

## Body of Light

When I was ten years old, having some time ago, been yanked out of the Catholic convent school by my parents: I suppose I was trying to figure out some strategy to get back into it. Or perhaps like Luther, to start a new branch or new brand of access to God. A rival operation.

When I was at the convent school the nuns, being metaphorical: had told me, as a six year old boy, that if my father who was a struggling 'door to door' barber; continued to knock on people's doors on Sunday, looking for customers; the Devil would take up residence under my bed. Nuns tend to be simple and given to theater. Children have no filter, no irony, and no sense of metaphor. So I took it literally, and was taken to a psychiatrist, for screaming wildly in the night. To this day, I am dysfunctional in the dark. The domain of Satan.

So as a ten year old boy walking home from school, I daily passed St. Philips Catholic church. Which in those days, was permanently and innocently open.

I started visiting the church, which by Catholic standards, was plain and simple enough. Though adorned, with magnificent towering brass candlesticks holders. Upon which, stood the noble candles, that would serve the Catholic mass. These candles, not lit, held a soft light. That seemed to be gathered to them, from all the weak late afternoon light that seeped into the church from the street outside. They were solid, smooth, and heavy: yet strangely glamorous in their translucent silence. They stood as slim figures, sentinels, even before I knew about Giacometti. And this light, that was held I in a body, fascinated me.

And in addition, if one, however young had ambitions to begin a new church: one would certainly need candles. Even as a substitute for electricity. Indeed, not knowing what kind of premises I would be able to locate: candles seemed fundamental.

So I began, on a daily basis, to lift these massive self illuminated columns off of their brass holders, and walk out with them. One by one.

On the way, further up the street, I would steal a newspaper. Because I would need a clean virgin copy, to wrap, bury and perfectly preserve my bounty. Stiff-legged, as a boy with a severe hip, I would amble home, and then bury the candle with it's brethren, in my front garden. The daily larceny would continue, until after a couple of weeks, I had a magnificent collection of major candles.

One evening after I arrived home, and buried my bounty, there was a knock on my front door. I opened it and there stood, smiling beatifically, a priest.

He was skillfully and persuasively non-confrontational. He seemed to be the acme of kindness. He asked me if I had anything that belonged to God. I said I didn't. I told him I had my bike and that belonged to me.

He then, serenely undeterred, told me that if I did have something that belonged to God, and I would be kind enough to give into his safe-keeping, so that he might return it to God, he would be able to leave in peace. He then told me, very sweetly, that if I had taken something that belonged to God, And I then returned it to him: I would be in 'higher standing' with God, that I would be if I hadn't taken it in the first place. This immediately appealed to my strong sense of business. It seemed me, that not only could I get of a tight corner, but I could improve my relationships with God, just by giving back, what was his.

With conventional law, even if you give the stuff back, you go to jail.

In unison we tenderly dug up the candles. They were indeed perfectly preserved. The priest and I became friends, as we worked together in our common cause. He left happily, and waived to me, with the giant candles under his arms, as he walked back to the church. Now when I see them in my memories mind, they seem to glow.

Sean Scully  
30 September 2010  
Mooseurach