

Fr. Damian Ference

THE STRANGENESS OF TRUTH

Vibrant Faith in
a Dark World



"Fr. Ference's *The Strangeness of Truth* is a gift. . . .
I warmly recommend it, especially for young people
searching for life's deepest truths." —Bishop Robert Barron

In Praise of *The Strangeness of Truth*

"Fr. Ference's *The Strangeness of Truth* is a gift. With pathos and humor, he explores the wisdom and beauty of Catholicism—its faith in the non-competitive God, its embodied character, its transformation of suffering and death through Christ's cross and resurrection—in light of his own experience as brother, son, student, rock fan, and priest. I warmly recommend it, especially for young people searching for life's deepest truths."

—Bishop Robert Barron, founder of Word on Fire
Catholic Ministries, Auxiliary Bishop of the
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

"Fr. Damian Ference is one of my favorite people. Like, ever. He's humble, articulate, and winsome. All of that comes through in this excellent little book that gives the reader an overview of the Catholic faith in a fresh and compelling way. I wish I had it back in my agnostic days."

—Matt Fradd, *Pints With Aquinas*

“Read this book and fall in love, or grow more in love, with Jesus and His Church!”

—Fr. Larry Richards, pastor of St. Joseph Church
and founder of The Reason for Our Hope
Foundation, Erie, Pennsylvania

“*The Strangeness of Truth* is a stirring call to make our faith not just a place we visit, but rather the very air we breathe, the food we eat, and the home in which we live. I have long been convinced that Fr. Damian Ference will be remembered as one of the greatest spiritual thinkers of this generation, and this work more than bears that out.”

—Hallie Lord, SiriusXM radio host and author of
On the Other Side of Fear: How I Found Peace

“Fr. Damian has long been one of my favorite writers, and this book only affirms that. Weaving together saints, stories, philosophy, and faith, he paints a picture of Catholicism that is both fresh and accessible. Anyone reading this book will see how Catholicism makes sense of life and makes it tangibly better. Give this book to anyone who doubts that.”

—Brandon Vogt, founder of ClaritasU and
author of *Why I Am Catholic*

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*Vibrant Faith
in a Dark World*

Fr. Damian Ference


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*For Helen,
the one and the many.*

*"It is the business of the artist to
uncover the strangeness of truth."*

—Flannery O'Connor

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Foreword

IT IS WITH GREAT JOY that I write this foreword to this absolutely wonderful book, *The Strangeness of Truth: Vibrant Faith in a Dark World*, by Father Damian Ference, a dynamic priest of the Diocese of Cleveland, who is also a seminary professor, a philosopher, a loving son, brother, friend, and a spiritual guide for many. More than simply a book, it is a moving letter to those who search and yearn for meaning. It speaks to those who are restless, who are filled with questions and looking for answers to the many challenges and contradictions that we all find in the course of our journey. *The Strangeness of Truth* is a profound reflection on the treasures of the Catholic faith, seen and presented through the eyes and heart of the personal journey of the author. As a young man, Damian Ference encountered the Risen Christ in a powerful way. This encounter would eventually lead him to leave behind his youthful dream to be a "rock star" and to give his life to Jesus Christ and all of humanity as a priest in the Catholic Church. He is now a star of a different kind, much like the Star of Bethlehem. Today, Father Damian shows the

way to others, the way to a life of faith in the person and vision of Jesus Christ who, after all, is the Way!

In this book, written as a moving letter to all of us who search, we can see the unfolding of our own lives. We follow Father Damian through life, with all its ups and downs, twists and turns, as he shares the stories of his own life and faith journey. Through it all, he discovers meaning and purpose in the treasure of the Catholic faith. In so many ways, this is a book about two of Pope Francis' favorite words: *encounter* and *accompaniment*. In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis invites all of us to a renewed personal encounter with Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter us. He reminds us that no one is excluded from this invitation and that the Lord does not disappoint.

The Strangeness of Truth. How can Truth be strange? Father Damian tells us how. Sandwiched in the narratives of his story, this book shares with us the surprising story of the intimate encounter of God with us, his people. It is the story of how he demonstrates the power of his love. God's love is a love that accompanies us in creation, in the mystery of dying and rising, and even through the signs and symbols of our faith, which are always reminding us that "everyone counts and everyone matters." Father Damian presents the beauty of the Catholic faith to us artfully and skillfully, in a language and through images that are understandable and relatable. He shows how faith enlightens and gives meaning to our lives and the many events that arise in them. Through it all, we are given the opportunity to discover the footprints of Christ, who is and has always been there, right by our side.

My prayer is that all who take the time to read this book from a young, faith-filled priest, will discover what he has discovered

and be transformed by the love of Christ, who seeks to encounter us at every turn. Thank you, Father Damian, for taking the time to share your story, for presenting us the treasures of the Catholic faith, and for giving us this book as a gift to the world!

Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez, D. D.
Bishop of Cleveland

Preface

Why This Book?

"Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."

— *Roman Missal*

"I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style, and methods of evangelization in their respective communities."

— *Pope Francis*

"When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs as you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock, to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large startling figures."

— *Flannery O'Connor*

DEAR READER, THIS LITTLE book is my humble attempt to present the Catholic faith to you for the first time, or for the first time in a long time, or perhaps in a way that you haven't heard it

presented before. I am writing to you not only as a Catholic priest but also as a man who has come to find himself most fully alive in communion with the One who is Life itself, and in the Church that he founded almost two thousand years ago.

I was ordained one year after the clergy sex-abuse scandals rocked the Catholic Church in 2002, so I am not blind to the human weakness, hypocrisy, cowardice, greed, and arrogance that is at times on display in Catholic living. But I've also been an eyewitness to the kindness, courage, honesty, generosity, and humility of countless women and men who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and refer to the Catholic Church as their *Mother* and *Teacher*. I believe what the Catholic Church holds and teaches to be true, and this book is my attempt to present the beauty, the mystery, the challenge, the consolation, and the joy of Catholicism to you in an honest, human, intelligent, humorous, and incarnational manner.

Perhaps you were raised Catholic but haven't been practicing your faith for a while. This book is for you. Perhaps you went to Catholic grade school and high school or even Catholic college but stopped practicing your faith a while back because it didn't seem relevant to your life anymore. This book is for you. Perhaps you once had very strong faith and then life came at you with terrible suffering through the death of a loved one, sickness, a break in a most important relationship, or some existential crisis. This book is for you. Perhaps you are new parents who have decided that your son or daughter needs to be raised in a faith that has greater wisdom and values than the world has to offer. This book is for you. Perhaps you are a student and your teacher or professor wants you to read something that presents Catholicism in way that ties personal narrative and theology together. This book is for you. Maybe you are a seeker,

a searcher, a man or woman who is on a journey looking for answers to questions about the meaning of life in general and Catholicism in particular. This book is for you. Perhaps someone who loves you very much gave this book to you as a gift and you are wondering if it's for you. It is.

The structure of this book is simple; it's like a sandwich. I begin each chapter with a narrative from my own life. That's the bottom bun. Then I offer a systematic treatment of a particular topic: the incarnation, the resurrection, sacramentality, the human person, exemplarity, beauty and reason, the both/and principle, and suffering. That's the protein, cheese, lettuce, tomato, onion, and condiments. Finally, I close each chapter with another narrative, which relates to the narrative with which I began the chapter. That's the top bun. If you don't like carbs, skip the narratives, and if you're a carb loader, you can simply read the buns. But the best diet is a balanced diet, and the buns are whole grain, so the best way to read this book is by reading the entire chapter. You could skip around if you want, but each chapter really does build on the next, so read this book the traditional way, from beginning to end, and then pass it on to a friend so that you'll have someone with whom you can discuss the book over a cup of coffee or a pint of beer. (By its nature, Catholicism is communal, so it's good to discuss these matters with others. You might even want to read this book aloud to another and work on the discussion questions in Appendix 2 together!)

Happy reading!

Fr. Damian Ference

God Is for Us, God Is with Us

Incarnation

"And the Word became flesh."
— *John 1:14*

"God became not only a man,
but Man."
— *Flannery O'Connor*

IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES, a Saturday morning at the Ference house translated into a morning of chores. After breakfast, my mom and dad would present to my brother and me a list of things to be done around the house. Then we'd all get to work.

Being the youngest, I always thought the way my parents distributed chores between my brother and me was anything but fair. Because Adam was four years older, he got to do all the fun stuff, like cutting the grass and washing the cars. I was stuck weeding the gardens and trimming the grass around the

flowerbeds with hand clippers, not with the gas-powered trimmer that I use today. I also had the terrible charge of picking up after our beloved dog, Peanuts.

Peanuts was a Labrador-mutt mix that we adopted from the Animal Protective League when I was four. My mom used to tell me that we saved his life—I guess the pound would have killed him if no one took him. Naturally, I was attached to my dog. When I was really young, I used to sit on his back and make him carry me around our living room like a horse. (Years later, my cousins would blame me for his arthritis.) I liked everything about Peanuts—well, almost everything. The only thing that I didn't like about my dog was cleaning up after him on Saturday mornings. He'd drop bombs all over the backyard during the week, and it was my job to find each one and pick it up in order to clear the way for Adam and his lawn mower.

What made this chore even worse was that Adam would take great delight in watching me work. Having already cut the front lawn, he'd watch me survey the backyard with shovel in hand, searching for poop. My dad had told me that using the corner of the shovel made the job easier, and he was right. Yet as I cleared the yard, Adam would offer color commentary and gloat, reminding me to "get everything!" The smell and sight were bad enough, but having your older brother ride you about it was the worst.

But he'd get his. What Adam didn't realize was that while he was busy giving me the business about finding every last piece of poop in the yard, I would strategically leave one fresh pile for him, his mower, and his shoes. So when he ripped the cord and restarted the lawn mower, it was my turn to gloat.

A few minutes into cutting the back grass, he'd stop, mid-yard. With the mower still running, he'd bend his leg back and

turn his head over his shoulder to check the bottom of his shoe. His face would sour. Ha! He felt it. He smelled it. It ruined his morning. And it made mine.

My brother and I were always going at it. Everything was a competition, and both of us hated losing. Nobody likes losing. Nobody.



We human beings tend to think that God is somehow competing with us. It may be hard to admit, but it's true. If we're honest with ourselves, we have to confess that something deep down inside of us makes us believe that, somehow, God is waiting to pounce on us, kind of like the way my brother and I used to pounce on each other as kids. Sometimes we may think that God doesn't want our best, that he's simply waiting for us to mess up, make a mistake, or break some commandments in order to throw lightning bolts our way.

Have you ever had the feeling that God is out to get you? Although the notion of God as a competitor is a popular one, and we may even feel it at times, it's not true. It's actually the furthest thing from the truth.

Here's the truth: God has no need to compete with us because God is God. What the heck does that mean? It means that God is not a part of the world. And by "the world" I don't just mean the earth, I mean the entire universe and every created thing. I mean the context of everything that is. Before anything ever existed, God existed. God has no beginning or end. God just *is*. God is not a thing—God is God. Thomas Aquinas called God *the sheer act of existence*. God is existence itself.

God is also love. Aquinas defines love as *willing the good of the other, for the sake of the other*. Love is not directed toward the self but to the other, as other. Love involves making a sincere gift of oneself for the sake of another person. Love wants what's best for someone else. The Greek word *kenosis* means self-donation or self-emptying. Love is donating or emptying one's self for the sake of another person. Love is *kenosis*. Love is always directed toward the other. But how can God be love if there is only one God? Doesn't God need somebody to love? Doesn't God need an other? And if God needs something, wouldn't that make God less than God?

It is true that love is only possible with more than one person. After all, love has to be given and received. As they say, *it takes two*. That's what makes love love.

Take a husband and wife, for example. A husband loves his wife—he is her *lover*, she is his *beloved*. As the lover, he gives himself completely to her—he empties himself. As the beloved, she freely receives him and she loves him back, emptying herself to him completely. He, in turn, receives her love, the gift that is her very self. Such is a mutual exchange of love. Both the husband and the wife freely give themselves to each other and freely receive each other as gift. But there's more. In addition to the husband and the wife, there is also the *love itself* that is being exchanged between them, which can manifest itself in another person! So the reality is that love doesn't take two, it actually takes three—the *lover*, the *beloved*, and the *love in between*. Love is a communion of persons. Love draws us into relationship with others.

Does any of this sound familiar? It should. If God is existence itself, there can be only one God, because existence by its nature is one. In other words, there cannot be two Gods who

are each infinite existence, because one would limit the other, and then neither would be infinite. And if God is love, and if love is only possible between persons, then there must be three persons in this one God. Human reason by itself could not have come up with this idea. It came to us from God by means of divine revelation. This is what we mean by the mystery of the *Trinity*. The Father loves the Son, as the Father is the *lover*. (He did not create the Son. The Son was always there; he is eternal like the Father. That's what we mean when we say "begotten not made" in the Creed.) The Son receives the Father's love, as the Son is the *beloved*. The Son also gives his love to the Father, and the Father receives the Son's love. And who is proceeding from the Father and the Son? What do we call the love in between the lover and the beloved? You've got it: the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in being, or one in substance. Or, to use the language in our Nicene Creed, they are *consubstantial* (literally, "with one substance"). Therefore, God is one, not in the unity of a single person but in a Trinity of persons, each of whom fully possesses the one divine substance or nature. God's nature is love. And God is love because God is a communion of persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

Moreover, if God is one as a Trinity of one substance, and if God is a communion of persons, a communion of love, that means God is *self-sufficient*. In other words, God doesn't need anybody to love because God is love itself. Because the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, and the Holy Spirit is the love proceeding from the Father and the Son, God has no needs. Why is this important? Because it means that God created the world not out of need but out of love. God didn't have to create the world—he wanted to create it, and he created it

out of love. And if that's true, then why would God want to compete with his own creation? That wouldn't make any sense. He'd always win.

Okay, that was a lot all at once and you may need to read this section over a few times more before it sinks in. Don't feel bad if that happens. Remember that the Trinity is a profound and eternal mystery. It's not a post on social media. You can't explain it in 280 characters. It's not like a math problem either. Math problems can be solved. You can't solve the Trinity. If you could, it wouldn't be a mystery. You contemplate mystery. You sit with it. You rest in it. Understanding takes time—so take your time. But also know that this stuff is really important. If we don't get the Trinity right, then we're going to get everything else wrong, including ourselves.¹



In addition to God being a Trinity of persons, God is also Creator. God created all things visible and invisible, and he created all things *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. This is a wild reality because it means that before there was time, space, atoms, molecules, motion, and light, there was God. Lots of people get this wrong. They tend to think that God is part of the world rather than the Creator of the world. This distinction has enormous consequences.

When God created the world—and again, when I say “world” I mean everything that exists—he created it not because he had to but because he wanted to. God created the world out of love. God chose to create—he willed the world to be. And although everything that God created reflects his goodness, the

pinnacle of his creation was man and woman—of course, that means you and me.

God created us in his image and likeness. And that means that we are like God in a way that no other creatures are like God. We have a body (visible) and soul (invisible). We also have intellect and free will. We can know and we can choose. We can know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad, true and false. And we have the freedom to act on that knowledge. We can also know God, and we can choose to love or turn away from God. Animals are different from us in this way.

Animals don't have reason or free will, which means that animals can't do things like murder or rape. Humans can. When an animal kills, it kills for food and survival. When a human being kills, it may be for a variety of reasons. We make distinctions about how and why humans kill in a way that is unique to human beings. We make a distinction between self-defense, manslaughter, and murder. We make a distinction between marital love, hooking up, and rape. Animals don't. They can't.

Animals are also unable to love. You love your dog, but your dog can't love you back. I know that sounds harsh. Although dogs seem to show some sort of affection, and people can be very attached to their dogs, it's different from true love, which is only between persons. Let's go back to our definition of love: *willing the good of the other, for the sake of the other*. Only a human being can will anything, because only human beings have free will. Therefore, only human beings can love. Love is *kenosis*; it's self-donation, self-gift. Love is a personal act. It takes persons to love.

If you go back and reread the second and third chapters of Genesis with all this in mind, it will make a lot of sense. Recall that God created the man and the woman not because he

needed to but because he wanted to. He created Adam and Eve out of love and for love. He wanted to enter into a loving relationship with them—to become one with them, just as a man and woman become one with each other. God didn't force them into relationship—they entered into relationship freely; they chose it.

Remember the tree of knowledge of good and evil that God planted in the garden? Lots of folks wonder why God planted that thing. Was God tempting the man and the woman? If so, that's cruel. Some folks think that if that tree weren't there, then original sin would not have occurred, meaning that the Fall was all God's fault. Others think that the tree was the source of freedom, and that eating from it made the man and woman human. Neither of these are good interpretations.

The point of the tree in the story is actually to represent human freedom. It shows that loving God is a choice, an act of the will. Love is a decision. That tree symbolizes the opposite of loving God. To eat of that tree is to reject God. To eat of that tree is to die. Although choosing to eat from that tree will never make us free, the tree itself is necessary for real freedom. The tree represents our ability to choose something else besides God. Loving God is a choice, and so is turning from him.

Sin emerges from the belief that God is against us, that God is our competitor. That's the lie the serpent tells to the woman (and the man) in the third chapter of Genesis. He convinces them that God is their competitor and that if they really want to be free, if they really want to live, they need to reject God and embrace something else. To reject God and embrace something else is a human act—it's a choice. It's what we call *sin*. And indeed, that's what they choose. Rather than trusting God and choosing to love him, they turn from him, because they

think that by turning from him they'll be free. It doesn't happen. It can't happen. Yet because we keep thinking that it will happen, God decides to show us that he's on our side.



To save us from this thing we call sin, God sent us his only Son. Why? Because we can't save ourselves from sin. Christianity is not a self-help religion. We can't simply pick ourselves up by the bootstraps and give it the old college try. Perhaps you've learned this the hard way. Have you ever done everything in your own power to try and fix yourself or heal yourself but still came up short? I have. It didn't work. Sin runs deep, so deep that we need a Savior to rescue us from it.

It's really important to note how God saves us from sin. He doesn't save us abstractly. He doesn't save us by sending an angel down to earth or some sort of super human. Nope. He sends us his only Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, who becomes one of us in all things but sin. Again, this is something that we are familiar with as a statement of fact, but not something we often think about or contemplate in the fullness of its reality.

Christians believe that God, who is totally other, all good, all knowing, all powerful, self-sufficient, and eternal, actually humbled himself and became a human being. That's ridiculous. Really, it is. We often become so comfortable with nativity scenes and Christmas songs that tell the story of the incarnation, how God became a human being, that we completely miss the reality of what is one of the most important moments in human history.

When I was a kid, I attended Incarnate Word Academy from kindergarten through eighth grade. Although my teachers, the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, explained a few times what our school's name meant, I never gave it much thought.² My friends and I just called it "IWA" and that was that. That's sad. My school was named after the reality that God became a human being, which is a profound mystery, but to me, it was simply the name of my Catholic grade school.

When it comes to the incarnation, it's imperative to remember that God is not our competitor. God is self-sufficient in the communion of persons that is the Trinity. God doesn't need to save us—God wants to save us. And to show us that he's come to save us, he comes in a way that is credible and convincing—he comes as one of us because of love.

Jesus Christ is fully God because he is the Second Person of the Trinity begotten of God the Father. He is also fully human because he is born of the Virgin Mary, a human being. (More on Mary in Chapter 4.) Jesus Christ is one person—a divine person, the Son of God—with both a divine nature and a human nature. Think about that for a moment. If it doesn't blow your mind, then you haven't thought about it hard enough. Jesus Christ is both God and man, both at the same time.

How is the incarnation possible? How can God become one of us without demolishing our humanity? After all, God is completely other, and we define God by what we are not. God is perfect, good, all-knowing, all-powerful, and immortal. God always was, always is, and always will be. We, on the other hand, are not perfect, not all-good, not all-knowing, and we are mortal. How can God and man come together like that? How can two contrary things come together as one? It is only possible

because of who God is. And remember, God is not our competitor. God is self-sufficient. God doesn't need anything.

When God becomes a human being in the person of Jesus Christ, his divinity does not overtake his humanity. Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man at the same time. Since God is not our competitor, his divinity does not challenge our humanity. And since God created man for communion and not for competition, in the person of Jesus Christ we see how God is and wants to be with us. He doesn't come to compete, he comes to save—he comes to be with us, even in our brokenness and sin. God is Emmanuel. God is with us.



The two most popular and recognizable depictions of Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word are him *in the cradle* and *on the cross*. Both images are a beautiful testimony to the reality that God is for us and with us. God is not against us—He is not out to get us. God comes to save us.

Saint Luke tells us that Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, which should strike us as funny. If God were to come among us, wouldn't it be more appropriate for him to be born in some pristine castle, surrounded by guards, a protective moat, and solid walls? Or wouldn't it make more sense for him to be born in a more sterile location than a barn or cave? Of all places, a stable sounds like the last place in the world that the Son of God should be born. So, why a stable?

Stables don't always smell good, and they can be chaotic and messy. The same can be said of our hearts and our lives.

Life is difficult and at times heart-wrenching. We live in a fallen world. Yet that is where Jesus comes to meet us, right in the middle of that mess we call sin. God is born right in the middle of the messiness of our lives to show us that he is with us, that he is for us, and that he can save us from ourselves. Jesus Christ is born in a stable to show us that he's not afraid to enter the messiness of our broken lives. He gets us. He's one of us. And because he is also God, he can save us.

Something similar happens on the cross. The last place you would expect to see God incarnate would be on an instrument of torture and death, but sure enough, that's where we find him. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the innocent one, dies a terrible death by crucifixion. Why? Isn't it below God to do such a thing? Yes. That's the point. God humbled himself so much in the person of Jesus Christ that he was willing to die a terrible death so that we might live. *Kenosis*.

The cross is dark, messy, and painful, yet we find Jesus Christ, the Son of God, right in the middle of it. That's intentional. Because God is for us and with us, Jesus shows us the lengths that he will go to prove that he is not our competitor but our Savior and Friend. The cross symbolizes our fallen world, and Jesus is not afraid to enter directly into the eye of the storm and conquer death itself by entering into death on the cross.

The other important feature of the cradle and the cross is that both images are non-threatening and non-competitive. A baby is powerless. A baby needs to be fed, held, burped, and changed. A baby can't hurt you. A baby can't compete with you. The same is true of a dying man on a cross. He can't do anything for himself—he can't even get himself a drink. The crucified Christ is powerless, just like the newborn Christ. Both are signs and reminders of the non-competitive nature of God.

Jesus comes to us not to hurt us or to take away our freedom or to scold us, but to heal us, to love us, and to save us. The Incarnate Word empties himself completely in the cradle and on the cross so that we might trust him and allow him to save us.



I began this chapter about the Incarnation with a story about me, my older brother, and dog poop. I told it to highlight our competitive nature as fallen human beings and to show that we often bring that idea of competition to our understanding of God, which is actually a misunderstanding of who God is and what he is about. God is not our competitor—God is our Creator and Savior. God is for us and with us. I want to end this chapter with another story about poop in order to serve the same purpose.

The people of Catalonia, Spain, like most Christian peoples, decorate their homes and churches during the Christmas season with Nativity scenes. Like all Nativity scenes, the figurines of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are at the center of the action in the middle of the stable. The other players vary, but usually shepherds, Magi, and a variety of animals fill out the rest of the scene. But the Catalanian people add another character to the mix: *El Caganer* or “The Crapper.”

I first heard about the tradition of *El Caganer* a couple of years ago and couldn’t believe my ears. But it’s true. Most Catalanian Nativity scenes host a figurine of an elf-like man with a funny red hat who is off in the distance, somewhere out in the fields (never in the stable itself) with dropped drawers, taking a poop. It’s silly, shocking, and embarrassing. But it’s also

humbling, human, and incarnational. When God entered into our fallen world as one like us in all things but sin, he entered into every part of being human.

For the Catalanian people, *El Caganer* is a theological reminder of the shocking nature of the incarnation—that when God took on our nature in the person of Jesus Christ, he entered into everything human. Everything. *El Caganer* also reminds us that God enters into our world as things are, as we are, wherever we are. Jesus comes to meet us in order to save us, not to embarrass or compete with us. He is for us and with us.

El Caganer is a strange image indeed. But for a faith that proudly, regularly, and rightly depicts the God of the universe as a baby in a diaper and as a man dying on a cross, should this really be a surprise?