

# Charismatic

## Articles of Spiritual Enlightenment for Christians

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### The Easter Vigil

Bro. John Samaha, S.M.

**From the outset the Easter Vigil, originally and more appropriately called the Paschal Vigil, has been celebrated at night.**

In the beginning it was a very plain ceremony—an assembly that ended with the breaking of the bread and an *agape*. One or more days of fasting preceded the Easter Vigil.

As the Easter Vigil developed in Rome and in places where the Roman rite was followed, this tradition added a baptismal rite, the ceremony of the *lucernarium*, a

blessing of the new fire, and a candlelight procession.

As it developed the Vigil became more and more meaningful. At first the celebration took place at night like the weekly Eucharist, because most of the faithful could not assemble during the day. However, the evangelists situate the discovery of the tomb "as the first day of the week was dawning" (Mt 28:1), "very early" (Mk 16:2; Jn 20:1), "at dawn" (Lk 24:1). The thrust emphasizes that Jesus is the "light of the world" that came into the world as a "revelation to the Gentiles" (Lk 2:32).



In baptism the believer passes from death to life (Col 2:12). Ritually and really the neophyte is plunged with Christ into death so as to come to new life with the one who "was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6:4). For this reason baptism is called "illumination" (in Biblical Greek, *photismos*) and the baptized, "illuminated."

In our day, thanks to electricity, we can have as much light as we want whenever we want it. This was not the case in the past, when lighting the lamps in the evening was a rite. This was generally a happy occasion, when many lamps were lit as for a banquet at the beginning of the Sabbath on Friday evening. Christians understood this light that drives away the darkness as a symbol of the Christ-light. The

(See Page 2)

### Does America Need Religion?

William E. Simon, Jr.

**We live in a time of unprecedented prosperity, while the morals of our nation show signs of serious erosion.** And, even as the majority of our citi-

zens openly acknowledge the importance of faith in their individual lives, a minority is equally openly assailing the idea that religion has any place in our national life. It is both the best of times and the worst of times.

Many of us could easily bear witness to the importance of faith in our individual lives and I count myself among them.

Similarly, many of

us could argue strongly for the importance of faith for society at large—such as its role in strengthening marriage and family, inspiring voluntarism, as well as reducing crime and drug usage.

This article focuses on an even broader and deeper role for religion, one embraced by the framers of our constitution, namely: that faith and

(See "Religion" Page 8)

**First Friday Mass**—of the Sacred Heart  
**A Healing Mass**  
Rosary 7:00 pm—Mass 7:30 pm  
**April 2, 2004**  
**Our Lady of Mercy Church**  
1 Elmwood Drive, Daly City  
**Fr. Joe Landi, Celebrant**  
**Deacon Mark Reburiano, Homilist**  
Music by God's People  
**Come. Experience the Joy!**



### Experiencing the Spirit

Fr. Antonio Gentili

**T**he presence of the Holy Spirit, which is the same as saying the life and love of God within us, can be experienced in various ways:

- in every feeling or act inspired by a Love stronger than ours; in every act of faith, when we recognize God as Father and Christ as Lord;
- in the Christian community, the Church assembled in the Holy Spirit (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40);
- in listening to the Word and in the celebration of the sacraments;

— in prayer. Perceiving the Spirit of God in us during prayer is the condition for being aware of his presence in other ways.

The Gospel reminds us that the communication of the Spirit by the Father is the gift of Christian prayer: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Lk 11:13)

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for

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# The Easter Vigil

From Page 1

procession led by the Paschal Candle represents the journey of God's people no longer led by a bright cloud but by the glorious light that shines on every person coming into the world (Jn 1:9). This rite is most solemn in the context of the great night illuminated by the resurrected Christ. This was eloquently explained in the solemn proclamation of the Lord's resurrection that we now call the *Exultet*.

Because all lights are extinguished on Holy Thursday evening, it is necessary to light a new flame in order to celebrate a liturgy at night. And so the ritual developed: the blessing of a new fire and the procession into the church led by the Paschal Candle as the celebrant intoned "Light of Christ!" and the faithful responded "Thanks be to God!"

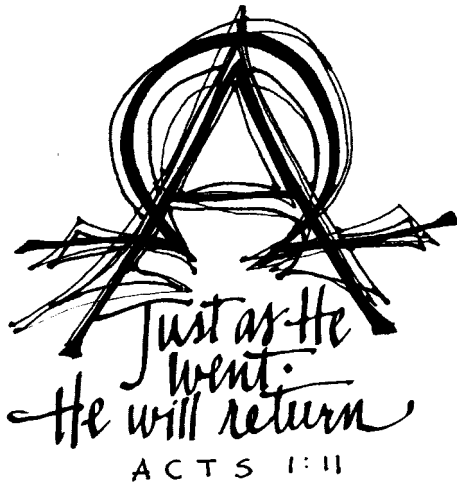
## Reviving the Vigil's Significance

Over the centuries this celebration underwent some problems and waned in significance. As late as the thirteenth century the liturgy was still not entirely structured. Since the seventh century there had been a general decline, and this event was celebrated early in the day on Holy Saturday. When Pope Pius V reformed the Missal in the sixteenth century following the Council of Trent, he forbade the celebration of the Eucharist after midday. Consequently on Holy Saturday morning in churches brightened with sunlight and a barely perceptible flame on the Easter Candle, the celebrant sang "O night truly blessed!" In addition very few people were able to attend this long liturgy on Holy Saturday morning. This added to its diminished significance.

The Biblical, patristic, theologi-

cal, and liturgical renewal that began to swell in the 1920s indicated the unacceptability of this condition and the impoverishment of the Easter celebration.

In 1951 Pope Pius XII authorized the celebration of the Easter Vigil during the evening hours of Holy Saturday, and revised the rites to foster greater congregational participation. Then in 1955 he decreed that the Easter Vigil must take place at night.



## The Modern Easter Vigil

In our day we follow the "Missal of Pope Paul VI" promulgated in 1969 following the Second Vatican Council. The Easter Vigil celebration has four parts: the blessing of the fire, procession of the Easter

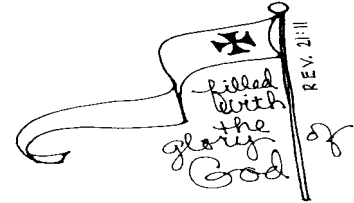
Candle, and the chanting of the *Exultet*; the Liturgy of the Word; the baptismal liturgy, which includes at least the blessing of the water and a renewal of baptismal vows; and culminates in the Eucharistic liturgy. This solemn celebration of the Lord's resurrection is the zenith of the liturgical year, "the solemnity of solemnities."

While the spoken word is very important in the liturgy, we are called to be more alert to the symbolism, both in things and in actions. We are asked to approach with a receptive attitude, ready to be engaged in a way that appeals both to the mind and to the heart, to one's whole being. We are invited to listen carefully and to look attentively on the realities present in signs that cannot be fully captured in words. This is how we are called to participate fully in the Easter Vigil.

—Brother John Samaha, S. M., writes from the Marianist Community, Villa St. Joseph in Cupertino, CA 95014.

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## If not, why not?

By Fr. Joe Landi, Editor

### Q: Why does our Archdiocese discriminate against credit unions?

A credit union is a member-owned credit cooperative and the profit it makes for doing "banking" for its member-owners are returned to them by way of low transaction fees, low interest rates on lending and high yield on savings. When compared to rates charged by banks and savings and loan corporations, which are owned by stockholders who share the profits, credit unions fit the precepts of the church's social teaching on economic justice for all.

There are about 10,000 credit unions in the United States. About 700 of these are in California. Of nearly 80 million credit union accounts nationwide, more than 7 million are in California.

Over 40 credit unions are located in the San Francisco Archdiocese. Some are small; some are exceptionally large, dwarfing in assets many banks. Some serve just their fellow workers; some metamorphosed into huge community credit unions. For example, in 50 years S.F. Fire Credit Union grew from about 750 members and assets of around \$51,000 to over 18,000 members and assets of over \$342M. Based in San Francisco, Patelco Credit Union, an anyone-can-join-credit-union, with 35 branches and 1200 service centers, is one of the most successful credit unions in the United States, with over 191,000 members and assets of over \$3B.

### So What's The Problem?

Recently, St. Veronica's Church in South San Francisco was told by the Finance Department of our Archdiocese to move their operating funds from Sierra Point Credit Union to a commercial bank or savings and loan bank because credit unions are not on the Archdiocese's list of approved depositories.

Sierra Point Credit Union is a community credit union, with several past mayors of South City on its Board of Directors plus a member of the City Council. Board member Dick Battaglia, a parishioner of St. Veronica's, is also Treasurer of South San Francisco.

Thinking I might get through the "plutocracy" of the Archdiocese, Dick Battaglia suggested that I get an answer to "Why does the Archdiocese discriminate against credit unions?"

Why me, you might ask? The right stuff, of course. For forty years, I

have been a credit union member. I am the immediate past Chairperson of Sierra's Board of Directors, a former Director of the California Credit Union League, and former Parochial Vicar at St. Veronica and a Catholic Priest in good standing with the Archdiocese—at least up until now. So I inquired of Richard P. Hannon, the Archdiocese's Chief Financial Officer, the reasoning that prompted a policy restricting parish and parochial school operating funds to "commercial bank accounts or savings and loan bank accounts."

A charitable summation of that inquiry would be: Don't confuse me with facts. "We are not going to change (the policy)," was his response. His response was a shocker for several reasons. **The first and foremost reason is that the policy is not in keeping with the Church's social teachings.**

In Pope John Paul II Encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991) for example, the pope extols the virtues of the very credit cooperatives the Archdiocese rejects. Writing on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the encyclical, *Reverum Novarum*, John Paul II lauded the work of Christians in bringing about economic social justice. "Here we should remember the numerous efforts to which Christians made a notable contribution in establishing producers', consumers' and credit cooperatives." (*Centesimus Annus, Toward the New Things of Today*, Chap II, 16).

Secondly, and closer to home for an economic teaching, The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, (11/13/86), in *Economic Justice For All*, asks us to become informed, measuring every policy by how it "touches the least, the lost and the left out among us." We are called to new forms of stewardship, and credit unions fit that bill because credit unions are democratic, member-owned cooperatives, where members have the power to direct credit union policy.

A credit union's board is elected based on a one-member, one-vote structure. This structure is in contrast to for-profit, public companies like a bank or S&L where stockholders vote according to the number of shares of stock they own.

### Are Credit Unions Safe?

Congress created the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund (NCUSIF) in 1970 to insure members deposits up to \$100,000. Administered by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), the NCUSIF is backed

by the "full faith and credit" of the U.S. Government, but funded totally by credit unions. However, not one penny of insured savings has ever been lost by a member of a federally insured credit union.



Fr. Joe Landi

Banks seem to be in the news frequently for charging excessive fees or being fined for some corporate wrongdoing. Moreover, banks and S&Ls, not only have depositors and stockholders see their money evaporate, but thanks to Charles Keating, the godfather of the S&L scandal, taxpayers will be paying for it for about 20 years. He used the Lincoln S&L he controlled as his private piggy bank—and he was very piggy! Keating caused a rippling effect that bankrupted the FSLIC and left taxpayers a bill in excess of \$500B to stabilize the savings and loan banking industry. For an insight on corporate greed and how to make others' money evaporate, read Steven Pizzo's book, *Inside Job*, one of the best books on S&L looting.

### What Are The Advantages Of Credit Unions?

Credit unions exist only to serve their member-owners. Board members are volunteers. Some larger credit unions are privately insured to \$500,000 per account. All are non-profit.

Surveys repeatedly show members are more satisfied with the service they receive from their credit union than bank or savings and loan customers are with their institutions. So, why does the Archdiocese's policy for operating accounts exclude credit unions?

### Consider these points:

1. In 1909, parishioners at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Manchester, New Hampshire formed the first credit union in the United States. It is still serving its owner-members.
2. Credit Unions are in harmony with the Church's teaching on economic social justice for all. (*Centesimus Annus*, IV, 36f)
3. None of the surrounding Dioceses exclude credit unions as a depository.
4. Checks drawn on credit unions are acceptable in the Sunday collections and acceptable in the Archdiocesan Appeal. Therefore, credit unions should be acceptable to receive deposits from Catholic churches, schools and the Archdiocese itself.

**The policy should be changed.** Credit unions have a right to know if not, why not?

See you in church.

## Faces of Courage

A book review

### **F**aces of Courage: Young Heroes of World War II—

a new young adult book that depicts the struggle for survival by brave young people who risked their lives to defy the Nazis. There is Kirsten, a young Danish girl who helped save a group of Jewish children from the clutches of the Nazis. Yojo, a Gypsy teenager, guided downed British pilots over the Pyrenees Mountains to freedom in Spain. Jacques, a blind French teenager, organized a student resistance group called Volunteers of Liberty. The Eidelweiss Pirates were German teenagers who opposed the Hitler Youth and aided homeless Jewish children and runaways. And Jacob, a young Pole, concealed his Jewish identity and went to work



in a German armament factory. Three of the stories relate the heroics of real people; the others are about fictional characters but are based on documented events.

Author and renowned educator Dr. Sally Rogow is touring in support of her new book which facilitates Christian-Jewish dialogue about the Holocaust. *Faces of Courage: Young Heroes of World War II* is an inspiring collection of twelve stories of young rescuers, resisters, victims and survivors of Nazi tyranny including Christians, Gypsies, Jews and young people with disabilities. Reminiscent of another brave teenager, Anne Frank, all of the young people in *Faces of Courage* affirm the highest values of the human spirit.

Dr. Rogow, who is co-chair of the Jewish-Christian Friendship Circle in Vancouver, has written children's books as well as articles on language, literacy and social development and has conducted workshops for special needs children and educators all over the world. She recently read in Toronto at St. Michael's Catholic High School and was

interviewed on Vision TV, Canada's multi-faith television network. She will read at Catholic and Jewish High Schools in British Columbia, Washington and California in Spring 2004. *Faces of Courage* has received testimonials and reviews from Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, The Anne Frank Center in New York, The Canadian Council of Christians and Jews in Toronto, The American Library Association and the Association of Jewish Libraries.

Rogow's most recent articles include "A Courageous Rescue: The Story of Assisi" which is the account of how Cardinal Aldo Brunacci, Bishop Giuseppe Nicolini and Father Rufino Nicacci sheltered and rescued hundreds of Jewish refugees in Italy and "They Must Never Be Forgotten: Nuns and Priests Who Rescued People From the Holocaust," which is the account of courageous Catholic Nuns and Priests who rescued Jews from the Nazis. It can viewed at the Catholic Educator's Resource Center's web site at [www.catholiceducation.org](http://www.catholiceducation.org). Rogow hopes that the articles and the book will act as a "bridge for Christian-Jewish relations."

### About the author

Sally Rogow has a keen interest in stories of heroism. Her experience working with children with disabilities gave her many opportunities to witness the courage of young people facing adversity. She has written books and articles on language development, literacy, play and social development as well as books for children and adolescents, such as "Lillian Wald: The Nurse In Blue" and "Rosa Minoka Hill, Native Woman Physician." Sally has a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin, an M.A. from Columbia University, an M.A. from Michigan State and an Ed.D. from the University of British Columbia. She is a native of New York, but now makes her home in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

—Available on line at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com); \$12.95  
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## Book Reviews



### **Testimony of the Cross**

—Meditations and Prayers of John Paul II  
By Pope John Paul II; Photographs by Grzegorz Galazka

A stunning and moving photographic and textual reflection expressing the mystery of the cross in the pope's life. Prayers and meditations are written by the Holy Father, and forty beautiful photographs provide an exquisite retrospective of John Paul II's pontificate.

\$15.95—Liguori Publications

### **Lent and Easter Prayer at Home**

By Mark G. Boyer

Shows how to make Lent and Easter special simply by paying attention to ordinary things all around us through Scripture, reflections, meditation questions and prayers from the Psalms.

\$8.95—Ave Maria Press

### **The Undoing of Death**

By Fleming Rutledge

In this collection of Holy Week and Easter preaching, the author offers a wide-ranging vision of the cross and Resurrection, and the new creation arising out of eternal love.

\$25.00—Eerdmans

### **From Resurrection to Pentecost**

—Meditations for the Easter Season

By Robert F. Morneau

There are seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost. This volume of poems and ponderings offers one form of companionship for this beautiful season.

\$12.95—Crossroad

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## Jim Caviezel

by Edell Cech

**R**emember the thoughtful soldier in *The Thin Red Line*? The time-machine-cop in *Frequency*? The inspirational bum in *Play It Forward*? The witty young sailor in *Count Of Monte Cristo*? Or Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*? All played by Jim Caviezel, one of the most successful Catholic actors in Hollywood. **Youth Beat:** There's a big movement right now: young people who are really into their faith.

**Jim:** Well, I'm part of that young move-

ment. God is calling us all to come to Him more than ever. Conversion is a lifelong thing. Maybe your actions aren't there yet, but it starts in your thoughts and prayers. The more you pray, the more God comes into your life.

**YB:** Can you give an example?

**Jim:** Like going to Mass - you have to prepare yourself to receive the Eucharist. Some people say, "I can't go to Communion because I haven't gone to confession." Well then, get prepared! You prepare before a basketball game; you practice, you train. If you're serious about being Catholic, then train every day - make that the cornerstone of your life.

**YB:** How does one get that boldness?

**Jim:** For starters, when guys think of what they want to be someday, do they think, "Someday I want to be this luke-warm-average-mediocre wimp"? Or do they think of being one of those knights of the Round Table - with a sword in hand, like St. Michael the Archangel - to

Youth

Connecting with the Gospel

be someone on a horse and ride like they did in *Braveheart*.

**YB:** It's a radical commitment, then?

**Jim:** That's what I'm telling young people: Christ's cross is worth dying for. **If you're looking for an easy life, the Catholic faith isn't it. At least make a choice. But if you say you're Catholic, live it.** We need saints on this earth right now. You've got to focus on that - you've got to put yourself around people that are going to support you in your Catholic life, that are going to nurture that--every time you search for friends like that, God will bless you. And if you don't have any, pray, because God will put them in your life. You do it by praying from your heart. You do it by trying every day. That's what we need.

**J**oe Carroll was born a poor kid from the Bronx into a family of ten. With the goal of becoming a millionaire by seeking fame and fortune in California, Joe arrived on the West Coast in 1963 with \$50 to his name.

However, rather than making financial investments, Carroll made a spiritual one and entered the seminary. In 1974 he was ordained a Catholic priest and for the next eight years devoted himself to parish work, building a strong group of supporters who found his charisma and gregarious personality hard to resist. But as his congregation grew, so did another group of San Diegans: the homeless. Bishop Leo T. Maher was well aware of the problem and appointed Father Joe to head St. Vincent de Paul in 1982, which at the time was nothing more than a lunch line and thrift store.

Father Joe realized a meal was only the first step; there needed to be a more substantial collection of programs and services in place to positively impact the lives of San Diego's homeless. With that in mind, he devised the idea of an urban oasis, organizing a board of prominent San Diegans who joined him in putting into action his grandiose plans of building a Village within a city.

*"I came right out in my commercial and said I was a hustler and needed money to help the less fortunate - there was no strategic planning in developing my message,"* Fr. Joe says. *"I really hoped there would be no response so I could return to my duties at the parish, but almost immediately the donations came pouring in."*

By 1987, the first of three new buildings for the homeless, the Joan Kroc Center, located on the corner of 15th Street and Imperial Avenue, was completed. The Bishop Maher and Paul Mirable Centers followed in 1989 and 1992 respectively.

Father Joe developed a "one-stop-shopping" approach to rehabilitation that profoundly impacted the entire country's philosophy of care by placing clients in a respectful and dignified environment, while facilitating easy access to a comprehensive list of services.

Today those facilities provide housing to 855 children, families and single adults nightly. In addition, on-site services include a career and education center, medical and dental clinic, children's services department, counseling programs and more than one million meals annually.

Fr. Joe Carroll is a testimonial of how one person can change the lives of many others by redirecting his personal gains to universal ones.



Excerpted from www.svdpv.com



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## In The Parking Lot by Fr. Frank Pavone

**I**n the general election, as in the primary, many pastors will be approached by people who wish to distribute campaign literature in the Church parking lot, or who simply do it on their own.

These are people who have heard the call of the Church to get involved in transforming society! They have understood what the Second Vatican Council meant by the "apostolate of the laity" and their special call to be in the world as witnesses to Christ. They have learned what the Church teaches about the tragic separation of faith and life that leads many to worship in a corner but leave the world unchanged.

So they pay attention to elections. They find out who is running, and make a decision in conscience about who is the best person to exercise public office in a way that will advance God's Kingdom of justice, life, and peace. And now they take a practical step and attempt to inform their fellow-believers by handing out literature at the place where they are most likely to find them.

Then what happens? Often, they get thrown off the property! The very pastors who are ordained to stir up their gifts to get involved in changing the world now punish them for exercising those gifts!

There is no reason to throw such people off the property simply for putting literature on cars. Among the attorneys who advise us at Priests for Life are James Bopp, Jr. and Barry Bostrom, who are among the nation's leading experts on tax law and on what Churches are allowed to do regarding elections. In a recent letter (full text at [www.priestsforlife.org/elections/parkinglots.pdf](http://www.priestsforlife.org/elections/parkinglots.pdf)), they advised us as follows:

"The distribution of campaign material by others in the church parking lot will not jeopardize the church's tax exempt status. The mere permission of distribution of campaign materials by others in the church parking lot is not regulated by the Internal Revenue Code. The Code and its regulations are designed to limit only the activities and expenditures of non-profit organizations. Distribution of campaign materials by others outdoors, in a public parking lot, is not an activity or expenditure of the

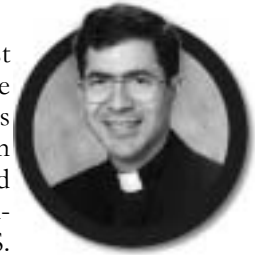
church.

"In most states there are state court decisions holding that such activity is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and/or the State Constitution, and therefore, the church will suffer no adverse consequences as a result of this activity. There are many cases recognizing the free speech rights of individuals and protecting speech and petitioning, reasonably exercised, in public areas, even when the property is privately owned....

"In other words, churches not only may permit campaign statements to be distributed in their public parking lots, they cannot prohibit such distributions because the parking lots are open to the public."

I am grateful for this expert guidance. Wouldn't it be great if we stopped worrying about what might happen if we do something, and started worrying about what might happen if we do nothing?

—Fr. Pavone is the National Chairman of *Priests For Life*



## Easter 2004 by Fr. George Dyer, S.T.D.

**The Risen Christ promised to remain with us until the end of time. (Mt. 18:20) We can find him in:**

- a young widow hugging a flag to her chest as her Marine husband is laid to rest.
- a little Iraqi boy on a hospital bed, both arms amputated just below his shoulders.
- children standing in soup kitchen lines across the United States, their noses barely reaching the edge of the serving table.
- an elderly nursing home resident whose family rarely visits.
- forty-two million Americans who pray they won't get sick because they have no health insurance.
- millions of Americans who are searching for jobs.

We can also find Christ wounded and hurting within ourselves, when our hearts are burdened by guilt or regret, by loneliness or fear.

Christ lives in our Church, for God's Spirit has fashioned us into the new presence of Christ on earth. We are to be the hands and voice and heart of Christ. Through us and

with us, he feeds the hungry and comforts the grieving.

We are to be instruments of justice and peace, committed to bringing love where there is hatred, pardon where there is injury and hope where there is despair. Ours is not an impossible dream, for our Risen Lord has set something new loose in the world. He spoke of it in terms of a Second Spring (Matthew 24: 32).

Spring arrived in the Midwest a month ago. Trees were dark shapes against newly fallen snow, and ice lingered on the lakes but March 20<sup>th</sup> told us that the earth had taken a friendly tilt and the sun was coming our way. Soon buds will pop, grass will green and Spring's miracle will be with us again — a world fully alive after a long winter's sleep.

Our living Lord is with us and in us, giving us a life that will burst into glory in eternity. In the meanwhile we lend him our hearts and hands and search for him in those about us, seeking not so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is searching for him and living in him that we find our way to eternal life.

—Fr. George Dyer, S.T.D., is the Pastor of Saint Patrick's Parish, Wadsworth, Illinois and author of the *Catholic Educator* and the *three Minute Theologian*. © 2004



## To Reach Peace, Teach Peace by Fr. John S. Rausch

**A**fter Mark Springer left the seminary in 1969, his draft status during the Vietnam War jumped from a deferment for divinity students, IV-D, to IA, "available for military service." But, nurtured in a loving family of ten kids and steeped in the Gospel spirit through his seminary years, Mark needed to challenge the war.

"We are caught in an American culture that says violence is the way," he said, "but the way of Jesus is different. I could not kill anyone according to the words of Jesus."

Mark appeared before his draft board in Pontiac, Michigan, and received the classification of 1-O, "conscientious objector available for civilian work contributing to the maintenance of the national health, safety, or interest." The draft board assigned him for 24 months to the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Home, Farmington, Michigan, where he worked as a counselor and director of recreation for boys and girls who were wards of the court. Mark was reaching for peace by teaching peace.

The U.S. military draft ended on June 30, 1973. Yet, with a preemptive strike policy in place and frequent U.S. military action around the world, twin legislative bills, S 89 and HR 163 cur-

rently sit in the Committee on Armed Services to reinstate it. The act, known as the "Universal National Service Act of 2003," would require both men and women 18 to 26 to serve for 2 years in the uniformed services or in some civilian capacity determined by the President. The Pentagon denies it wants another draft, but last November it posted on its website, "Defend America," an appeal for volunteers to fill all 10,350 draft board positions nationwide and the associated 11,070 positions for appeal boards. Politically, no discussion about the draft can begin till after the presidential election. Morally, however, men and women ages 18 - 26 must start now to examine their understanding of peace and war in light of Church teachings and the words of Jesus.

The Catholic Church recognizes the status of conscientious objectors who stand against an individual war and all wars in general. The U.S. government only grants CO status to those standing against all wars. By 1969 during the Vietnam War 2,494 Catholics had received CO status.

Obtaining CO status remains tricky, but doable. The candidate needs to prove: 1) a firm, deep, and fixed belief against personal participation in any war;

2) the conviction is based upon religious training and belief; and 3) the claim is sincere.

If the draft gets reinstated, parishes can become great sources of support with training, testimonies and organized peace activities. CO candidates can file documents with their parishes attesting to their Gospel beliefs about creative nonviolence. Occasionally sermons can address the Catholic position on peace and war.



**Fr. John Rausch, a Glenmary priest, teaches, writes and organizes from Stanton, Kentucky, in central Appalachia.**

The Church continues to recognize the validity of the just war ethic, but Catholic reflection today has clearly moved in the direction of an imperative for peace. Addressing the diplomatic corps assigned to the Holy See in 1997, John Paul II said, "For a long time international law has been a law of war and peace. I believe

that it is called more and more to become exclusively a law of peace, conceived in justice and solidarity." His teachings evolved from witnessing the creative nonviolent resistance that brought victory to Solidarity in Poland and dismantled the Berlin Wall in Germany. In 1979 the pope admonished the world community with simple yet profound words: "To reach peace, teach peace."

A conscientious objector represents a person courageously teaching peace with an alternative witness.

## Palm Sunday

**Fr. George Dyer**

**L**ent, like Caesar's Gaul, is divided into three parts.

The first three and a half weeks call us to a new beginning through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Lent's second part invites us to study Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead. The two parts are a neat fit, says liturgist Mark Searle. The first is designed to lead us to "compunction", a word that suggests the "puncturing" of our inflated egos. Hitting us repeatedly with demands that we would not or could not meet, the first weeks of Lent remind us that we are "dust" and destined to return to dust. Then the final weeks of Lent present us with the image of Jesus, savior, healer and life-giver (Searle, "The Spirit of Lent", Assembly 8:3).

If this Lenten strategy deflates us, it also helps us understand the mood of the Jerusalem crowds on Palm Sunday morning. They first glimpsed Jesus riding a borrowed colt down the winding road from the Mount of Olives. With their hopes soaring, the people ran to meet this healer of the blind and deaf, this raiser of the dead. They spread their cloaks in

his path, waved branches torn from palm trees and shouted a welcoming "Hosannah" as he entered the city. Both a benediction and an entreaty, the word literally means "Save us, we pray!" We make that prayer our own this Palm Sunday as we plead for ourselves, our nation and our troubled world.

Our tattered Lenten resolutions are a metaphor for our personal and our national experience. Both have taught us wisdom and the perils of limited vision and unintended consequences; and so we worry that events in the Middle East may slip the reins of our limited will. Palm Sunday reminds us that a Savior has come among us. God sent his son to lead us from darkness to light, from death to life.

**On Holy Thursday** we will recall the Lord washing the feet of his disciples. On Friday we will venerate the cross on which he died. On Holy Saturday we will bring the newly lighted Easter Candle into the darkened church and touch our tapers to that Easter flame. As that new fire dispels the darkness, we will know a hope that springs not from our resources but from the power of the Risen Christ to bring peace to our lives and our world.

Religion?

From Page 1

freedom are indissolubly linked in a way that is critical for the welfare and endurance of our country.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

One of the most poignant stories of ancient times is the account of the Roman general Scipio Africanus weeping over the burning of Rome's great rival, Carthage, in 146 B.C. Asked why, Scipio said he felt terror at the thought that someday someone would give the same order to destroy Rome too. How extraordinary, said Polybius his tutor, to whom Scipio was speaking, that on the day of his greatest success he should have been aware of his own mortality and the transience of life. Scipio was a rare conqueror who needed no slave to whisper in his ear, "This too shall pass."

That same sense of transience lies at the heart of Polybius' own work, *The Histories*, which Thomas Jefferson and James Madison studied and knew so well. Throughout history, as Polybius observed, all republics had risen, prospered, and fallen. Indeed there was a "regular cycle of constitutional revolutions" and a process of "ordained decay and change." The most important of the three great classical sources of decay was what Polybius called "the corruption of customs."

The framers sought to avoid the previously inevitable corruption of customs and to set up a "new science of politics" as a direct answer to the fatalism of Polybius' analysis. As men of the Enlightenment, they were optimists but also realists. The American republic was the first great republic since the fall of Rome. It was to be the "new order of the ages." But while the founders of our republic were revolutionary, they were also rooted in history.

It is clear from their writings that they had carefully studied political systems of every type. They sought to use history in order to defy history. More specifically, they had a clear and ingenious idea how the American republic could break the inevitable cycle and

beat the historical odds.

The United States was to be a "Great Experiment," in George Washington's oft-repeated words. Their way, they believed, was the way not only to win and order freedom but also—and equally important—to sustain freedom. The United States would therefore be a free republic that would remain free. But what was their solution? What was the basis of their optimism?

It was certainly *not* a belief in democracy. John Adams pointed out "There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide." James Madison was equally gloomy: "Democracies have always been spectacles of turbulence and contention and as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths."

If you ask most Americans today, including many scholars, to spell out the framers' solution, the answer would lie in the separation of powers, and our system of checks and balances. A strong constitution, they would say, is the sole necessary protector of freedom--the only necessary antidote to the corruption of customs. This reliance on the constitution alone however, is flawed and not consistent with thousands of years of history.

It is true that our constitutional separation of powers is an essential, as well as distinctive feature of our American government. But it is not unique—the Swiss republic adopted it before America. And it is only part of the solution the framers devised for countering the corruption of customs. Polybius expressly says, and the framers repeated it, that a strong constitution is not enough because human nature left to its own devices would eventually subvert the constitution itself.

Polybius wrote, "When a commonwealth, after warding off many great dangers, has arrived at a high pitch of prosperity and undisputed power... the manner of life of its citizens will become more extravagant; and that the rivalry for office, and in other spheres of activity, will become fiercer than it ought to be. And as this state of things goes on more and more... this will prove the beginning of a deterioration."

So, if the framers' reliance either on

democracy or separation of powers was not absolute, what is the other missing piece of the puzzle? It was a concept sometimes referred to as "the eternal triangle of first principles"—a set of three interlocking and interdependent ideas that were viewed as absolutely foundational for sustaining freedom.

The three legs of this triangle are liberty, virtue, and religion. The premise is that each leg requires the other—liberty requires virtue, virtue requires faith, and faith requires liberty. With this concept in mind, we can clearly

**"There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."**

John Adams

see the heart of the framers' brilliant view of the indissoluble link of faith and freedom. I am not arguing that all the framers were people of faith, let alone orthodox faith, or that they agreed on the precise place of religion in public life. Clearly they demonstrated great diversity on both these issues. On the underlying relationship of faith and freedom, however, they showed remarkable unity, almost without exception.

LIBERTY REQUIRES VIRTUE

The first leg of the triangle is the principle that liberty requires virtue. For the framers, liberty was not just a form of negative freedom—a freedom "from." Rather, it was positive freedom—a freedom "for," or freedom "to be." In Lord Acton's famous formulation, freedom is not the permission to do what we like but the power to do what we ought. In a similar vein, Benjamin Franklin once said, "Only a *virtuous* people are capable of freedom." Or in James Madison's observation, we see clearly that "the father of the constitution" did not rely on the constitution alone: "Is there no *virtue* among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks—no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without virtue in the people is a chimerical idea."

John Adams was equally blunt.

(Continued on page 12)

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## On The Lighter Side

### Why God Made Men Happy

**T** heir last name stays put when they marry. Wedding plans take care of themselves. Wedding dress \$1000--man's tux rental--\$100.

Chocolate is just another snack. They can never be pregnant. They can wear a white T-shirt to a water park. They can wear no T-shirt to a water park.

Car mechanics tell them the truth. They never have to drive to another gas station restroom because this one is just "too icky". They don't have to stop and think of which way to turn a nut on a bolt. Same work, more pay. The occasional well-rendered belch is practically expected. New shoes don't cut, blister, or mangle their feet.

One mood--all the time. Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat. A seven-day vacation requires only one suitcase. They can open all their own jars. They get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness. Their underwear is \$8.95 for a three-pack.

Three pairs of shoes are more than enough. And one wallet matches all shoes. They almost never have strap problems in public.

Everything on their face stays its original color. Wrinkles add character. The same hairstyle lasts for years, maybe decades. They only have to shave their face and neck. They can play with toys all their life. Their belly usually hides their big hips.

They can wear shorts no matter how their legs look. They can "do" their nails with a pocket-knife. They have freedom of choice concerning growing a mustache. They can do Christmas shopping for 25 relatives on December 24 in 25 minutes! ☺



### Top Ten of the Silliest Questions Asked by Cruise Ship Passengers, or why the cruise director jumped ship...

10. Do these steps go up or down?
9. What do you do with the beautiful ice carvings after they melt?
8. Which elevator do I take to get to the front of the ship?
7. Does the crew sleep on the ship?
6. Is this island completely surrounded by water?
5. Does the ship make its own electricity?
4. Is it salt water in the toilets?
3. What elevation are we at?
2. There's a photographer on board who takes photos and displays them the next day, the question asked: "If the pictures aren't marked, how will I know which ones are mine?"

**And the Number One silliest question asked by cruise ship passengers...**

1. What time is the Midnight Buffet being served? ☺



**"A joyful heart is the health of the body..."**  
Proverbs 17:22



**Q:** What do you call a pony with a sore throat?

**A:** A Little horse.

**Q:** Why did the turtle cross the road?

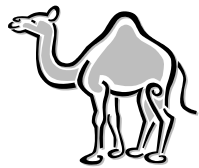
**A:** To get to the shell station.

**S** ister asked her third-grade class to draw pictures of their favorite bible stories. She was puzzled by one boy's picture, which showed four people on an airplane, so she asked him which story it was meant to represent.

"The flight to Egypt," he replied.

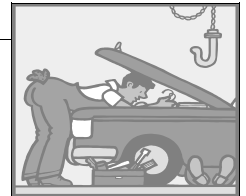
"I see ... And that must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus," she said. "But who's the fourth person?"

"Oh, that's Punch It-- their Pilot!" ☺



**a** young man takes a date for a drive. As they reach a small wooded area, the engine starts to act up. The young man says, "I wonder what that knocking is?"

His date answers. "One thing I can tell you for sure—it's not opportunity." ☺

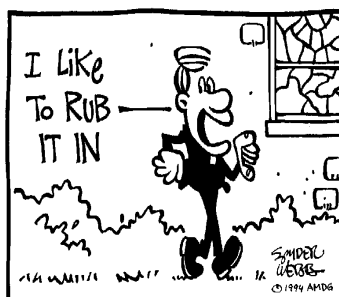


**O** pera is a place where when a guy gets stabbed, he doesn't die—he sings. ☺

**St. Peter** decided to speed-up entry through the Pearly Gates and asked the assembled to form three lines... "Single", "Married", and "Married, not hen-pecked".

Everyone got into the first two lines except one lone man in the "Married, not hen-pecked" line. St. Peter went up to him and asked, "Are you sure you are in the right line?" "Yes", came the reply. "My wife told me to stand here." ☺

### Father Flood/Webb





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# The Father's Eyes

Author Unknown

# Bob

Richards, the former pole-vaulter and champion, shares a moving story about a skinny young boy who loved football with all his heart. Practice after practice, he eagerly gave everything he had. But being half the size of the other boys, he got absolutely nowhere. At all the games, this hopeful athlete sat on the bench and hardly ever played.

This teenager lived alone with his father, and the two of them had a very special relationship. Even though the son was always on the bench, his father was always in the stands cheering.

He never missed a game. This young man was still the smallest of the class when he entered high school. But his father continued to encourage him but also made it very clear that he did not have to play football if he didn't want to. But the young man loved football and decided to hang in there. He was determined to try his best at every practice, and perhaps he'd get to play when he became a senior. All through high school he never missed neither a practice, nor a game but remained a bench-warmer all four years. His faithful father was always in the stands; always with words of encouragement for him.

## Spirit Counts

When the young man went to college, he decided to try out for the football team as a "walk-on". Everyone was sure he would never make the cut, but he did. The coach admitted that he kept him on the roster because he always put his heart and soul to every practice and at the same time provided the other members with the spirit they badly needed.

The news that he had survived

the cut thrilled him so much that he rushed to the nearest phone and called his father, who shared his excitement and was sent season tickets. This persistent young athlete never missed practice during his four years at college, but never got to play in a game.

It was the end of his senior football season, and as he trotted onto the practice field shortly before the big playoff game, the coach met him with a telegram. The young man read the telegram, then, swallowing hard, he mumbled to the coach, "My father died this morning. Is it all right if I miss practice today?" The coach put his arm gently around his shoulder and said, "Take the rest of the week off, son. And don't even plan to come back to the game on Saturday."

Saturday arrived, and the game was not going well. In the third quarter, when the team was ten points behind, the silent young man quietly slipped into the empty locker room and put on his football gear. As he ran onto the sidelines, the coach and his players were astounded to see their faithful teammate back so soon.

"Coach, please let me play. I've just got to play today," said the young man. The coach pretended not to hear him. There was no way he wanted his worst player in this close play-off game. But the young man persisted, and finally feeling sorry for the kid, the coach gave in. "All right," he said. "You can go in."

Before long, the coach, the players and everyone in the stands could not believe their eyes. This little unknown, who had never played before, was doing everything right. The opposing team could not stop him. He ran, he passed, blocked, and tackled like a star.

His team began to triumph. The score was soon tied. In the closing seconds of the game, this kid intercepted a pass and ran all the way for the winning touchdown.

## Spirit Pays

The fans broke loose. His team mates hoisted him onto their shoulders. You never heard such cheering.

Finally, after the stands had emptied and the team had showered and left the locker room, the coach noticed that this young man was sitting quietly in the corner all alone. The coach came to him and said, "Kid, I can't believe it. You were fantastic! Tell me what got into you? How did you do it?"

He looked at the coach with tears in his eyes and said, "Well, you knew my dad died, but did you know, that my dad was blind?" He swallowed hard, and continued, "Dad came to all my games, but today was the first time he could see me play, and I wanted to show him I could do it."

Like the athlete's father, God is always there cheering for us, reminding us to go on. God gives us what we need, not simply what we want. God has never missed a single game.

-- from *Stories That Warm the Heart*, by Sr. Dorothy Ederer, O.P. Courtesy of www.massprep.org



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**Apr 6 CHRISM MASS—5:30 pm**  
 Join the Archbishop, Bishops, priests, and Deacons  
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 Gough at Geary, SF

**Apr 11 EASTER MASS with Choir & Orchestra 11:00 am**  
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[www.stcecilia.com](http://www.stcecilia.com)

**Apr 16 BIBLE STUDY (3rd Friday of the Month) 7:30 pm**  
 with **Fr. Balaswami,**  
**Corpus Christi Church Parish Hall**  
 Alemany Blvd at Santa Rosa Ave., SF  
 Contact: Norma 415/468-8369

**Apr 18 SUNDAY CHARISMATIC MASS 2:00 pm**  
**St. Patrick Church,**  
 756 Mission St (between 3rd & 4th Sts.) SF  
 Contact Judy 415/826-7827

**Apr 24 ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN**  
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**May 7 FIRST FRIDAY MASS—Of the Sacred Heart**  
**7:00 pm Rosary, 7:30 Mass.**  
**Fr. Joe Landi—celebrant**  
**Corpus Christi Church,**  
 Alemany Blvd at Santa Rosa Ave., SF

**The Value of Prayer**

by John Paul II

On Sunday, 7 March, before praying the Angelus together with the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square, the Holy Father reflected on the Gospel Reading (Lk 9:28b-36) on the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Lent invites us to follow Christ in the mystery of his prayer, source of light and strength in time of trial, and that to pray means to be spiritually immersed in God, in an attitude of humble cohesion to his will.

"Jesus took Peter, John and James, and went up onto a mountain to pray" (Lk 9:28): this is how the Gospel of the Transfiguration of Christ begins, characterizing the Second Sunday of Lent. Luke the Evangelist stresses that Jesus is transfigured on the high mountain while praying, immersed in intimate and profound dialogue with God the Father. A dazzling light radiates from him, a foretaste of the glory of the Resurrection.


Each year in preparation for Easter, Lent invites us to follow Christ in the mystery of his prayer, source of light and strength in time of trial. In reality, to pray means to be spiritually immersed in God, in an attitude of humble cohesion to his will. The interior light that transfigures the human person comes from this trusting abandonment to God, making the person a witness of the Resurrection. However, it is only in listening to Christ, in following him with docility even to the Passion and Cross, that this can become a reality. We must look towards him because there is salvation in no one else but him, the Son of God.

Twenty five years ago, precisely at the beginning of Lent, I wanted to extend to the entire world this message in the Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (cf. n. 7). If human beings want to know themselves thoroughly, I wrote at the time, they must draw near to Christ, enter into him, "appropriate" and assimilate the entire reality of the Redemption (cf. n. 10). How true this truth still remains today!

May the Virgin Mother of the Redeemer help us to start afresh from Christ to build a world according to the true dimension of the human being.

(©L'Osservatore Romano - 10 March 2004)





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## Religion? From page 8

“We have no government armed with powers capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. *Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry* would break the strongest cords of our constitution as a whale goes through a net.”

### Virtue Requires Religion

The second leg of the triangle is the principle that virtue requires religion. For the framers, virtue was more all encompassing than many view virtue in today's society. For one thing, it included strong features such as excellence and courage. For another, it had to be grounded and rooted. It was not a cliché that floated in thin air. Religion provided virtue with its content, its inspiration and its sanction.

### Religious freedom has become freedom from religion instead of freedom for religion

As George Washington said in his *Farewell Address*, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports.” Or as the more skeptical Mr. Jefferson asked equally clearly, “Can the liberties

of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis? A conviction in the minds of the people, that these liberties are a gift of God? That they are not violated but with his wrath?”

### Religion Requires Liberty

The third leg of the triangle is the principle that religion requires liberty. Here, and not in the separation of powers, is where our framers were perhaps most original and most daring.

Indeed, it could be argued that the first sixteen words of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution are the most daring and distinctive part of the entire American ordering of public life. This was an unprecedented break from 1500 years of political history since the time Constantine ordained Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 312 A.D.

As Madison argued so powerfully in his *Memorial and Remonstrance*, “torrents of blood” have been spilt in the name of established religion in the Old World. But we now have “the true remedy” in the separation of church and state. Its underlying principle?

“That Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.”

Madison further argues that the *establishment* of religion is both unnecessary and unwise. It is unnecessary because religion flourishes best on its own strength. It is unwise because when religion becomes established, it becomes oppressive and coercive.

No fair-minded reader of the writings of the framers can possibly miss their extraordinary chorus of agreement on these issues. So it seems beyond dispute that faith or religion occupied a preeminent place in the foundation of our republic. Skeptics, however, might ask, was it religious hype or, as John Adams once said, “pious cant”? The framers expressly said it was not. Were they merely “children of their times” in giving such a place to religion? Far from it. Nowhere is the difference between the founders and their contemporaries in France starker than in their positive attitude to religion. The cry of the French republican revolutionaries was “Let us strangle the last king with the guts of the last priest!”

Skeptics might say that there is some new solution to the menace of the corruption of customs that the framers didn't know of. If any-thing, modern society proves the opposite point. What is however, all too plain is that many Americans today have

abandoned or are unmindful of the framers' position. Certainly it is not taught with any regularity in our schools. In fact, many of our liberal thinkers have adopted a position much closer to the French radicals than to our American framers. Even some conservatives have become so caught up in the importance of economic issues alone that they have neglected the framers' position and its prudent realism.

### What happened between their world and ours?

What is behind the sea change between the framers' world and ours? These are the factors that I believe lie behind the controversies and culture warring of the last generation:

**Exploding Pluralism.** The story of America is the story of a steadily expanding pluralism, but the expansion in the last fifty years to include almost all the world's religions has put a new strain on our traditional ordering of religion and public life—one obvious example is in the public schools. In Los Angeles, where I live, we have a district with over 90 different religions in their schools. A politically correct holiday program could last a month.

**Expanding Statism.** When the First Amendment was passed in 1791, religion was central and powerful in most people's lives, whereas the federal government was distant. Today the situation is reversed: the federal government is strong and central, whereas religion for many is marginal and weak.

**Emerging Separationism.** This is the view pushed openly by groups such as the ACLU, that the separation of church and state must be strict and absolute. Religious freedom then becomes freedom *from* religion instead of freedom *for* religion. Public life becomes a “religion-free zone,” so that religion is considered inviolably private and public life inviolably secular. I wonder what would be on our currency now if that were a subject of discussion—I highly doubt that “In God We Trust” would pass muster.

This view of a “religion-free zone” is a radical departure because, for the greater part of our history, America adhered closely to the framers' understanding of the first amendment. Great leaders such as Teddy Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan, following in the footsteps of the framers, continually reminded us that faith and religion are not just important to the character of our people and nation, but also, to

(See page 15)

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# Dear Grace By Grace MacKinnon

**Q: Can Catholics still go to heaven although they never attend Sunday Mass, but they do live prayerful lives and try to be good?**

**A: They never go to church, but they are "good" people?**

But what do we really mean by "good"? What is goodness? In the profoundest sense, goodness is everything that is of God. He is goodness itself. All that is "good" originates in Him and comes from Him. Of course, not everyone understands this. Thus, we tend to think that as long as we are consciously doing nothing wrong against others, we are "good" people. But what about offending God; are we being good people when we do that?

Going to Church on Sunday is something God has asked us to do. It is the third of the Ten Commandments. Also Jesus also asked us at His Last Supper to "do this as a remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The Catholic Church teaches that "Sunday . . . is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church" (CIC, can. 1246 § 1). "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound

to participate in the Mass" (CIC, can. 1247).

The faithful who attend Mass on Sundays are not perfect people. They are people, however, who are trying to follow Christ by doing what He asks, hopefully also out of love for Him. In order to truly begin the journey on the road to eternal life, we must first recognize our own sinfulness and total dependence on God. We must have a desire to please God in everything. And when we fail, as we often will, to get up and try again.

The word "mass" means "missa"—to send. We witness the love that it took for Jesus to do what He did for us, and then we are "sent" out into the world to transform it, by loving as He did. He shows us the way to salvation. It is the way of love.

"God predestines no one to go to hell." (CCC 1037) For that to happen, a person would have to willfully turn away from God (a mortal sin) and persist in it until the end. It is a mortal sin to miss Mass deliberately, and if one refuses to

obey God's law to the very end, then that person does run the risk of losing his or her eternal salvation (heaven).

**Perhaps your relatives do not know that it is a grave sin against God to miss Mass on Sunday.**

It seems that you have tried to inform them of this. In asking you about who is and who is not going to heaven (based on church attendance), it seems that your family is trying to shift the attention away from themselves. This is what many do in order to avoid looking at their own actions. We waste precious time when we do that, though. One of the devil's most effective tricks is to convince us that we have all the time in the world. But Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7: 13-14).

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Grace MacKinnon holds an MA in Theology and is a syndicated columnist and speaker on Catholic Doctrine.

## Spirit

From Page 1

words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27).

Our prayer isn't able to express the "cry" that rises from our heart and from all creation toward God who saves us. We cannot know and fully grasp God's will. At this point the Holy Spirit intervenes, releasing from the heart of believers an ecstatic prayer, defined by Paul as a "sigh too deep for words." This prayer recalls for us the gift of tongues characteristic of the first

outpourings of the Spirit upon Christ's disciples.

Whatever Paul says of community and charismatic prayer can be applied to prayer *tout court*: prayer, understood as immersing ourselves in the mystery of God, listening to his voice through the echo that it stirs within our spirit, speaking to him, which is only possible "in the Holy Spirit."

We are left with the understanding that it is the Spirit himself who prays in us, the verification of our absolute inadequacy with regard to this task: *We do not* know how to pray as we ought. Beyond this *we do not* lies the reality of our relationship with God. We can link the concept that we are his temple to this prayer of the Spirit in us (see 1 Cor 3:16 and 6:19).

In order to grasp the presence of the Spirit of the Fa-

ther and of the Son in us, the most immediate way is that of praying to him. The great tradition of prayer guides in this direction, for it is the fruit of the Church's mystic contemplation of the Spirit. It follows that all those who are led by the Spirit are of God.

The Gospel insists on the "need to pray always and not become discouraged" (Lk 18:1). Prayer seems to consist of listening more than of speaking; of preparing ourselves to receive than of asking; of assuming an attitude of faith in each circumstance of life than of practicing devotion.

—Condensed from *The Spirit Prays in Us* by Fr. Antonio Gentili. English translation © 1994 Daughters of St. Paul

## Pray in the Spirit at All Times

Eph 6:18



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# El Sacramento de la Reconciliación

Por el P. Bart Pastor

## ¿Qué encierra un nombre?

**E**S uno de los "sacramentos de sanación" confiado por Cristo Resucitado a Su Iglesia para seguir Su ministerio de sanación y reconciliación. Según sus diversas facetas, este sacramento se conoce con distintos nombres.

El Sacramento de la Confesión recalca nuestra necesidad para reconocer nuestros pecados y para pedir el perdón de Dios. En el Sacramento del Perdón Dios nos concede "perdón y paz" por medio de la absolución sacramental del sacerdote. Del mismo modo, el Sacramento de la Conversión hace presente sacramentalmente la llamada de Jesús a la conversión, el primer paso para volver al Padre de quien nos hemos alejado por el pecado. El Sacramento de la Penitencia se centra principalmente en el proceso de conversión personal y eclesial de la contrición, el arrepentimiento y la satisfacción. Finalmente, el Sacramento de la Reconciliación sirve para restablecer nuestras relaciones de amor y amistad con Dios y nuestro prójimo.

## El "corazón" del Sacramento

En la parábola del hijo perdido (Lc 15 11-32) nuestro Señor demuestra el "corazón" de este sacramento de Reconciliación. Encontramos en esta historia un proceso de conversión de cuatro pasos que conduce a la reconciliación entre Dios y el pecador: una situación de conflicto; el encuentro íntimo del pecador con los efectos perniciosos del pecado, que acaban por llevarle al autodescubrimiento; y la gracia sorprendente que lleva al pecador a la transformación personal en el abrazo amoroso del Padre.

El Sacramento de la Reconciliación siempre exige conversión. Esto significa un compromiso con un proceso continuo de alejamiento constante del pecado y de las ocasiones de pecar, y de acercamiento a renovar nuestro espíritu reconociendo nuestros pecados a nuestro Padre, verdaderamente arrepentidos, y con un propósito firme de quedarnos con Él para siempre. Por una parte, supone una conversión moral que consiste en ordenar nuestra imaginación, nuestros sentimientos y nuestras emociones hacia lo bueno de Dios que es amor. También incluye una conversión intelectual volviendo a dirigir nuestro entendimiento y juicio a Dios. Sobre todo, debe ser una conversión religiosa que simplemente significa un "enamorarse" de Dios, que es nuestro Padre amoroso, rico en misericordia.

El Sacramento de la Reconciliación, por lo tanto, puede entenderse correctamente en términos de un encuentro "persona a persona" entre el Padre de la misericordia y el pecador que tiene una necesidad absoluta de la misericordia del Padre. No debe tomarse como un mero recitado inconsciente de una lista de pecados. Ni debe considerarse un proceso para encontrar faltas que conduzca al juicio severo de Dios de nuestras ofensas por medio de un sacerdote-juez. En vez de eso, el miedo debe dar paso a la confianza infantil en la compasión del Padre; de la culpa condenatoria, a la misericordia que perdona; de la confesión, a la absolución; de la confusión, a la paz y de la separación, a la reconciliación.

## Papel de la Iglesia

En la confesión por tanto, afirmamos nuestra convicción de que somos pecadores, que necesitamos la misericordia de Dios, que viene a nosotros a través de Cristo y Su Iglesia. En el ministerio sacramental del sacerdote, que actúa en nombre de Cristo y revestido con el poder del Espíritu, nuestro Padre trae paz y reconciliación.

La Iglesia no sólo nos llama a un arrepentimiento humilde, sino que también intercede por nosotros y nos ayuda

hacia la conversión continua. Al hacerlo, proclama su fe en la victoria de Cristo sobre el pecado, da gracias al Padre por la libertad que Cristo ha conseguido para nosotros, y ofrece su vida como un sacrificio espiritual en alabanza de la gloria de Dios. Por medio del sacramento, la Iglesia llama a todos sus hijos a reconciliarse con Dios y unos con otros, de manera que todos podamos convertirnos de nuevo en la familia santa y feliz de nuestro Padre Celestial.

## Algunas consideraciones prácticas

Para que el sacramento sea verdaderamente eficaz son esenciales tres factores:

- (a) un verdadero pesar por el pecado, con propósito de enmienda,
- (b) la confesión humilde de los pecados y la absolución sacerdotal, y
- (c) volver a ser miembro de la comunidad cristiana.

El verdadero pesar por el pecado significa considerar el pecado como lo que realmente es: no meramente romper con alguna ley impersonal en un libro o un sentimiento de culpa, o como algo que no podemos evitar; sino más bien como una actitud, poder, acción moral o una negativa a actuar que nos conduce al mal, y nos aliena o separa de nuestro verdadero ser, nuestro prójimo, la comunidad y Dios. A pesar de que a menudo se cubre de un aspecto atractivo, el pecado verdaderamente hace daño, destruye, deshonra, envenena y corrompe.

El pecado puede ser personal, como el que comete un individuo, pero siempre con relación a otros y a la comunidad; también social, difundiendo actitudes morales negativas que infectan las interacciones entre individuos y grupos; asimismo estructural, como patrones o sistemas económicos, sociales o políticos que producen injusticia y daños entre los pueblos. Confesamos nuestra maldad en estos aspectos diferentes del pecado para poder reconciliarnos completamente con Dios y con nuestros hermanos y hermanas.

El pecado se puede clasificar como mortal o "pecado hacia la muerte" que mata nuestra relación básica de amor con Dios y los otros. Para que un pecado sea considerado mortal, debe existir un asunto grave, conocimiento suficiente y consentimiento total. El pecado venial, por otra parte, es "pecado excusable", que no compromete a nuestra libertad básica y fundamental, sino que mina y debilita nuestras relaciones de amor con Dios y otros. Algunos pecados veniales pueden dañar profundamente nuestras relaciones con Dios y otros, y deberían confesarse en el Sacramento de la Reconciliación.

Las partes principales del Sacramento de la Penitencia son (a) contrición, (b) confesión y (c) penitencia o satisfacción. La absolución concedida por el sacerdote es el signo del perdón de Dios, que nos reconcilia con Dios y la comunidad cristiana.

Finalmente, se ganan indulgencias en el Sacramento de la Reconciliación. Las indulgencias son la remisión de todo (plenarias) o de parte (parciales) del castigo temporal, debido a los pecados que ya han sido perdonados en vista de los méritos de Cristo nuestro Redentor, las oraciones y buenas obras de la Santísima Virgen María y los santos.

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Religion?

From Page 12

repeat Washington's words, "indispensable" to the preservation of our democratic institutions.

In 1917, Teddy Roosevelt wrote, "In this actual world, a churchless community where men have abandoned or scoffed at or ignored their religious needs is a community on the rapid downgrade."

Nearly half a century later, Dwight Eisenhower said, "Without God, there can be no American form of government, nor an American way of life."

**Trumped by the Radicals**

Clearly, we have reached the point where the civil rights of those who preach and practice the most radical lifestyles, or who insist that all public places be a "naked public square" trump the religious liberties of anyone who disagrees.

When Michael Novak addressed the Library of Congress in 1998, he was asked, "Can an atheist be a good American?" His answer was yes, "That has been done, many times." But, he continued, "Can American liberties survive if most of our nation is atheist? The most common, almost universal judgment of the founders was that it could not."

The time has come for men and women to join together to build a new consensus around religion's proper place in the public square. But the answer to the folly of "the naked

public square" is not a reassertion of any "sacred public square" —such as the domination of Protestantism in the nineteenth century. Those of us who are Catholics or Jews know too much about that.

Rather, let us begin moving toward a "civil public square" in which citizens of all faiths are free to enter and engage in public life within constitutional first principles and a common vision of the common good.

We need to rebuild a consensus in our communities based on what is just and free for people of all faiths.

That eminently achievable consensus rests upon citizens who are steeped in the strengths of their freely chosen religious beliefs, as well as the other two legs of the eternal triangle of virtue and freedom. These are people who, day-in-day-out, do their best to live responsibly, provide for their families and respect the liberties and rights of their fellow-citizens.

In other words, at a time when morality and virtue are in short supply from the very highest office in the land on down, religion must play a greater, not a lesser, role in our national life. If it does, the future for America is as bright as the framers hopes and dreams. If it does not, the consequences might be summed up in three words as familiar to the framers as to Polybius and the ancients: *decline and fall*.

The noble experiment that is America remains, by its fundamental

structure, undecided from generation to generation. We the people must therefore fight to return religion to its proper and foundational place in our country as the essential companion to liberty. In so doing, we must return our country to the vision our founding fathers not only held dear, but for which they risked everything—their lives, their property and their sacred honor. Religious liberty is far more than just liberty for the religious. It is vital for all citizens. Putting religion back in the place the framers intended it is not just a policy item on the order of tax cuts, health care, and the missile defense. It is taking care of our foundation. Religion in America is far from an inviolably private issue; essentially, it is a national issue. So, why does America need religion? It is not too much to say that *as faith goes* in America, so goes freedom.

**Religion must play a greater, not lesser part.**

William E. Simon Jr. is co-chairman of William E. Simon & Sons, a private investment firm and merchant bank with offices in Los Angeles and New Jersey. Mr. Simon serves on numerous organizational boards including Catholic Charities and was the Republican candidate for governor of California in 2002.

—Condensed from Mr. Simon's presentation at the California Republican Convention, Burlingame CA. Prayer Breakfast, 22 Feb 2004.

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