woman who has too many groceries for my check-out lane might not be able to read the sign saying '12 Items or Less.' I'm lucky to be literate - she might not be so privileged.

It doesn't matter what crazy back-story you make up, as long as it helps you feel kinder towards the annoying person.

I end by saying a "Hail Mary" for them as a way of blessing them and turning my frustration into something positive.

As another example, acquaintances often come up to me when I'm working in a café I frequent a lot. *They* want to chat - *I* want to write. That's why I'm there. I even put on headphones as a not-so-subtle 'Do Not Disturb' sign.

And still they come over!

I've carved out this precious time to get a specific amount of writing done. So it takes a *lot* of patience, but I've learned to tell myself that God has put that person in front of me to teach me to be less obsessed about my writing schedule and more interested in my fellow man.

I save my work on the laptop and give that person my full attention.

At the same time, I admit that I'm also praying to God to give me patience during the entire conversation! But at least my thoughts are on doing His work, not mine.

He constantly gives us chances to help others and put our egos behind us. We should take advantage of them.



*I have to listen to YOUR music because ...?*

## Remembering Our Own Youth

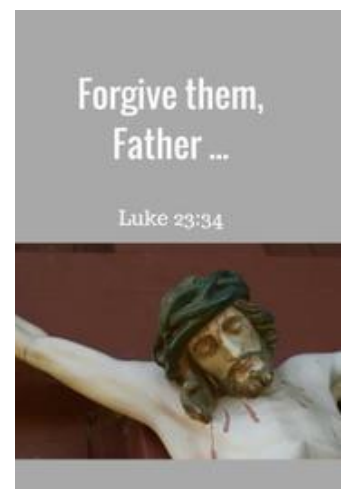
I have another trick, especially when young people behave as if the world revolves around them and us older folk should simply wait while they chat in groups in the middle of the supermarket aisle, or hog the outside lane in traffic while slowing down to text their friends.....

I remember what I was like at their age. We didn't have cell phones in those days, but I can recall plenty of times when I failed to stand aside and let others pass, or treated the outside lane as my personal space.

By forgiving them for their inconsideration I hope to be forgiven my own. Again, they're not usually trying to annoy us but have a genuine lack of appreciation of others. I think we've all been guilty of that at some point in our lives.

At the other end of the age scale, when an eighty-something bugs me by driving slowly, or doddering through the check-out lane in the store, I tell myself that one day I will - God willing - be that old person myself. It behooves me to 'pay it forward' and be patient with their foibles.

*.. for they know not what they do.*





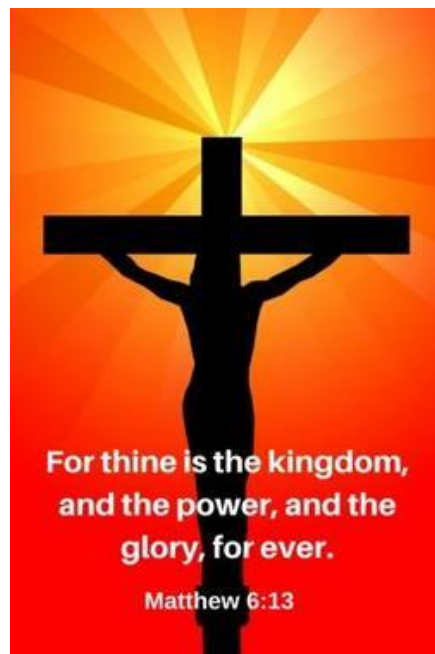
## Think of Christ

The ultimate method for dealing with frustrating people is to remember what Christ went through for us, and His continuing Mercy towards us.

He suffered horribly for mankind with His agonizing death on the Cross. Yet every day He calls us into an intimate relationship with Him, overlooks our weaknesses, and forgives us, over and over again - even though He knows we will sin again.

Letting the poor behavior of others get under our skin ruins our peace without ruining theirs. If we take the high road, we feel good about ourselves.

God sees what is done in secret. Let's offer those infuriating situations up to Him and use them to give Him glory by turning them into moments of forgiveness and prayer for others.



\*\*\*

# Home Is a Strong Word

---

*"It is a task of great complexity, but I have full confidence" Owl, from Winnie the Pooh*



I currently live in Maryland, but my husband wants to retire and move to God's Waiting Room, Florida.

Our house was put on the market a few months ago, and we've had several showings. But it appeals to a small niche, since it is a horse property, so it will take a while to sell.

Meanwhile, I'm in a constant state of not knowing how much longer I'll be at this house, and it's hard to handle the uncertainty. I need to be ready to leave at any time, which is *very* unsettling.

## **No One Knows the Hour**

It then occurred to me that this is exactly how we should approach our earthly existence.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:36 NIV "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

My life could end at any moment and I should be putting all my efforts into getting my soul in order.



*Life is a constant journey towards our goal, Heaven*

## **You Must Be Ready**

Again, in Luke 12:40, NIV Christ warns: "You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

If my soul is ready to meet the Lord, then it doesn't matter whether or when my body will move to another house. As long as I'm in right standing before God, I can be at peace. The unsettled feeling will disappear and I'll be able to say with honesty, "Thy will be done."

The house will sell when God wishes it, and that is all I need to know.



*"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:2 NIV)*

## **Everything Should Lead Us to God**

But it will be hard. When we move, my horse will no longer live with us but have to be boarded somewhere, and I'll have a tough time relinquishing control over his welfare.

God is reminding me that *He* is in control, not me, and everything I have is from Him. I own nothing: He has simply loaned me things and creatures.

As my parish priest says, adoring God leads us to love people and use things for His greater glory. We're not at liberty to use people and love things.

I must be willing to hand everything back to Him when He asks, and in the meantime not get too attached to anything, anyone or any place.

\*\*\*

# Look Up - Not Down!

---



If we look down ...

... that's where we'll end up



*Thank you, Christina Dale and Smugmug for the photos in this post :)*

Our previous parish priest exhorted us to look up and not at the ground.

If we persist in staring down, that's where we're going to end up. Elevating our thoughts towards Heaven prevents us from becoming despondent and downhearted.

He's so right! When things go horribly wrong in my own life, I shuffle along feeling sorry for myself, with hunched shoulders and bowed head. Everything is doom and gloom.

What a different story when I lift up my head, straighten my shoulders and meet life head on! The physical act of standing upright brings with it a sense of determination and purpose.

Then we must pray to God for help and He'll give us the strength to deal with the difficulties life throws at us.



*We have to swallow our pride and get back on that horse (once we catch him)!*

## **On One's High Horse**

It's the same when you're on a horse. No matter whether you're riding dressage or jumping, you need to sit up straight and look ahead.

With dressage this means looking at the letter you're aiming for in a particular movement. For jumping, it means looking over the fence, not at it. You don't want to land on the obstacle, you want to clear it.

In both scenarios we mustn't look down, or that's where we'll end up!

## **What Happens When We Fall?**

When we first learn to ride, we think that not falling off makes us good riders and we're proud of ourselves.

But then comes the day when we take a tumble. The longer it has taken that day to come, the harder it is to shake off the experience and get back on the horse.

Some people never do. I often hear stories from friends about how the day they fell off a horse was the time they rode. They never got back in the saddle – they didn't want to take the chance of falling off again.

How sad! They've missed out on so much fun.

I've fallen off more times than I can remember. Some of those incidents were physically painful, others just bruised my ego. Even though I never want to, I get back on the horse straight away, if I'm physically able.

If not, I would have to brand myself a coward for life. That would be way more painful.



I'm not naturally courageous. If you follow my horse blog posts, you'll see plenty of occasions when I'm nervous and it takes a lot to get me going again. My horse, Cruz Bay and I have taken some dreadful tumbles, and it isn't easy to get over them.

I have to work at avoiding the errors which led to those falls and not give up when I mess up.

The Christian life requires the same attitude.



We need to learn from our mistakes and try not to repeat them

## **Be Perfect as Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect**

That is one tough challenge, isn't it? Who can live up to that?

Riding has taught me that I will never be the perfect horsewoman, but I still strive to become that person. How much more vital is reaching for perfection in the Christian life!

Sadly for many, the seeming impossibility of attaining this goal is so discouraging that they don't even try to reach it. Or maybe they work hard for a while, feel they're making progress, then become despondent when they fall into sin again.

Having sinned once more, they've proved they're not perfect. So they may as well commit another, and another, until they are much further from the goal than when they started.

Christ talks about this when he mentions the man whose house is swept clean when the demons are removed. But when the man is not *truly committed* and doesn't replace those demons with good living, many more come back into him than were there in the first place (Luke 11:24-46).



**We need to make peace with our horses and ourselves and carry on**

## **A Reason to Give Up?**

Does that mean that it's hopeless trying to be good?

Of course not! ***Christ died on the cross to make up for our deficiencies and grant us mercy when we fail:*** He walks with us in the good times and the bad.

If we fall into sin, we must sincerely repent and ask Him for forgiveness then pick ourselves up and walk once more on the path of righteousness.

We *will* fall into sin, time and time again. Way more often than the average rider falls off a horse!

## **Follow Your Passion**

If Christ is our passion, we get up, dust ourselves off with a healthy visit to the confessional, and resume our spiritual course. If we love Christ, we'll be quick to apologize to the One Whose mercy is endless and Whose compassion inexhaustible.

Christ reaches out His hands to us every time we fail.

We then mustn't sin further by refusing to trust in His mercy and forgiveness, or equate Christ's limitless reservoir of forgiveness with the pitiful puddle that is our own version of it.

## **Falling Must Lead to Getting Up**

Being human, we expect to fall. Being a Christian means getting up from a fall - again and again and again.

That is where Catholics are fortunate: we have the Sacrament of Reconciliation and hear the words of the priest *in persona Christi* absolving us of our sins. We can receive a fresh start as often as we need it.



And for those of us who feel that we might as well take a tape recording of our sins and press 'play' for the priest at every confession, because the sins are always the same: would you rather have more to confess than you already have?

We must keep battling with our sins and get up again and again and again for the rest of our lives.

Then we can truly call ourselves Christians.

\*\*\*

# At How Many MPH (Miles of Personal Humility) Do You Usually Drive?

---



*Driving is a great opportunity to evangelize*

Have you ever thought about how the way we drive on the roads is a great indicator of our level of humility?

We want the annoyingly slow person in front of us to get out of our way. In our own estimation we're very important and have places to be *NOW*—and that vehicle needs to move over to make way for us!

But that slow driver has as much validity in God's eyes as we do. Who are we to say that our needs are more urgent than theirs? Perhaps that slowpoke had a bad accident two weeks ago and this is his or her first time back on the road? Maybe he's very old and just being careful not to have or cause an accident? Maybe the driver is a nervous teen who's just got her license?

If we knew any of these scenarios to be true, we would be more caring (I hope!).

## **Hey! Why Should I Be Humble?**

In his terrific new book, *Love Awakened by Love: The Liberating Ascent of Saint John of the Cross*\* Father Mark O'Keefe writes that *"To walk in.....faith..... requires abiding attitudes of trust, docility, and humility. God is at work in us. .... (and) wants union with us more than we ourselves could possibly desire it."*

God wants to work in our lives, but He can't if our free will won't let Him in. There's no room for God in us if we're too full of ourselves. We need to empty ourselves of the 'me' to make 100% of our souls available for Him.

It's a difficult task, and one which requires God's help to achieve. We're always going

to fail in our own eyes (a sure sign of our pride). But if we trust and hope in God to keep us going, He will lift us up every time and make good our deficiencies.

As Father O'Keefe writes: *"Hope calls us to place all things in God's hands, pick oneself up, and get back on course to the future that God makes possible through the divine mercy and help. Christian hope, then, must always walk hand in hand with humility."*



***Motorists, motorists on the road, get out of the way before I explode!***

## **Developing a Healthy pH Level**

This all sounds very nice, but how do we achieve our proper pH (personal Humility) level?

My father used to quote from the Automobile Association manual in the United Kingdom, as he was racing another driver and knew he shouldn't be: *"You must not drive in the spirit of competition."*

I've come up with a few useful ways of keeping my own competitiveness under control (after all, I *am* a competition rider – that attitude comes naturally to me!).

1. If a driver is cutting in front of me and/or other drivers, blatantly breaking the speed limit or driving in any other infuriatingly bad way, I tell myself: "I used to drive like that—before I knew better," or, on my more sarcastic days, "before I grew up."

2. If a person is doddering in front of me and my impulse is to tailgate them (as if this will somehow make them speed up) I remind myself that one day I shall be very old and doddering, too, and will want other drivers to be considerate of my frailty. What goes around comes around.

3. I have a big Christian fish sign on the back of my vehicle. One way for me to 'evangelize by deed' is to let other drivers come in front of me. Or I move over to the outside lane, to let in a car waiting to come onto the two lane highway. Even if those drivers can't see the sign on my truck, drivers behind me will, and hopefully I shall have led by example.

4. Saying my rosary while driving is a great way not to need to rush anywhere



*Of course, there's always this method of dealing with bad traffic!*

Driving is an excellent opportunity for us to gauge our true humility level and perceive any cracks in our charity towards others. There are many occasions to be courteous to other road users.

Every journey is an opportunity to increase our humility and make more space for God's work in our lives.

\*\*\*

# Horse Riding Courage & Catholicism

---



*Horses are God's beautiful animals but are also scary at times!*

My New Year's resolution was to become a brave rider.

I used to be a very brave rider, going over high cross-country jumps and stadium obstacles at one day events, and taking my horses on trail rides in hail storms.

That changed with one big, bad rear from my horse at a show where he dumped me and ran off. I had to buy two canes to hobble around with for days, and was in a lot of pain!

From then on I've been wary of how my gelding might react to whatever stimuli happen to be present, and as a result my riding world had become pretty much limited to being in indoor or outdoor arenas. No trail riding or cross-country training.

I used to laugh at people like that but had now become one of their number. It was humiliating, and had been going on for far too long.

## Changing From Within

This year I was determined to change and bought two books: one on overcoming riding

fears, *Inside Your Ride* by Tonya Johnston, and the other a generic sports psychology book, *With Winning in Mind* by Lanny Bassham.

I read them voraciously and made copious notes. Then I incorporated ideas from both volumes into a short list of self-affirming and mind-changing statements with which to indoctrinate myself daily, as suggested in both books.

A few days into my recitations of this statement, I realized with horror that a vital component was missing.

I had failed to include God in my deliberations. How could I call myself a practicing Catholic when I was excluding God from all of my activities?



## **Make Me Brave So I Can Be Useful**

Horried with myself, I rewrote a key line of my daily mantra into: "God is watching over me and I am a very good rider."

As I looked at what I'd written, it occurred to me that I was asking God to help me be brave when riding, but it stopped there.

Shouldn't I also be asking God to help me be a brave Catholic? In these secular days when it's

unfashionable to stand up for God's natural laws, when we're told that our religion is 'out of touch' with a modern world where gay marriage and abortion are absolutely fine and that disagreeing with this is 'being intolerant,' it takes a lot of courage to side with God in public.

I resolved then and there to ask God to give me courage on my horse so that it might spill over into the way I live my faith.

## **Today a Water Jump, Tomorrow the World!**

Today I took my horse to a new venue where we'd mingle with a group of horses he'd never met, and a trainer, in order to tackle the water jump.

This is basically a shallow pond, with gentle slopes into it and wooden banks for jumping into the water from. My horse isn't fit, so it would be enough for him to walk into the water.

At first he wouldn't go, then the trainer told me to watch her friend whose horse stood in the water already. "Don't look down into the water, look ahead at Jennifer," she said. It reminds me of Christ asking Peter to look at Him and not at the water.

About five minutes later my horse jumped into the water. I was ecstatic, and my equine buddy was also pleased with himself. In no time at all he was happily trotting into the water and cantering boldly through it!

Through the trainer God gave me the right encouragement to be brave with my horse and not worry about him leaping to the side or bucking or lunging into the water and throwing me off. I had asked God to help me before I got on my horse, and he gave me faith in my trainer. The result – success!



## **Luck or Faith?**

Recently while beginning to ride my horse again this year, I've been wearing a bracelet with a cross on it. I relied on it as some kind of lucky charm. Why, I don't know, since I already wear a silver cross and the brown scapular.

Moments before I mounted my horse on this occasion, the bracelet broke. For a few seconds I panicked, and I had no pockets on me to carry it in.

Then it occurred to me: Satan wanted me to lose faith by breaking my bracelet but God was telling me to rely on Him, and not on some token made of steel and stone. (The golden calf comes to mind.)

I swung into the saddle without a second thought for the bracelet missing from my wrist. And my ride went fine.

## **Letting Horses Work for God's Kingdom**

I've been so lucky to have horses in my life that I often ask God if He's O.K. with this. I very much hope that I correctly understand His answer!

Over the past two years I've discovered that the majority of my riding pals are practicing Catholics or active, believing Christians. Some are lapsed.

My job is to set a Christian example, together with my Catholic friends, and hopefully bring back those who have left the Church. I must monitor my own behavior at all times, and this is a good thing. It makes me strive to live the faith that I profess in order to save souls.

This includes being brave enough to acknowledge Christ and speak the truth. Even when people don't want to hear it, just as they didn't in His time.

## **He Doesn't Allow Me Too Much Riding Success!**

I've got used to God keeping my feet on the ground by not allowing me to win too many blue ribbons!

I used to think this was God's way of telling me to stop riding. But because of the abundance of Catholics who ride with me, and the good I hope to do with them, I now see this as God's way of keeping me humble.

I've recently had some wonderful successes in my faith life, indirectly related to the horses, and it would be very easy for me to get complacent and pleased with myself, forgetting Who's really



in charge.

So God whacks me over the head at regular intervals with a lousy dressage score or a bad spook from my horse to keep me in line. I'm so happy He's making good things come out of my passion for horses, while keeping a firm grip on my ego!

\*\*\*

# From Seeming Futility to Utility

---



*Being a Christian can sometimes feel like wandering in the desert*

This has been an amazing week! The Holy Spirit has worked through me (with the aid of others) to directly benefit two persons' lives.

## **Guided to an Oasis**

We often go through long periods when it feels as if we're not doing anything useful for the world. Our financial donations to various causes are important, but we don't see the benefits of this activity close-up.

That feeling of dryness completely changed this week. I was led to a spiritual oasis, a wonderful gift from God for Lent.

Using me, the Holy Spirit led two people to bring two people closer to God and in line with His loving wishes for their lives.

I feel privileged and deeply grateful to God. He's been hearing "Thank you" much more often from me than just the regular petitions this week!



## The Donkey's Lot

My previous parish priest used to say that the life of a good Christian is often like that of a donkey walking round and round on the treadmill's path, so the millstones will grind the flour. The activity is not glamorous, but it produces unseen benefits for others.

When God sometimes lets us see how He's utilizing us to participate in His miracles, I think He's giving us encouragement on that path and telling us not be discouraged when we don't always witness the good results of our work.

He's helping me recognize that *all* our lives are of value if we let God work in us. He also reminds me that only *through Him* can good works happen, and thus prevents me from becoming proud and pleased with myself.

So I conclude by repeating this was a *great* week!

\*\*\*

# The Pursuit of Joy versus Happiness

---



*This is my resentful face :(*

My mother has had a stroke. Her left side has stopped working, and she is now in assisted living. However, she could regain complete use of her left arm and leg – if she would only put effort into her therapy.

## **I'm Doing *My* Bit – Why Doesn't She Do Hers?**

She is driving me mad. I made sure that she was no longer in real pain and found her a kind, strong (and handsome) male therapist who has the patience of a saint. And *still* she won't try to get better.

It takes forever to visit her from my house in Maryland. I have to fly to Chicago, then take a three hour bus trip from O'Hare to reach her house, before climbing into her car and driving to the assisted living home.

All this for someone who isn't trying to get better!

## **Resenting the Cross I've Been Given**

For a long time I ranted at God for putting me in the position of having to take care of my mother's finances, spend a week cleaning out her incredibly cluttered house, and trying - long-

distance – to organize the redecorating and sale of her property. (Clearly she won't live there again, and has agreed to my selling it.)

Mother is causing me incredible inconvenience. Doesn't she care that I have a life of my own? Why won't she put in the effort to literally get back on her feet?

## **Time to Reflect**

The bus rides back and forth give me plenty of time to reflect, but also to read. The book on this latest trip was "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway" by Susan Jeffers.

Was I reading that book because of Mother? No, actually. I'm trying to overcome certain fears I have when competing on my horse. But at the end of the book, Dr. Jeffers writes that life is about feeling joy, which is not derived from pursuing our own happiness.

"And what is joy? It is something that expresses the ebullience of the spiritual part of ourselves. Joy is characterized by lightness, humor, laughter and gaiety."

She goes on to explain how we "become bigger (when) we move away from that 'feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making me happy' (George Bernard Shaw). We move into adult status, where we have much to give this world."

## **How to Experience Joy**

God creates so many opportunities for us to give to people, but we tend to carefully sidestep them, because they get in the way of our 'true goal' i.e. the pursuit of our individual happiness.

Our true goal should, however, be helping others. As Christians we're supposed to serve.

We can't all be Mother Theresa and do mighty deeds. And God doesn't ask that of us. He simply wants us to be good and faithful servants, doing His work humbly, regardless of how insignificant it appears to us or others.

Once I grasped this, I realized how selfish I am to get mad because my mother is disrupting my life. She didn't choose to have a stroke!

Instead I should be glad of the opportunity to take care of her needs, *because God wants me to*. He has given me a job, He has let me know that I matter to Him and to her. My joy is in fulfilling God's purpose for me.

## **Postscript**

My mother battled with Alzheimer's and a paralyzed left side for four years before going to meet the Lord.

It was incredible to watch her go from bitterness about her situation to quiet acceptance, from her decades' long rejection of Christianity to reconciliation with God and the Catholic Church.

Three days before she died, a staff member at her nursing home told me, as I was coming to visit, that when asked how she was doing this morning, Mother had replied, "Today is a wonderful day!"

While the family sat with her in her room, where she was asleep, her eyes flew open, she raised her arm and, pointing, cried "Home!"

Thirty minutes afterwards she said, "Jesus!"

Her Lord and Savior was calling to her. He took her to Him soon afterwards.

\*\*\*

# Miffed by the Mother's Day Mint

---



Do you have annual expectations about Mother's Day? Do you fantasize that, unlike previously, *this* year it will contain twenty-four - well, at least twelve - hours of love and appreciation from the family?

Didn't think so. Neither do I.

## A Toast to the Absentee Family Member

This year my son was at college, cramming for his exams in the coming week.

I assumed that watching basketball on TV in his student residence, when we talked on the phone, was helping him in his endeavors. His father assures me that our son needs background noise to study.

If you say so.

## The Beautiful Moment

On Saturday night I asked my husband if he would come to 8 a.m. Mass with me on Sunday. Imagine my pleasant surprise when he was dressed and ready the next morning, without my having had to say a word!

This put me in a very good mood.

## The Mint that Ruined that Beautiful Moment

During the sermon he said something to me, to which I replied. Then shortly, afterwards he was trying surreptitiously to slide a mint to me along the pew. I gave him a puzzled look, and he mouthed, "For your breath."

For that comment he received an angry look, and I mouthed "Not in church!" hoping the priest hadn't noticed this rude interruption of his sermon.

### **Men! (Or Is It Just Husbands?)**

Then, while looking steadfastly at the priest, I proceeded to fume inwardly about my husband's insensitivity. How could he be so cruel as to ruin Mother's Day by telling me I had bad breath (I'd eaten garlic the previous night) and suggesting I eat a mint in the Lord's house?!

I tried to remind myself that I should not get upset, and pretty much succeeded.

### **Men! (Or Is It Just Husbands?) (Continued)**

Until Mass was over. Desperate to get to his cigarettes, my husband marched out of church as fast as possible, leaving me trailing (and embarrassed) in his wake.

It was Mother's Day: couldn't he *just this once* have had the sensitivity to walk out with me properly, like husband and wife?

By the time I reached the car, way across the parking lot, the happiness of having been accompanied to Mass by my spouse had well and truly dissipated!

Those of you reading this, who are married, can easily imagine the words that ensued in the car.....

### **The Man's Response**

His response to the mint thing was "I was just trying to help," (we need to redefine the word 'help'!) and to the walking out on me "I always do that" (oh, that's alright then).

I don't often feel this way, but yesterday really was an instance of men and women coming from different planets!

### **The Day Is Saved**



In case you're worried, he salvaged the day by buying and barbequing dinner that evening, and it all ended peacefully.

\*\*\*



# God Working through Airplanes

---



## The Fear

I get very scared when flying. Small planes, in particular, make me feel terribly vulnerable.

Twenty years ago, I was on a tiny ten seater flying from St Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to Puerto Rico. The turbulence was terrifying: I really thought my last moments had come. And I had done nothing I could truly call useful for mankind during my life!

## Bargain Making and Breaking

So I promised God that if he allowed me to land safely, I would sponsor a child, since I couldn't have children of my own.

We landed safely. I forgot to thank God - and did nothing about sponsoring a child.

## A New Bargain

A few months later, on my very next flight – you've guessed it – the turbulence was even worse! I apologized to God for not keeping my promise last time, and told him that if he allowed me to live through this flight, I *really, really* would sponsor a child.

As soon as we landed, I thanked God and set to sponsoring not one but two children, as I felt

so ashamed of my previous behavior.

### **Give and You Shall Receive**

I mentioned earlier that I was unable to have children. Shortly after I sponsored those children, I became pregnant with my son.

Have you ever had an experience where you did the right thing and were 'over-compensated' for it?

\*\*\*

# Be Acknowledged by the Son of Man

---



My mother is in a skilled nursing home in Madison after suffering a stroke. So I have to fly in two planes each way to visit her from Maryland. Up till now I've always prayed silently for God to keep me and the other passengers safe during these flights.

## The Closet Christian

But I realized that this was praying on the sly, as it were - not wishing other passengers to notice that I was talking to God.

One reason for this was that I didn't want my fear of flying to be obvious. But something more sinister was going on: *I was embarrassed to be seen praying.*

Was I unwilling to let the public know that I was a Christian?

That thought upset me. A lot.

## (Wo)manning Up...

So I decided to make the Sign of the Cross as the plane was taking off (when I start to pray) and when the plane landed (after my thank-you-God-for-the-safe-flight prayer).

## Or Not...

But - it would mean acknowledging Christ in public. **Gasp!!**

You expect priests to be inured to the stares and ridicule of people around them, but it was asking a lot from a member of the laity, who prefers to remain anonymous when traveling, and indeed in general.

## **Wait a Minute: Doesn't Christ Mention This Topic Somewhere?**

Then I remembered the words of Scripture:

*"I tell you the truth, everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, the Son of Man will also acknowledge in the presence of God's angels." Luke 12:8 New Living Translation (©2007)*

Followed by:

*"But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God." Luke 12:9 New Living Translation (©2007)*

There was no pretending I didn't understand the import of those words.

## **(Wo)manning Up - For Real, This Time**

Just how humiliating would it *really be* to make the Sign of the Cross in public? Come on, I wasn't being called to do something truly scary, like stand up and ask the passengers to join me in prayer!

Was I too weak to give one small - yet significant - public acknowledgement of Christ?

I felt embarrassed about feeling embarrassed, and hoped God would forgive my timidity. If I called myself a Christian, and a Catholic, I had to be prepared to evangelize even in this tiny way. If Christ died on the Cross for me – in a very public humiliation – surely I could manage this minor sacrifice in return?

I am glad to say that as soon as we began taxiing on the runway, I made a big – not furtive – Sign of the Cross and asked God to keep all of us safe. When we landed I did the same, and proceeded to repeat the process for each of my successive three flights.

There, that wasn't so bad, was it? *Baby steps..*

God - One

Satan - A Big Goose Egg

\*\*\*

# Learning from Hurt

---

This past Sunday, my son texted me from the house of a Catholic friend, where he'd spent the night having 'bro time' as he calls it. He would not be at midday Mass with me. Instead he would be eating at IHOP with his 'bros.'



## To Rant or Not to Rant?

My immediate reaction was anger, quickly followed by hurt, then more anger. But I knew he knew I wasn't happy about his defection, and texting an angrily worded guilt-trip back to him wouldn't help. At least he'd let me know he wasn't coming: that in itself was something.

It would also be inappropriate to shoot an irate message to him just before going into Mass! So I asked God to calm me down and let the Holy Spirit prompt my correct response.

## But Hurt is Still Hurt

Yet I still felt hurt. My son knows how important to me our church time together is. Although they don't mean much to him now, I hope he'll look back on these shared hours before God in later life and find strength in them during hard times. And I hope the memories serve to bring him back to the fold.

While I sat there, smarting with indignation and wounded feelings, I looked up at the cross suspended over the altar. It is huge. A silver statue of Christ hangs on it, but instead of both His hands being nailed to the wood, His right hand is free and stretched out towards the congregation. He is inviting us – begging us - to come to Him.

## **An Unexpected Perspective**

Seeing Christ's pleading gesture in the middle of my self-pity, I suddenly gained a tiny, tiny glimpse of how hurt Christ must feel when we, His children, turn our backs on Him, as my son had just done to me.

I was only one mother experiencing one moment of rejection. How much worse must it be for God when most of humanity says 'No' to Him? After everything He has done for us in giving us life, after the unfathomable sacrifice His Son went through for us. And still we say 'No.'

No, we won't obey God's commandments. No, we won't go to church every Sunday. No, we won't follow Christ's example and take up His cross. No, we refuse to spread His word.....

## **A Healthy Dose of Humility**

As Mass progressed, I felt smaller and smaller in God's presence, yet grateful that He had given me this insight and the grace to understand – just a little bit – how much I hurt Him every day. I left the church resolved to be a better follower of Christ.

I also told my son (without anger) that Mass on Sundays is not optional – not while he lives under my roof. He'll thank me for it after I'm dead and gone!

\*\*\*

# Humility under Fire

---



When I introduced myself to our new parish priest, he was already a couple of months into his tenure.

It took courage to do this as I'm not one of those people who can walk up after Mass and have an easy, off-the-cuff conversation with a person I don't know.

## Quiet Resolution

All during Mass I searched my brain for a topic to broach, having decided that today was the day I would finally say 'hello.'

I always enjoy Father's sermons, so I decided he would be pleased if I gave him this feedback. After Mass I dutifully stood in line behind other parishioners. He laughed and joked with the people in front of me, and then it was my turn.

Imagine my embarrassment when he shook my hand - as I gave my name and said that I enjoy his sermons - but stood open-mouthed and said nothing! His expression was hard to read, but he clearly didn't want to talk to me.

I felt crushed and walked back to my car wanting to cry like a little child. How could God reward my courage and attempt at saying something kind and encouraging with such apparent contempt?

## To Be Upfront or Not to Be?

There were two possible ways for me to react, as I saw it.



Either I could feel resentment, tell all my friends what a terrible priest he is and attend a new church.

Or, instead of going behind his back, I could let him know how he had made me feel and thrash it out with him.

Clearly the better route was to be direct with Father instead of going behind his back.

So I emailed him on Monday (after a night spent stewing over things!) and tried to keep it short, factual and not resentful. I simply asked why I had received such a reception from him when I was trying to be welcoming and encouraging.

## The Christian Response

Within the hour I received an apologetic reply. Father felt very bad about the whole episode, explaining that he'd had very little sleep over the last two days.

I was happy to hear from him, but didn't know how to respond. So that night I prayed for him instead.

The next morning I had another email from him. He was offering that morning's Mass up for me and my intentions. My altruism in praying for him had been answered by incredible kindness.

Now I had to respond!

## Letting Someone Else Benefit



I thanked him very much, and asked him to pray for a friend of mine who lost most of her house in Hurricane Irene's flood. He responded immediately that he would.

## **The Takeaway**

Our parish priest is human, but he is also Christian. He was willing to be humble and charitable in the face of criticism. That is very difficult for all of us.

I was more than happy to stay in his parish and keep learning from his example.

\*\*\*

**P.S.** And I'm not kidding, his sermons are awesome!

**P.P.S.** Four years after I wrote this post, he moved to another parish and all of us were very upset about it. When I went to confession to him for the last time and told him I was miffed that he was leaving, he said, "Do you remember the time when you got upset with me....?" and we both had a good laugh over it.

## About Yours Truly

I'm originally from England, but became an American citizen a decade ago. My home is in Maryland with my husband, homebred gelding Cruz Bay, two English bulldogs (what else!?) a laid back ginger house cat and a very demanding tabby barn cat.

I was brought up Catholic but left the faith for a couple of decades. A gift from my Baptist mother-in-law, *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?* by Dr. Charles Stanley got me thinking about what lay beyond my selfish daily life. I love to joke about how a Baptist brought me back into the Catholic Church! I am enormously grateful to her for this gift of reconversion.

Now I can't imagine living without God at my side. He gives purpose to everything and guides us along the only path we need to be on.

I am active in my church, and write Christian inspirational fiction. Horses feature heavily in my life, and therefore in my fiction and non-fiction.

I hope you've enjoyed this little book and that it has helped you in some small way to deal with the everyday trials of your life.

God bless!

Hilary

<https://hilarywalkerbooks.com/>

<http://christiantales.com/>

# Discover Other Books by Hilary Walker

## Christian Inspirational

Riding Out the Devil (Book 1 in *The Jack Harper Trilogy*)

Riding Out the Tempest (Book 2 in *The Jack Harper Trilogy*)

Riding Out the Rough (Book 3 in *The Jack Harper Trilogy*)

Riding Out the Turbulence (Companion Short Story to *The Jack Harper Trilogy*)

Riding Out the Wager (Book 1 in *The Father Michael Trilogy*)

Brittle Diamonds

## Equestrian Guides

A Step-By-Step Guide to Entering Your First Dressage Competition

The Beginner Rider's Guide to Stress-Free Horse Buying:  
How to Purchase the Perfect Horse for a Beginner Rider without Going Insane

## The Horse Bumbler Series: The Autobiography of an Awful Rider with Aspirations

Part One: First Catch Your Horse

Part Two: You've Caught Your Horse: Now What?

Part Three: The Aim of All This

Part Four: What Horses Do to You

## Short Stories

How I Lost My Husband's Horse

Felicity's Show Flair

A Dog Named Blue

The Horse Inside

How Not to Rescue a Racehorse

Bridled Passion: A Horse Trilogy

The Horse That Went to Church

## Connect with Me

Visit my website:

[www.hilarywalkerbooks.com](http://www.hilarywalkerbooks.com)

Subscribe to my blogs:

<http://christiantales.com/>

<http://horsetales.weebly.com/>