

B is for Brick



Getting Kids Ready for Load-Bearing

Good advice for homeschoolers, from Charlotte Ostermann



MotherheartPress

B is for Brick

Getting Kids Ready for Load-Bearing

Good Advice for Homeschoolers from
Charlotte Ostermann

CharlotteOstermann.com
MotherheartPress.com

Introduction

Here's an exercise for your imagination. I ask you to close your eyes and hold out your hand. I tell you I'm going to place a feather in it, and you're just to hold it there. You close your eyes, feel a touch, and your hand drops with a surprisingly heavy load. Opening your eyes, you see the brick that just fell out of your hand onto the floor. What happened? Can't you hold a single brick?

Well, I prepared you for a feather and handed you a brick. None of your muscles were readied for more than a slight load. Sure, you could hold a brick if you saw it coming. But we don't see the 'bricks,' or burdens of life coming! We can't be ready for everything unless we live in an over-braced, defensive state of tension. That will take a great toll on us - maybe do more damage than any of the burdens on their own.

Our kids face a lifetime of potential hardships. We are keenly aware of their vulnerability and want to help them be ready. They'll experience doubts about the faith; temptations to despair; the pain of not fitting in, of being unloved, of failure; the oppression of daily drudgery, of unfulfilled desire, of failure. Others will let them down. They'll be shocked by how hard it is to keep loving someone they love. A prowling lion will pursue them, acedia will trouble them, answers to important questions will elude them. Their load may include pain, sickness, loss of loved ones, rejection, poverty, and more.

How do we get them ready for those burdens?

Getting Kids Ready for Load-Bearing

They need Practice: some way to simulate reality in manageable form and develop responses and strategies. They need to be Proactive: engaged and interested in getting ready, getting stronger, and willing to do the work.

Should you help them practice with 'feathers'? Great ideas can definitely strengthen us, mentally, but unless we take them in and wrestle with how to apply them, we can think of ourselves as being as strong as our strongest ideals when we are only as strong as the ones we've acted on. Facts are feathers. At the other extreme, we could overburden our kids with a 'get tough,' or 'prepare for the worst' approach. We won't really be of much help if we just dump the weights of the world on the kids early. They might stay safer in the world if it seems overwhelmingly threatening to them, but that will be load-avoiding, rather than load-bearing.

We want something in between, and that's where the bricks come in. A brick is more than hardened mud. Its makeup includes some straw, or other material that provides structural support, like rebar strengthens concrete. That straw also makes it lighter and more durable. Lets imagine that we could give our kids light bricks to build a self-support system. What kind of structure would that be?

I suggest that an arch is the perfect shape to imagine building for a 'self'. It balances the forces of compression (top-load) and tension (interior load). The arch opens up space, and that interior space is the key to freedom.

Any building is a nice image - a shelter, an interior cathedral, a safe haven - as long as it gives a sense of freedom. The point is that a 'self' is something we help the child build, and that our contribution can be some really strong 'bricks'. But ours will need to be usable in the microcosm of the home - more like building blocks.

Hmmmm....practicing building things with light building blocks that simulate reality, but are small and manageable...doing this with delight and interest and engagement...

...getting stronger by proactively taking part in this building. Sound familiar? I'm thinking of the hours and hours my kids have spent playing with Legos - toy building bricks! But what in the world does such play have to do with getting ready for the hardships of life??

Play is exactly the word to use for the kind of endlessly engaging, self-motivated, manipulation of reality in a microcosm, tearing down and rebuilding new forms, and translating ideas to reality that fuses Practice and Proactivity.

Maria Montessori's Catechesis of the Good Shepherd takes a page from this same playbook. Kids in an atrium are doing play/work with materials parents have chosen and made with love.



Our kids need to play with the ideas and forms that have built our support structures, our interior matrix of strength, so as to develop the ability to build their own. So, we need to make them some bricks to build with. For our 'mud': the stuff of life - experience, news, conversation, reading, chores, people, nature, family dynamics....whatever Real Life is actually made of. For our interior matrix of support: Truth.

So, our bricks are true and powerful, small verbal structures woven into the stuff of life.

We make bricks naturally, constantly, but what we may not do is:

- a) *Consciously* discover and create small, interlocking, multi-use building blocks
- b) Model playing with them, and
- c) Share the fun - allow kids to tear down and play with the blocks we collect.

I'll work backwards through the list and focus the most attention on that first one.



We don't share the fun.

During the process of play with kids, some threatening things happen.

1. Our own structures are dismantled (and, if you let them dismantle Truth and rebuild it, they'll tear down the whole Church and become dissident relativists),
2. They build things we never thought of (and, if this is 'education,' or 'parenting,' don't we need to have control, the whole plan, kids whose structures turn out like our models - safe, familiar?)
3. They get absorbed in their own creations (and, we get bored with the models we made, and don't really want to play anymore),
4. All this takes time from things that have more proof-of-value (and, doesn't seem to have any clear endpoint).

To which I reply:

1. They can't dismantle Truth, and must learn to generate verbal structures by de-constructing and re-constructing small, manageable, pre-built, excellent structures like ours.
2. If their structures are built with trustworthy bricks, they will be sound even if they look different from ours.

3. Never admit you're bored! It reflects badly on your capacity to interest yourself in reality.

4. Play is to the child what philosophy is to man, what beauty is to truth, what Sabbath is to the week - the superfluous and unnecessary crowning glory that calls him forth to collaborate in moving toward his eternal destiny and thus expands his capacity for freedom. The goodness of the material he's working on moves into him *through* his efforts to grasp it, to live up to it, to receive it, to understand it. His play is the work of becoming ordered according to what he plays with (memo to the wise: playtime is powerful stuff - watch those materials for intrinsic truth, goodness, and beauty, please).

For you who are afraid, I recommend a great big dose of Perfect Love, which drives out fear. I'm not being facetious! We really do need to have God's help to let go of what may become crippling fears. Also, I recommend you learn to take yourself less seriously, a la G.K. Chesterton's famous advice: "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly." We all need a resilient, dynamic strength in order to be free. A death grip on a few true things can be an iron-strong, static grip, but you can miss a lot of other truth while clinging to that lifesaver.



We don't model playing.

You are not the limit of what your kids may become, but you are an intermediary who leads them on by example, and by reflecting back to them what you perceive in and about them. If you do not do the work of growing up, of remediating your own lousy education, of being an avid and articulate communicator, they will be affected - not irreparably, but adversely, to some degree. You can't suddenly make it All Good, but must recognize this inability or lack of desire to play and delight in the adventure of education yourself is evidence of a need to start doing that very thing!

You must slog through it like a kid dragging a sled up a snowy hill laboriously: for the fun of the slide down. You must invite and endure failure, like a kid who wants to master a high dive, or a computer game. You must work hard, like a kid building a tree house. You must be receptive to trustworthy influencers, take in good materials, build your own capacity for delighting in the world of building blocks God has strewn all around you. Once you're having fun, it will be easier to invite them to play!

For you who do not yet feel that playing with truth, with reality, with big and powerful ideas is fun, I recommend you reconnect with the childlike state of being at leisure with yourself. Read Josef Pieper's *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, and my own *Souls at Rest* for more on the importance of holy leisure.

"...what produces knowledge is not the system of signs put before us, it is the work of our own reason on those signs...The source of knowledge is not in books, it is in reality...we must vitally assimilate what we read, and we must finally think for ourselves. ...we must...compel our own soul to re-express...my reading must enable me to engender thought in the likeness, not of the author who inspires me, but of myself!...A new idea acts retrospectively; a torch throws its light behind as well as before. Materials that were laid aside take on a new aspect when they are classified by means of an idea. Then everything within us is reborn and animated with a new life. ...To speak is to listen to one's soul and to the truth within it....**If you want fully to exist from the intellectual point of view, you must know how to think aloud, to think explicitly, that is to shape both within you and for the outside world the word which is the expression of your mind.**"

A.E. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life*

We aren't sure how to build our collection of bricks .

I want to help you become more aware of what bricks are, where to look for them, how to create them.

Creation

First, gather as many as possible from Creation. He's left forms-filled-with-truth all around you for your delight and amazement. We live in His playground, and He wants to share. Whatever He has made is a visible form, supported by a matrix of law, order, and the language of mathematics. If you will look deeply into anything there that interests you, you'll find wonders. The more you find, the more you realize how they interlock, how various the forms can be that you may make with them.

Look *through* any small-or-large form in nature to see God's fingerprint everywhere. Holograms, water, musically patterned animals, the spiral growth of trees, fractals, the science of sound, the structure of carbon molecules, bees - all are rich in parts and pattern, law and logos. The things themselves are words God has spoken, or ideas He has realized. The world simply shouts out His glory, if you will stop and listen.

Metaphor

One step up from concrete reality, you have metaphors, which can be very strong life-building blocks. Because we are designed to *know*, and to know one thing *by means of* another, we naturally use metaphors.

From a child's "God is like a father," to the psychologist's "This destructive family pattern is like a tug of war," to the scientist's "Light is like a wave," we bounce from one thing to know another.

If you become more conscious of the way metaphor, at its highest, becomes Sign-post to Truth, you will hungrily build the family stash of these blocks and encourage Junior to establish his own collection.

Much of proverbial wisdom is in the form, "A fool is like..." "Like a continually

nagging woman..." so mine the Scriptures as well as poetry, science, and math books for these.

Literature

Literature is a form of play-with-bricks, and an important one, in which our children learn to deal with danger and relationship dynamics and life's hardships in microcosm (see Michael O'Brien's book, *A Landscape with Dragons*). Literature helps them to develop what C.S. Lewis called 'stock responses.' This is huge, but I'll move on to the do-it-yourself brick-making that is possible as you interact with your kids in conversation.

Conversation

Real conversation is a playground where we try out our ideas, practice our ability to generate Good, True, Beautiful verbal

. . . structures, and collaborate to turn the whole experience into a rollicking kind of group building that builds the group itself into a new unity.

It can be very difficult for better players to play well with less-skilled conversationalists. I relish the back-and-forth volleys of ideas, the iron-sharpening-iron of good argument, the process of working together to build up new forms. But I don't always relish the slower process of speaking in a quite-limited vocabulary, waiting for inept 'set ups' and 'returns,' holding way back on the energy of my 'game,' and staying interested (awake??) for the sake of the kids.

Well, such is motherhood!

Though it can be tremendously instructive and motivational for kids to listen to more experienced conversation, they need, also, practice at conversation with adults facilitating and guiding (not 'controlling,' please!) We tend to have more patience with new speakers of a language than with those struggling to convey more complex thoughts of their own in the target language.

Somewhere between the small, simple formalities of basic courtesy, getting food and directions, using nouns, verbs and prepositions, and the huge, complex structures of literature, scientific and theologic writing, philosophy and history, lies the territory of conversational exchange.

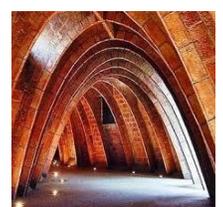
The building blocks here, though they might be about something concrete, are abstract thoughts. Though they might draw upon metaphor for expression, the thoughts must first be clear in the mind. If we aren't clear what we're thinking, or if we short-circuit the struggle to express it (even badly), we'll end up letting others do our thinking for us, and quoting them.

Danger: this is true even for the most true religious thoughts.

To help our kids grow conversant with Truth, we can provide good catechesis as a foundation. But unless they are allowed to tear down and rebuild that structure in their own words, and encouraged to pull those words out of their own interior, thoughtful, critical, experiential consideration of the Truth proposed, we are giving them feathers instead of truly preparing them for the heavy lifting Real Life may demand.

Mothers have a unique opportunity in the formation of kids, if they can have patience with this process, and shape the practice of playing with words, playing at conversation toward the practice of playing with Truth.

Now, it may make you very nervous to hear me say, "play with Truth," but hold on!



Children are not being taught to “play fast and loose with Truth,” to lie, to trivialize Truth, or to consider truth-seeking a mere game, when we involve them in such conversations.

We are not merely drawing out their own uninformed, or relative, personal ‘truths,’ and pretending these are sound structures.

We are doing our best to turn huge Truths into verbal structures that are manageable for them, so that they can practice building, linking, sorting them into forms that reflect the students’ own, growing understanding, their own validation of truth, their own insights.

We must be able to bear the tension of their ineptitude and struggle, and not do their work for them.

The House of Truth will not collapse because the thought they present is wrong. We don’t have to burden their bridge with our full weight to prove it wouldn’t be strong enough for Real Life.

They need safe ‘practice zones’ where they can take some risks and see what happens. Mom conversation can be prime territory for this kind of practice, if we are secure enough in the Truth to refrain from slamming anyone who misstates it, disagrees with it, or builds something we don’t like with it.

It is very, very hard to sit still for someone who baits me by contradicting a truth I hold especially dear. Kids will try out such statements like tiger cubs bite at their mother in play.

And, sometimes, mama's reaction sets some pretty clear boundaries, as ours will. But, would you rather they tried out some wacko notion in front of an admiring flock of non-Catholic age-mates with no discernment, or practice it with you? Another alternative: Junior just keeps it to himself and doesn't bother to let you know what he thinks. Also not good.

You'll have to figure out how much of their freedom you can take, and your capacity can grow, if you want more.

For more help to stimulate your own desire for bricks and for building, read Stratford Caldecott's *Beauty for Truth's Sake*, and my own *Souls at Work*. Father Barron's new *Seeds of the Word* takes a similar, and very interesting approach. For a thoroughly Catholic treatment of building up your faculties of soul into a vessel that's proof against lies and errors, read A. E. Sertillanges' *The Intellectual Life*. G. K. Chesterton's writings are chock full of great bricks, and my list could go on and on!

Check out my blog for practice playing with my favorites. Look for the Quote Me category, my Book Reviews, and the Study Guide questions for *Souls at Rest* and *Souls at Work* - all meant to start interesting conversations.

Let's stop and recap, get our bearings, and move on.

1. We want to help our kids have the strength and resilience to face the heavy loads life may place upon them.
2. To build the interior support they need, they must work/play with verbal structures that correspond to Truth.
3. These verbal structures must be woven into the 'stuff of real life,' be manageably small and simple, and true as true can be, in order to be good materials for developing the child's well-ordered thoughts.
4. We offer such verbal structures naturally, in explanations of science, aphorisms to live by, storytelling, use of metaphor, quotations, Scriptures, memorized catechism responses. We can more consciously collect them, create them, and get better at playing with them ourselves, to engage the kids in our own enjoyment and discovery.
5. Conversation is the play-space for bricks like these, and needs to be facilitated by patient, mature persons for less mature, less-skilled persons.
6. Ultimately, we will grow in capacity to process words (our own thoughts and those of others, theological and scientific truth, news, literature, etc...) into complex verbal structures that re-present the interior matrix of support and strengthen it. This 'internal skeleton' gives us greater correspondence to reality, greater connection with Holy Wisdom, and thus greater capacity to bear life's burdens well.

In the course of writing just this much, I've made lots of building blocks available for you to (break down my structure and) reuse. Let me draw your attention to some of the components. I can hear you saying, "I've got that one," and "Oooh, I like that new one," as we pull them out of the form I made to look at them more closely.

PLAY

'Play' is one of my favorite 'bricks'! Watch for *Souls at Play* - coming soon. This one links up with philosophy, wonder, beauty, Sabbath, and many other lovely bricks.

Interior Matrix of Support

'Interior Matrix of Support' A good one to use when discussing bones, cells, economics, Christ within us, and buckyballs. It has lots of places for interconnecting with other bricks.

SOUND

'Sound' is a great word-brick, with many layers of meaning; easily links to 'Science of 'the Word' 'interior space' 'waves' 'voice' and 'story'

Verbal Structure

'Verbal Structure': Any rich word, or form made of words is a building block, or brick. You'll notice I've used lots of humble bricks to build with, but the words 'to', 'of', 'the' and 'with' are not terribly rich on their own. Look for words with layers of meaning, links to different categories of thought, and association with bricks in your collection. A sentence, an argument, a definition, a story, an aphorism or slogan, a quote.

Lego Play Metaphor

'Lego play metaphor': An elegant block for building mental pictures of sharing, absorption, engagement, relinquishment.

"Never admit..."

'Never admit you're bored!' A very handy aphorism, with links to 'interesse' and 'study vs curiosity' and 'capacity for reality.'

Communicator

'Communicator': love this one! Links to 'communion,' 'community,' 'message,' 'media,' 'mediation,' and more.

Capacity for Freedom

'Capacity for Freedom': Extremely sturdy brick, large and foundational. To understand that freedom is a capacity, which must be strengthened by exercise is foundational to all my structures. Links to "Free will is a gift...", "We create our freedom by...", 'capacity for reality,' and many more.

Holy Leisure

'Holy Leisure' The key to human being, to freedom, to creativity! Big links to modern world, acedia, Sabbath, dis-integration, & more.

MATRIX

'Matrix': Links to 'womb', 'ladder, wisdom, science, vessel, scaffold, life, Mother, skin, bones, cells, Mary, Church

SEEING THROUGH

'Seeing *Through*': poetry starts with this one; it links to metaphor, science, God's fingerprint, Matrix of Holy Wisdom, wonder, personhood and art

Moving On...

So, we recognize that words can be used to build the kind of interior strength that supports life, supports freedom, holds up against life's pressures. But we cannot simply say lots of true things and hope that words as bits of information will have this power to empower our children. We must invite children into the adventure of form through words and word play.

Great Words, or High Truths can stand so remote and inaccessible that they become abstractions. Just as a child is given the wondrous opportunity to control, manipulate, direct, attack, and otherwise play with his father, who is tall and strong, intimidating and a force to be reckoned with, the child needs this sort of amazing, playful familiarity with words, with truth itself. And we must make that possible.

He won't have the skills to enter into this territory all alone until he is *in* the territory, made free of and playing with the words and ideas he finds there. Maybe this seems like a subtle nuance of thought and mere word-play in itself. But so often, parents talk *at* their children, and I think it's because they aren't sure how to converse *with* them in this playful-but-boundaried way.

There's a similar dynamic involved in learning language itself. You don't notice it until you try to learn a foreign language in a home where there's nobody to play with. You need lots and lots of low-pressure, low-level, imperfect, playful, everyday, plain vanilla conversation in the target language.

You need the constant stream of the small talk in a home, about the stuff of life. And you'll do best if there's someone around willing to toss the conversation ball back and forth with you in a carefully guiding way - making new patterns from the words you know, linking from these to new vocabulary, and expanding the scope of conversation gradually - all with great good will and enjoyment.

Nothing crushes the learning-to-speak vibe like a language partner who clearly hates the role of facilitator, or cannot stand to hear the language butchered by a novice, or is impatient to move on to things more worth talking about.

If we are playing conversation ball, the more advanced person must condescend in love, must still enjoy even our low-level practice conversations, and must do enough meta-thinking to be consciously directing, building, and facilitating the game.

In life-brick conversations, we must not slap down error, demand perfection, require immediate assent to truth, forbid the testing out of even wild and strange new ideas, or violate the private sphere of a child's inner thoughts.

“ Of all natural symbols, the richest and most eloquent is man himself. Man is not only an image of God, but an image of the ordered cosmos, a ‘microcosm’ or world in miniature, ...Positioned thus between the material world and the angelic, man (male and female) is a natural mediator and vicegerent of the Creator. ...This mysterious entwining of divine and human natures is called the ‘hypostatic union.’ It means that grace, and the source of grace, are now within creation as well as outside it, that grace and nature interpenetrate. The whole sacramental system stemmed from this...”

Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty for Truth’s Sake*

It’s a tall order! And one moms fulfill without hesitation or much instruction from day one of a child’s life in the family. The trouble is, moms may not realize how crucial this language-learning mode continues to be during the years when Junior is bridging from grammar to dialectic, from mere language, utilitarian and concrete, to language soaring and abstract. Too often, our interactions with kids become, themselves, utilitarian: “Do this. Stop that. Go there. Learn this. Sleep now. Eat now.” It takes work to have a more advanced conversation, and we’re dog tired.

“The keys to meaning are (and always have been) form, gestalt, beauty, interiority, relationship, radiance and purpose. An education for meaning would therefore begin with an education in the perception of form. The ‘re-enchantment’ of education would open our eyes to the meaning and beauty of the cosmos.”

Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty for Truth’s Sake*

One of the most important adaptive strengths a child can have is what Daniel Goleman calls “emotional intelligence.” In his book by that title, Goleman makes a good case for the need to be given access not only to the world around you, and the ideas of civilization, but also to the interior reality of your own feelings - through words. The importance of learning to honor and voice and handle emotional reality during childhood so as to be resilient and compassionate as an adult is hard to overstate.

“Free will is a gift, but freedom is a conquest.”

Fulton Sheen

The mother’s role here is most clear: from her, children learn there is an interior dimension, learn words for different emotional states, learn to respect and understand the reality of this invisible realm in themselves and others. She both models and also may make a conscious, verbal bridge to healthy engagement with emotional content. Without words, affective information can get stuck in the right brain, imagistic, less conscious state. Unvoiced, it cannot, as it should, inform reason and judgment. Without what Fr. Luigi Giussani calls “judgment with heart in it,” persons are in danger of dis-integration and interior polarization, or darkness.





My hope here is to contribute to the meta-thinking about, or the philosophical arch for your approach to conversations with your kids about every aspect of reality. We only have so many conversations, and they can be better ones. When words are used well, and some bricks are used over and over again, the kids internalize them almost effortlessly. (My kids sometimes fill in the blank for me when I begin a familiar quote, aphorism, or line of thought for the umpteenth time!)



“We create our freedom by every act of freedom.”

Fr. Luigi Giussani

When you take the trouble to structure an argument in a careful series of manageable steps, your child can learn to reconstruct it when you aren't there. (Contrast this with just asserting that such-and-such is true. Now, when someone asks him, he'll know your truth is true, but won't know how to explain or defend it well.)

“...cognitive and emotional intelligence,...of the two, emotional intelligence adds far more of the qualities that make us more fully human.”

Daniel Goleman

A Few Last Thoughts:

One way that you can learn together with older kids is to read well and slowly, with conversation. Be as honest as you can about what you don't understand. Model the teachable spirit you want them to have when reading material that's just out of reach intellectually. Enjoy stopping to look up a definition, or an etymology. Sometimes the detours are the best part of conversations. Having, as a focal point, a book that you are genuinely interested in reading, will give them entrance to topics that then become conversations between you.

You've heard me use the word 'rich' to describe the words and phrases and other 'bricks' I like best. Another word for that might be 'sticky,' as a burr is sticky. How many little projections does this have in all directions that will 'catch onto' other verbal structures?

Excellence in conversation is a whole 'nother topic, involving courtesies and a whole lot more meta-thinking. Rhetoric and argument are more specialized forms of conversation. Spiritual dialogue may be its highest form. I would like to write and teach more about all that, but for now, it's my goal to start you off with a sense of the

critically important role you moms play in the development of the first interior structures of support that, ultimately, really will help your child with the load-bearing of life. I hope you'll begin a love affair with words, if you haven't already - collecting great, sticky ones, and shiny, swordlike ones, and warm, reverberating ones.

Do you have a journal for the perfect sentences, quotes, aphorisms, and bits of folk wisdom that come to you in words? This is your stock in trade, your materials for hours of conversational brick-building with your kids! We are people of the word, alive in the context of The Word, in-dwelt at our very roots by word, and yet we often do not learn to wield the power of words for the good of our children.

Time is short! Please grow in this, and find other moms with their kids who want to play with you. Do you need a conversation starter? Check out the Study Guide questions for *Souls at Work* on my blog. Do you need ideas for better-quality materials to read with your kids? Consult your own desires, and theirs, and only then consult the 'best books list' to find works that already have their hooks in you, by virtue of some real interest.

Sometimes it will be enough for the kids to see you thoroughly enjoying, or being moved by, or getting excited about something you're reading. You have a lot of influence, and they really watch what makes you happy!



Dear Readers,

I hope you've found a few gold nuggets in this river of my thoughts. My intention is to bless you, encourage you, and affirm that your work in that home with your kids is of priceless and eternal significance! If I can get you well-rested, deeply in tune with the rock-bottom goodness of your own being, of just being, then I've done well.

Then, if I can encourage you to get up and get to work shoring up your own inadequacies and getting at least a step further ahead of your kids, then I've helped you be a better leader for them. Next, if I can get you playing with bricks in your years of conversational access to your kids, I am betting I'll be contributing greatly to their wholeness and resilience in the years to come. That's what makes this a worthwhile investment of my time!

I'm also secretly hoping you and they will get so excited about the adventure of learning and growing together, and the thrill of facing the world with an openness and freedom that can only come from a well-developed interior matrix of support, that you'll next want to share the delight of creating even more amazing new exterior forms. But, I've got to save something for Souls at Play, so catch me there for a great conversation. Meanwhile, I'm accessible and very much interested in your feedback, questions, and ideas.

Love, Charlotte

About the Author

Charlotte Ostermann is a veteran homeschooler, a Catholic convert and speaker, a freelance writer and blogger, poet, editor, and author.

Her books include *Souls at Rest*, *Souls at Work*, *Catholics Communicate Christ*, *Making Sunday Special*, & *Life in Motion*.

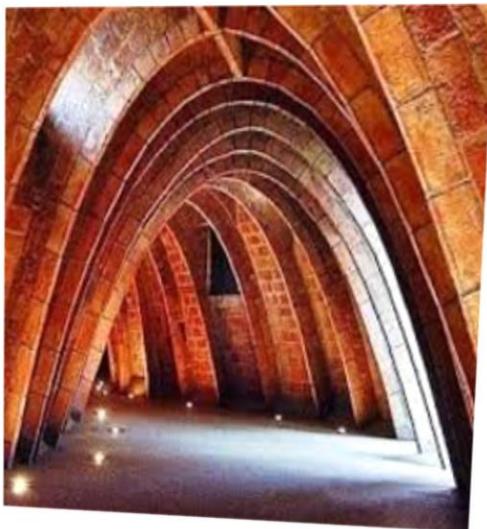
Her work has appeared in *St. Austin Review*, *Gilbert*, *Envoy*, *Thesauri Ecclesiae*, *Canticle*, and other publications. She writes for *Roman Catholic Spiritual Direction*, *Catholic Writers Guild*, *Catholic365* and other online venues.

She lives with three of her eight children on a 'farm wannabe' north of Lawrence, KS, where she worships at the *St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center*.

She's a founding member of the *Family of the Apostles of the Interior Life*, of *Sursum Corda Polyphony Ensemble*, and of the *Catholic Creatives Salon*.

Charlotte is the Director of the *Joy Foundation of Kansas*, and of the *50 Million Names Project*. Joy's mission is to create and support Catholic Cultural Initiatives. At 50MillionNames.com, names are registered to honor aborted children, emphasize the reality of their existence and humanity, and to generate ripples of blessing in their honor.

Did You Get
the
Companion
Volume of
Essays
About My
Favorite
Bricks?



**Bricks for
Life-Building
& Sharing**

A collection of things
I've made with my
favorite bricks. Enjoy!

Love, Charlotte

Another
Free
Conference
Bonus!

[Download
Here](#)



MotherheartPress

[Motherheart Press](#) is a project of the [Joy Foundation](#). To support Joy's Catholic Cultural Initiatives, Motherheart works are offered by their authors for distribution on a freewill donation basis.

Contributions to [JOY](#) are gratefully accepted, and support such projects as 50 Million Names, Sursum Corda, Catholic Creatives Salon, grants to Catholic artists, Joyful Moms Workshops, Regency Guild dances, Learning to See By Drawing classes, Catholic youth choirs, a resource lending library and more.

If you have received this publication for free, it's because part of [JOY's](#) mission is to support YOU! We are investing in Catholic families, Catholic educators, and Catholic artists.

Charlotte Ostermann, [JOY's](#) Director, welcomes you to receive, participate, donate, and [RESPOND](#)...freely!

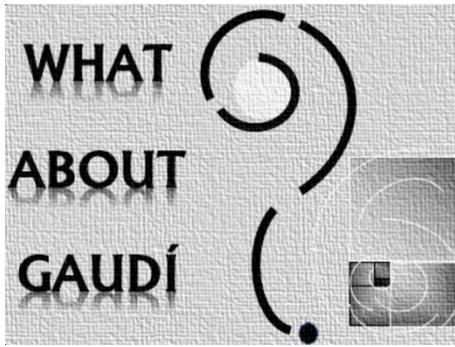
Thanks for your support. We ask that you refer others to [MotherheartPress.com](#), for more copies of this publication, and that's one more way to support [JOY!](#)



Light is Dawning on the City of Man



50 MILLION NAMES
VIOLENCE IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY!



Be Small, Think Big!



CLCCK
Catholic Library and Cultural Center of Kansas

The Joy Foundation of Kansas