



## AOF News & Views – Newsletter for July 2021

### ✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

#### ➤ Free Movie Nights!

**Fridays, July 2 and July 16, 7pm – 10pm**

Twice a month, we host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). The License prohibits us from naming the movie. But we can hint, usually.

July 2 will feature a 2012 movie about Australian Aboriginal girls who learn about love, friendship and war when their music group takes a USO tour opportunity to entertain the US troops in Vietnam. The second movie is ... we don't know yet. Open to suggestions.

How can you attend? You'll need a personal Netflix account + a laptop or desktop computer with the [Google Chrome web browser](#). If you don't have these we apologize -- please be patient until we have a movie venue again. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome web browser right now and install the "Netflix Teleparty" Extension. Get it at: <https://www.netflixparty.com/>. (Really, do it *now*, don't wait till movie night!)
2. Just before show time, fire up the Chrome browser again and go to the very special Netflix Movie Teleparty link, which will appear on the AOF events calendar about a half hour before showtime.
3. **Click that link.** The Movie Teleparty page will open. Log into Netflix (if not logged in already). At the top right of the browser frame check your "Extensions" list. Find the letters **Tp** in red. You must click on the letters.
4. The Netflix movie party should begin. You'll be watching it along with the rest of us. As it plays, we can chat on the side of the screen and make silly, snarky comments.

Free Movie Night was set up for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. RC *may* beg a small (voluntary) donation to cover costs. How can you do that? Sign up at <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership, a measly \$5 a month, is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) are like music.

**Location:** A Netflix Teleparty link, see above.

**Contact:** See <https://reasoncenter.com/contact/> or email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org".

*Free Movie Nights generally occur twice each month. You can suggest your own fave flick for next time, how cool is that?*



#### ➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

**Saturday, July 10, 9am – 11am**

A tidy stretch of Highway 99 runs two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road -- *our* stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. It is tidy because we have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. As one of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So join us please! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

Please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

**Location :** Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

**Contact :** 916-447-2169 (Don Knutson), or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

**Notes :** To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past the old Sleeptrain Arena. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, or somewhere near it.

*This is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home. In case of rain, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don).*



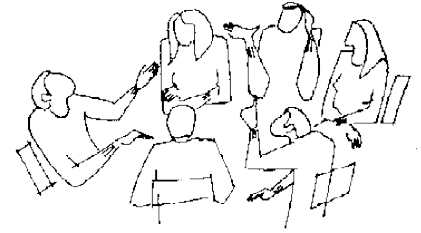
**Tuesday, July 13, 2021, 7:00pm – 8:00pm**

Join us, meet the Board, and keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. And maybe you'll have some good ideas.

Note, this Board meeting will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure your vaccinations are current, or wear a mask, or something. (Please wear something!)

**Location:** Ettore's Bakery & Café, dining room, 2376 Fair Oaks Blvd, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/EGWMQuveuoBkLSMs9>.

*Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your suggestions for events and activities -- most of all, your volunteerism. Helping hands are wonderful.*



**Sunday, July 25, 2021, 2pm – 4pm**

Do we have a speaker! [Kevin Bolling](#), executive director since 2017 of the [Secular Student Alliance](#) (SSA), will bring us up to snuff on how the SSA is helping students in high schools and colleges across North America.

Kevin has 20 years of nonprofit leadership experience, and his career includes over 10 years of student association management and on-campus program development across the U.S. For a decade, Kevin also served as the Executive Director of the California Thoroughbred Horsemen's Foundation, a charitable trust serving the healthcare needs of the industry's largely immigrant workforce.

Most recently, Kevin served as the Director of Philanthropy at the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, a major LGBTQ arts advocacy organization, whose youth outreach work has moved thousands of hearts and minds across the US towards embracing LGBTQ equality. He is a busy fellow.



This meeting will be by online videoconference. Attend as follows.

1. **Any time before the event:** Go to <https://zoom.us/download>. Download & install the "Zoom videoconferencing tool" if you haven't already. (Do it just once; it will be good for all future online Zoom meetings.) (Note, this step is *optional* -- it just makes the teleconference a bit easier.)
2. **Minutes before:** Go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcucOqrqz8uE9PwzHEPVLajW7NZiyXPgFFB>. It will take you to a "Registration Page." Enter your info, then click the blue box that says **Register**. Follow the instructions (it's free).
3. **If it asks you to sign in:** If you have a Facebook or Google account, or even an SSO account, just click one of the buttons for those, then sign in with your Facebook or Google info. Or create your own free Zoom account if necessary.
4. **If it wants a Meeting ID** (it probably won't), the ID is **833 7335 4497**.
5. If necessary, click the line that says **Join from Your Browser**.
6. The videoconference should begin. Speakers on, please! Sit back and enjoy.

**Location:** An online event – see above.

**Contact:** Email "programs (at) aofonline.org" or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

*The Sac Freethought community has ideas in the works! Get to know fellow nonbelievers - social activities and community involvement await you. Share your ideas at <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.*



## ✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

**Saturdays, July 3 and July 17**

Burn off those Lockdown pounds! Join freethinker friends for easy hikes in the area, locations to be announced (and suggestions are welcome). For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/> and click on one of the Saturday Morning listings, or send your ideas to Muhannad at <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/members/328699576/>.

Other local groups are also meeting online. Attend from the comfort of home, for free.

- **Sundays, July 4, 10:30am – noon: Online Coffee & Community.** Join us for coffee (BYOC) and conversation. New folks always welcome. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84871243462?pwd=aHBwS3VpeWxqWG1rYnVVRiNyTHBHQT09>.

- **Monday, July 5, 5pm: Christian Nationalism.** Blogger Seth Andrews will discuss the power that the Christian Nationalist movement currently wields, and how they use it. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/279089089/> for details.
- **Wednesdays, July 7 & 21, 7pm – 9pm: What's Your Story?** Meet other freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, nonbelievers and humanists in the Sacramento area; discuss beliefs and philosophy, and what led you to this place of mind. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84976409310?pwd=YmlTWTVqcVM5TmFrVjFrQkU2c1I1Zz09>.
- **Tuesdays, July 13 & 27, 7pm – 9pm: Porch Talk.** A gathering on a virtual front porch, a chat on topics of the day. Topic ideas are welcome. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86401692746?pwd=NWhrdHpEellNblRiR0w4RGtmQ2ZLUT09>.
- **Thursday, July 15, 7pm – 9pm: Recovering from Religion Virtual Support Group.** Providing personal support to individuals as they let go of religious beliefs. Share your story or just listen. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>.
- **Wednesdays, July 14 & 28, 7pm – 8pm: Black Lives Matter and Me.** Talk, read, watch videos; discuss social justice, reforms, privilege and power. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1lUcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Monday, July 19, 6:30pm – 8:30pm: Book Club.** Discussing *The Body* by Bill Bryson. Bring a few thoughts/ideas about the book to discuss, and suggestions for next time. See details at: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/276329698/>.
- **Friday, July 23, 6:30pm – 9:30pm, Virtual Skeptics in the Pub.** A social meeting for the Sacramento Area Skeptics, welcoming new skeptics and like-minded friends. Details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/tsvpxrycckbfc/>.
- **Saturday, July 24, 7pm – 9pm: Wine, Cheese, and Litera-cheer.** Share your thoughts about any book of choice, one you like or one you hate, one read recently or long ago. Just be nice (focus on the "cheer"), and BYO wine & cheese. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82238629326?pwd=YTdXN1gyMXI3bWQxNIJHcDdTV0JJZz09>.

## ➤ Blasphemy Breakfast in Folsom

**Sunday, July 10, 2021, 10am - 11:30am**

Come join like-minded friends for a Saturday breakfast in the Folsom area. Just walk into the restaurant look for smiling faces in the far back area on the right.

**Location:** Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, ph. 916-985-7337.

See map at <https://goo.gl/maps/9JU8WiBYrfLeNwHN7>.

**Details:** See <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/srnvksyccckbnc/>.

## ➤ Blasphemy Breakfast in Rocklin

**Sunday, July 20, 2021, 9:30am - 11:00am**

Join Rocklin-area freethinkers at Mel's Diner for a "Blasphemy Breakfast" (not that they blaspheme that much, but topics come up at times). A great starter event if you haven't been to freethinker gatherings before. Also a great group of people to answer any questions you might have, help you learn more about all the goings-on in the region, or help you any way we can. Recommended: the malts, omelets, biscuits 'n' gravy, and grilled cheese. And everyone's friendly.

**Location:** Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, ph. 916-772-6357, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/x62J3w1tDqZ47CVP9>.

**Details:** See <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/gfmvgsyccjbbc/>.

## ➤ Coffee & Community (in person, in the park!)

**Sunday, July 20, 2021, 10:30am – 12 noon**

Bring Your Own Coffee or other beverage, snacks, and lawn chairs so we can gather in a circle under the trees. New folks always welcome.

**Location:** Southside Park Cohousing, 434 T Street, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/jfFocWwGxN2Sk8qw5>

**Details:** See <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/xxqnksyccjbbc/>.

## ➤ More events!

Other freethought events pop up all the time, faster than we can print them. Keep checking the Sacramento Coalition of Reason global calendar at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>, and you will never be lonely.

### *You can help us.*

#### **Support Reason Center**

[Reason Center](#) opened in July 2014 and closed in 2020. Its mission was (is!) to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

If "RC" will reopen, it requires support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center because it stands up for *you*. To set up a monthly or one-time donation, visit [ReasonCenter.org](https://ReasonCenter.org).

#### **Support AOF**

You can support AOF *without spending a dime*. How? When you purchase goods at Amazon.com, simply use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762>. Bookmark it now! Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!



## ✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

### ➤ Chevalier de la Barre Day

Thursday, July 1, 2021

Mainly a French observance, **Chevalier de la Barre Day** is for all who opposes religious oppression. It marks the execution of the Chevalier de la Barre for impiety.

On July 1, 1766, church authorities tortured and killed young Jean-Francois de la Barre (the "Chevalier de la Barre" because he held the title of Chevalier or "knight") for impiety. His reputed "crimes" included not doffing his hat at a religious procession, singing bawdy songs, and the possession of banned books by Voltaire, a famed writer and leading critic of the Catholic Church. Outraged, Voltaire made the execution a cause célèbre, haunted by "this sentence so execrable, and at the same time so absurd, which is an eternal disgrace to France," because a key piece of evidence used against La Barre was La Barre's possession of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*.

The Chevalier and two young friends had been accused of defacing a crucifix in the French town of Abbeville. None saw this happen, but local clergy harassed and harangued the villagers until a few, fearing excommunication, vaguely recalled three youths who had not removed their hats at a recent Catholic procession. They pointed out La Barre and his friends. Once charged, one of the youths fled to Holland, and one (only 15 years old) was simply fined. Only the 19 year old La Barre remained. A search of his home turned up three forbidden books. The courts and the church decided they had their ideal suspect. Mercilessly they tortured him, cut out his tongue, and decapitated him. Eventually they burned his body on a pyre along with his copy of Voltaire's book.

In 1905, a statue of Jean-Francois, Chevalier de la Barre was built in Montmartre, on the outskirts of Paris. In 1941, Nazi collaborationists removed it and melted down for munitions for the war effort – while leaving statues of saints and kings intact.

In France, Chevalier de la Barre Day often features demonstrations in his memory. Today, freethinkers in France and the West experience great freedom in their lives, but in other cultures still torture and kill freethinkers and dissidents for their beliefs. Chevalier de la Barre Day is therefore a day to remember all those men and women persecuted by religion. For more information, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois-Jean\\_de\\_la\\_Barre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois-Jean_de_la_Barre).



### ➤ Indivisible Day

Sunday, July 4, 2021

In the state of Minnesota, former Governor Jess Ventura declared Independence Day to be **Indivisible Day**, a day in recognition of the separation of Church and State, and the vital role it has played in keeping our nation free and whole. See:

[https://secularseasons.org/july/indivisible\\_day.html](https://secularseasons.org/july/indivisible_day.html).



### ➤ World Population Day

Sunday, July 11, 2021

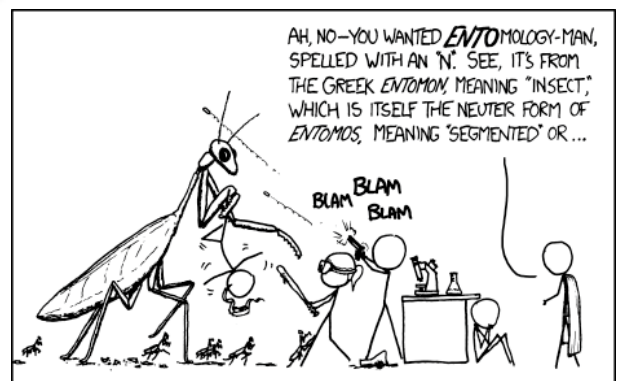
In 1989, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme established **World Population Day** to raise awareness of global population issues.

The inspiration was public interest in Five Billion Day, July 11, 1987, when the world's population reached approximately five billion people. Visit the World Population Clock at <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>.



If you missed the **2021 Thomas Paine Day celebration** (tsk), enjoy it now at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAo3ifwZza8>. Or find it on the Freethought Society YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8PXwTm8UpzKxAezBWUoFw>.

The new Thomas Paine Memorial Association is now planning more great programs. Share your ideas! Visit the Association website at <https://thomaspainememorial.org> (or see the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ThomasPaineMA>). Or contact Margaret Downey at PO Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366, email "Margaret (at) FtSociety (dot) org".



Register now for the **American Humanist Association 80th Annual Conference**, July 24-25, 2021. See: <https://conference.americanhumanist.org/>

## SSA Student Activist Scholarships

Scholarships are available to students enrolled in high school or college in the United States, designed to support students who in addition to pursuing excellence in their academic studies also advocate for secular values on their campus or community. To apply, visit <https://secularstudents.org/scholarships/>.



## Secular Morality

Atheists and believers both have moral compasses, but with differences: Theism is associated with stronger endorsement of moral values that promote group cohesion.

A new study suggests that, while atheists and theists share moral values related to protecting vulnerable individuals, atheists are less likely to endorse values that promote group cohesion and more inclined to judge the morality of actions based on individual consequences.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/02/210224143306.htm>



## Rabbinical story:

### *Why did God create atheists?*

Teaching the Talmud, a Rabbi explained that God created everything in this world to be appreciated, since everything is here to teach us a lesson. A clever student asked, "What lesson can we learn from atheists? Why did God make them?"

The Rabbi answered, "God created atheists to teach us the most important lesson of them all -- the lesson of true compassion. You see, when an atheist performs an act of charity, visits someone who is sick, helps someone who is in need, and cares for the world, he is not doing so because of some religious teaching. He does not believe that God commanded him to perform this act. In fact, he does not believe in God at all, so his acts are based on an inner sense of morality. And see the kindness he can bestow upon others simply because he feels it to be right!

"This means" the Rabbi continued, "that when someone reaches out to you for help, you should never say 'I pray that God will help you.' Instead for the moment, become an atheist. Imagine that there is no God who can help and say, 'I will help you.'"

(from [https://old.reddit.com/r/atheism/comments/lpioxv/a\\_short\\_jewish\\_story\\_why\\_did\\_god\\_create\\_atheists/](https://old.reddit.com/r/atheism/comments/lpioxv/a_short_jewish_story_why_did_god_create_atheists/))



## Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

**Atheists and Other Freethinkers** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at [www.aofonline.org](http://www.aofonline.org).

AOF President: Prolific Pamela Rivers  
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell  
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos  
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian  
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley  
Program chair: Super Susan McLean  
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif  
Directors at large:  
Roger Zabkie, Fran Evanisko, Christine Tweet,  
Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta), Kaeleigh Pontif

### How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
  - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us

### How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

### AOF's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers/533365556831322>

### AOF Mission Statement:

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives."

*What is a Freethinker?* One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (\*cough\*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Be respectful, and you may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>. (Book reviews are especially welcome.)



## John the Baptist

In the Gospel account, John the Baptist was beheaded in Galilee near the beginning of Jesus' mission on earth. Luke 7:19–21 also has John send two of his disciples to Jesus, which shows Jesus knew of his plight.

The reality may be quite different. The gospels and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus disagree on almost every detail regarding the death of John the Baptist, including the year of John's death.

Josephus tells us that the wedding between Herod and Herodias occurred in 34 CE, and that Herod had John taken to a remote fortress at Macherus, east of the Dead Sea, with the intention to execute John before he could stir up the Jews in revolt. Here is the relevant text from Book 18 of *Antiquities of the Jews*:

Now many people came in crowds to him, for they were greatly moved by his words. Herod, who feared that the great influence John had over the masses might put them into his power and enable him to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best to put him to death. In this way, he might prevent any mischief John might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly John was sent as a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I already mentioned, and was put to death.

That the wedding took place in the mid-thirties CE is confirmed by the action of King Antipas of Nabatea, who attacked and defeated Herod Antipas in 36 CE because of the slight to his daughter, whom Herod divorced in order to marry Herodias. This also confirms that the execution took place in 35 or early 36 CE, because the Jews believed that the defeat of Herod was divine retribution for the execution of John the Baptist, meaning that the execution was still fresh in their minds.

These references are strong evidence that John the Baptist was executed on the direct orders of Antipas some years after the crucifixion of Jesus (which is estimated at between 30 and 33 CE).

(condensed from <https://www.quora.com/Why-did-Jesus-not-rescue-John-the-Baptist-from-being-beheaded/answer/Dick-Harfield>)

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## Is it a bird? Is it a plane? ... No, it's St Christina the Astonishing

THE MEDIEVAL LEGEND of [St Agatha](#) puts me in mind of St Christina the Astonishing, a 12th-century Belgian saint who also had miraculous breasts. Yes, there's more to her story, and I know I shouldn't fixate on that one part. But I'm 38 and it's too late to change my ways now.

At age 21, the orphan peasant Christina had a fit and died. During her funeral she revived and floated up into the church roof. The priest insisted she come down, so she landed on the altar and told her erstwhile mourners that she had been to heaven, hell and purgatory, the whole tour.

She had some eye-opening revelations about whom she had seen where, but her main intelligence was that human beings stank from sin. She ran off to begin a new ministry of prayer, vicarious suffering for souls in purgatory, and floating as high as possible to avoid the smell.

She sat in burning ovens and icy rivers, swam under mill wheels and leapt from treetop to treetop. She lived in rags and was chased about the country as a lunatic or demoniac. Sometimes she was chained by her own family, but escaped into the forest.

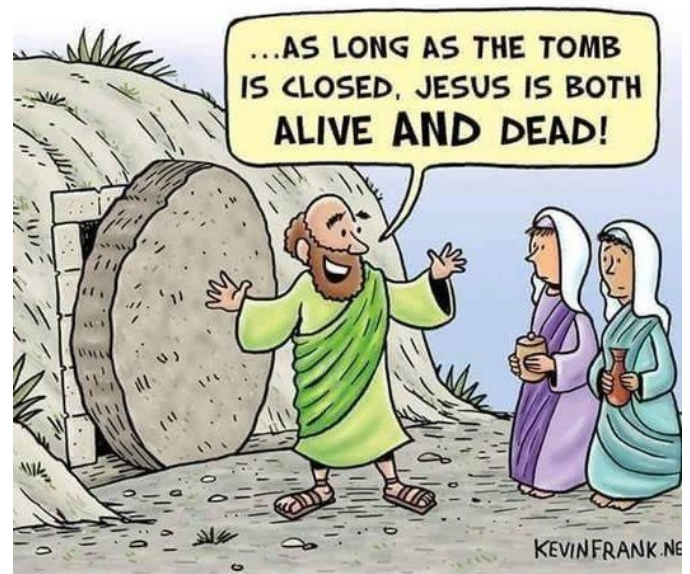
The Lord provided food for her on such occasions, but she had become rather fussy – she found human food like "swallowing the bowels of frogs."

"You've never eaten the bowels of frogs," my mum would have said. "Eat it or go hungry."

But the Lord was more sympathetic to Christina's dietary requirements and worked a miracle, allowing her to breastfeed herself. Her virginal breasts also produced oil which she dipped her bread into and which she used to treat her sores.

Christina was undoubtedly a real person, her life written by a contemporary, and she lived to the age of 70, though opinions were divided about whether she was holy, mad or demon possessed. In making her patron saint of the insane, the Church seems to have gone for some from column A and some from column B. Good call.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christina\\_the\\_Astonishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christina_the_Astonishing))



Saint Schrodinger, the forgotten disciple.