


Charismatic

Articles of Spiritual Enlightenment for Christians

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Like Wife, Like? Bro. John Samaha, S.M.

asked about the dignity of St. Joseph in the Christian tradition, the late Father Francis L. Filas, S.J., the U.S.A.'s leading authority on the subject, responded simply, "Like wife, like husband." The man closest to Jesus and Mary rightly deserves all honor and praise.

St. Joseph rarely enjoys great press. Usually he is forgotten, or at least left standing obscurely in the background. His self-effacement seems to have influenced the scant attention given him by many Church teach-

ers.

In a hymn honoring the Holy Eucharist, St. Thomas Aquinas describes the inadequacy of human language to express full appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament. St. Bernard and other great devotees of Mary voiced the same idea regarding our Blessed Mother. I think we may say the same about St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the virgin father of Jesus.

Such appreciation unfolds slowly after much study and reflection. It does not become evident at once in a single



glance. Even today many Catholics are inclined to think that St. Joseph is a wonderful saint, but he was not the real father of Jesus, so we honor him as protector of Mary. With that passing comment, such persons promptly forget St. Joseph and relegate him to the background. Actually this opinion was the common outlook in the first thirteen centuries of Christianity. Church history shows that St. Joseph was the victim of benign neglect in the lives of our early saints and Fathers and Doctors of the Church. St. Augustine and some other thinkers wrote of St. Joseph, but his mention is sparse. The tide turned slowly in the next five hundred years

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Unconditional Love of God Deacon Mark Reburiano

if we would look at the various books and novels in our major bookstores, there is no doubt to say that the ones mostly sold are titles about or at least related to love. It is not disputable both that the bookstores'

section on themes of love is the biggest and most visited by readers. This is also very true in the movie and music industry where there are many films and compositions produced every year with different love themes. It seems to me that the topic about love is a never-ending theme. We are interested in what others would say about love and listen to love stories

which could be inspiring to us. Love is a very rich yet ambiguous word that sometimes we even just say: "I love Rome" being fascinated by the beauty of the Eternal City or judge: "that's love" when we witness people helping each other or see parents assisting their children in their homework. What

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A Future Plenary Council Dr. David J. O'Brien

The Catholic Church in the United States plunged into the deepest crisis of its history in January 2002 with the acknowledgement that some US bishops transferred pedophile priests from parish to parish years ago. It was a difficult and embarrassing time, the effects of which are still felt today. In April 2002 US Cardinals experienced a public relations disaster when they flew off to Rome seeking

direction. Finding none, the bishops then gathered in Dallas in June of that year, where they listened as victims and lay representatives charged that they had failed to respond as pastors to victims of sexual abuse. The fairly drastic reforms endorsed at Dallas—"zero tolerance" for abusers, full cooperation with civil authorities, speedy changes to insure safety in the future—seemed inadequate. Even the surprising news that they were appointing a National Review Board of unprecedented independence to monitor their performance won them little credit.

In the months following the Dallas meet-

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Like Wife

From Page

and we find simple beginnings of a solid devotion to St. Joseph.

Increasing Attention

The theology of his vocation, dignity, holiness, and intercession began to flower only in medieval times; and the seventeenth century was the golden age. The enthusiasm of St. Teresa of Avila for St. Joseph was remarkable, vividly expressed in her writings, and perpetuated in the twelve new convents given his name.

The groundswell of attention began with the popes of the late nineteenth century. All the popes of modern times, from Pope Pius IX until our present Holy Father, have issued substantial teaching about Joseph on their official documents. Since 1870 the Church officially gave impetus to this new trend when Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. The next pope, Leo XIII, set St. Joseph before us with a rank and place best described in his encyclical about Joseph, *Quamquam Pluries*, 1889: "There can be no doubt that, more than any other person, he approached that supereminent dignity by which the Mother of God was raised far above all created natures."

Such an exalted understanding and appreciation of St. Joseph's dignity do not blossom all at once. Sustained study and meditation on his twofold vocation are required. The extremes of too much or too little must be sedulously avoided. A typical reaction often encountered is that the Gospel says Joseph was a just man. What more can be said?

Plenty! In 1989 Pope John Paul II offered us a masterful explanation and reflection on the unique vocation of St. Joseph in God's plan of salvation with *Redemptoris Custos* (Guardian of the Redeemer). This inspirational pastoral letter marking the centenary of Leo XIII's landmark encyclical, treats the person and mission of St. Joseph in the life of Christ and of the Church. It recalls what makes him special, not only for us per-

sonally, but for the universal Church.

Some muse that Joseph's role is not treated in any detail in Holy Scripture. But neither is the vocation of Mary. However, what little is said is highly significant. Theologians have reasoned to many of the functions and privileges granted Mary. The same process is followed in regard to Joseph. Once the divinity of Jesus and the divine virginal motherhood of Mary were firmly established in Catholic doctrine and in popular understanding, Joseph began to emerge without concern that his unique position as virgin father of Jesus and virginal husband of Mary would be misunderstood.

A Facet of Marian Devotion

The evolution of devotion to St. Joseph is in reality another facet of devotion to Mary. Probing more deeply Joseph's mission leads us to knowing more deeply the greatness of Mary. St. Joseph's position in relation to Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, stems from his position with regard to Mary, Mother of the Redeemer. The parallel holds true also for Mary and Jesus. The better we know Mary, the better we will know her Son, from whom she derives all her dignity and whom she reflects so faithfully. Pope Benedict XV clearly expressed this idea: "By St. Joseph we are led directly to Mary, and by Mary to the fountain of all holiness, Jesus Christ, who sanctified the domestic virtues by his obedience to St. Joseph and Mary."

Absolutely certain is the fact that God did not choose an unworthy man to be the husband of Mary, who was to be the Virgin Mother of God. Even if St. Joseph had been merely Mary's protector and not her husband, he would still have occupied a position far surpassing that of any other human being. But Joseph is her husband, related to the Mother of God in a marriage that was no less genuine because it was virginal. The marriage was brought into existence by God for the express purpose of serving the Incarnation, so that the Son of God might be received and reared within that holy conjugal union. Since, in all creation God could find none more worthy than Mary to be the Mother of Jesus, God could find none more worthy

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Once A Knight

By Fr. Joe Landi, Editor

Since April 3, I have a new title: Reverend Sir Knight Joe Landi.

No, I haven't been knighted by the queen of England. Something even better happened. On April 3, 2004, during exemplification ceremonies at the Double Tree Hotel, San Jose, myself and 226 other lay men and seven priests were initiated as a 4th Degree Knight in the Catholic Fraternal Order of the Knight of Columbus.

Having been a 3rd Degree Knight for nearly 12 years, there are those who might ask, "What took you so long" and others might say, "It's about time!" Well,

there are extenuating factors. Neither was it that I'm slow gifted; nor was it difficult in moving from 1st degree to the 4th degree. The time was not right.

One thing I learned while on my Roman sabbatical: Priests need to take time for themselves in order to be better servers of the faith community. So I took the time. And now that I am a full pledged Knight, I want the world to know what a great organization the Knights of Columbus is.

Each of the Knight's four Degrees is designed to exemplify one of the four Principals of the Order: Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism. "Let Liberty Soar Under God" was the theme of the April Fourth Degree Exemplification Celebration of the Northern California District Junipero Serra Province.

There were a couple of things that struck me about the weekend. The first and most obvious was the cordial warmth exhibited to the seven priests that were "Exemplified" to the Fourth Degree. The second was the dignity by which the affair was conducted. From the morning Color Corps Competition, the Exemplification Ceremony, to the Saturday evening banquet for the new

members and honoring the Worthy State Deputy (2003-2004), Sir Knight William Przybyla, it was a class act. Przybyla is a Clinical Staff Pharmacist at the Mercy Medical Center in Redding, California, and has been active in the Knights since 1977.

The banquet was by far the most elegant gathering of Catholics that I have ever attended—ladies in formal or cocktail dresses and every gentleman in a black tuxedo, black bow tie, and black cummerbund with the red, white and blue Fourth Degree Knight's sash diagonally across the front of their pleated white tuxedo shirt. The copious amounts of food served made me wonder if the Double Tree catering staff thought the Knights needed a hearty meal after a full day of jousting.

We Catholics have come a long way since the time the Knights were formed in 1882 as a lay men's fraternal group. It came about partly to contend with the prevalent anti-Catholic climate of the early 19th century America. Most Catholics were immigrants and there was a bumptious anti-immigrant segment in America, as there is now—witness the shameful self-serving antics of former Governor of Colorado, Richard D. Lamm and cohorts' bid for control of the Sierra Club to further their anti-immigration agenda—as if the Sierra Club needed another diversion from the conservationist vision of its founder, John Muir, a *Scottish immigrant*.

About the Order

With nearly 12,000 Councils, the Knights of Columbus remains headquartered in New Haven, but is now present in Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, and several other countries. St. Francis Assembly # 43 of San Francisco is one of the oldest.

The Knight's founder, Father Michael J. McGivney, a 29-year-old assistant pastor at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Connecticut, brought together a group of laymen with whom he

discussed his dream for a Catholic fraternal benefit society. It not only would assist widows and orphans of deceased members through its life insurance program, but also would boost members' sense of pride in their Catholic religion.

The Triad Emblem of the Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus features: the Dove, the Cross and the Globe, and I wear it proudly.

The Dove, the classic symbol of the Holy Spirit and Peace, is shown hovering over the orb of the Globe. Both are mounted on a variation of the Crusader's cross, which was found on the tunics and capes of the Crusading Knights who battled to regain the Holy Land.

The Knights cherishes as its patron Christopher (Christ Bearer) Columbus (Dove of Peace), symbolizing the Paraclete. Spiritually, the sacred symbols on the emblem typify the Union of the Three Divine Persons in one Godhead...the most blessed Trinity—

The Globe... God the Father, Creator of the Universe.

The Cross... God the Son, Redeemer of Mankind.

The Dove... God the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier of Humanity.

The colors of the symbols are: A Blue Globe with the lands of the Western Hemisphere in White. A Red Cross with gold borders, and gold knobs at the ends of the Cross and a White Dove.

Red, White, and Blue are the colors of the flag of the United States, the country in which the Knights were originated and are used to stress the basic principle of the Fourth Degree: Patriotism.

Come! Join the Order

Membership in the Knights of Columbus is open to all practical Catholic men age eighteen and above who are in communion with the Holy See. The term practical Catholic implies that a person accepts and abides by the Commandments of God and the precepts and tenets of the Catholic Church. If you fit this requirement and want to join a classy, involved, family oriented Catholic Fraternal Order, call me and I will put you in touch with a Council near you.

See you in church.



Fourth Degree Emblem

A Kempis: New Translations A book review

There are two new book releases of the greatest spiritual works of 15th-century German monk Thomas à Kempis – each with a fresh appeal for modern-day believers. The first modern-English translation of the great spiritual writer's *On The Passion of Christ: According to the Four Evangelists* (Ignatius Press) presents profound reflections of many Gospel passages on the passion and death of Christ. This meditational book is geared for all peoples of all times – especially those seeking to grow in holiness, face suffering or death, or overcome difficulties in their lives.

Each of the book's 35 chapter-meditations focuses on a specific aspect of the Passion of Our Lord, gives a prayer, a meditation and spiritual advice, then closes with another short prayer. Though the meditations were originally written for à Kempis' fellow monks, these should prove no obstacle to the attentive reader who seeks help and solace from the struggles of his own existence.

This new edition of *On The Passion of Christ* translated into modern English by Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J. Further, it is beautifully illustrated with classical art renderings depicting aspects of Our Lord's Passion and Death, gathered from collections and galleries from around the world. Father Tylenda says, "My intent in translating this great work into readable, modern English is that these meditations on the Lord's Passion would fill the reader's heart with greater love for Christ, in the same way the love of Christ's Passion filled that of à Kempis himself. This book should not be read at one sitting, but rather be prayed chapter by chapter." Tylenda advises first reading a portion of à Kempis' text, visualizing the scene being described, and then quietly and unhurriedly reflecting on it.

The Imitation of Christ has enjoyed greater popularity throughout

the centuries than any other Christian book, except for the Bible. And this first-of-its-kind illustrated anthology of *The Imitation of Christ* spotlights 40 memorable passages from the original work, with the exquisite enhancement of color illuminated manuscripts from the British Library.

At the very beginning of *The Imitation of Christ*, à Kempis reminds readers that to become a follower of Christ, one must imitate His life, and to accomplish this, one must likewise "meditate on His life as it is described in the Gospels." Thomas à Kempis was acutely aware of the human condition with all its frailties and fragmentations, and wrote *The Imitation of Christ* to guide the faithful reader through a purification process with a double benefit: to steer the soul's focus to the reality of eternal life, and strengthen the life of charity toward one's neighbor.



This new version from Ignatius Press includes some of the British Library's finest illuminated manuscripts, like the Isabella Breviary and the Hastings, Bedford and Sforza Hours – resulting in a magnificent book which will impassion and inspire all who enjoy timeless Christian writing. The book's artwork truly embodies the medieval style of the Middle Ages during which its text was written, yet so exactly and timelessly depicts the common weaknesses and sinfulness of followers of Christ in the face of His universal Love and Redemption.

About the Translator

Joseph N. Tylenda, S.J. currently resides with the Jesuit community at the University of Scranton, and is chaplain at Marian Convent, Marywood University (Scranton, PA). He has written a number of books on saints and martyrs, and Church feasts, and is currently working on translations of two other à Kempis books.

—Available from Ignatius Press at www.ignatius.com

Book Reviews



Charismatic Spirituality

—The Work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and Practice

By Stephen B. Clark

An explanation of the way the Holy Spirit works in redeeming human beings. The author describes how the Spirit operates in the Church and the individual to provide the full benefits of the divine life God intended people to enjoy. Exploration of the work of the Spirit addresses the needs and concerns of the Church at large and will satisfy the curiosity of any interested reader.

\$10.99—Servant Books

Send Forth Your Spirit

By Benedict Groeschel, cfr, Ed. D.

The fascinating and little-known theology of the Holy Spirit is explored. The teachings of the Fathers and the tradition of the Church about the mysterious Spirit open up many rich avenues for meditation. Also discussed are ways in which we can strengthen our own spiritual lives and become more docile and open to the inspiration of the Spirit. The approach is eminently practical, although focused on the mysterious realities of our origin and of our eternal destiny. Seven audiocassettes.

\$54.95—Alba House Communications

With Mary in Prayer

—Meditations and Guidance from the Life of Mary

By Heidi Hess Saxton

In this beautiful exploration of the human Mary, the author provides brief, evocative prayers and meditations in which she imagines events in the Blessed Mother's everyday life and invites readers to do the same.

\$10.95—Loyola Press

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it's a good thing to read a book, right? Unless, of course, the book has Harry Potter in it, according to some who would like you to believe that the books are bad for you. There are thousands of web pages alone that are dedicated to critiques of the J.K. Rowling books which recently reached another peak of frenzy as the fifth book was released with a record first print of 8.5 million copies.

For the two people out there who have not yet heard of Harry Potter, the books are about a boy named Harry Potter, who in the first book is just a normal ten year old orphan who lives with relatives who treat him cruelly. He receives no birthday presents and he has to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs while his cousin is spoiled with food and possessions. On his eleventh birthday, Harry finds out that he is the wizard son of two wizard parents, and that he is somewhat of a celebrity in the wizard world due to his defeating the evil wizard, Lord Voldemort (or "he-who-shall-not-be-named" as the wizards refer to him) when he was just a baby. Harry goes off to Hogwarts, the magical wizard school, and meets new friends, Hermione and Ron, just to name a few. Each book depicts another year in Harry's life with a new adventure defeating Lord Voldemort and evil.



J.K. Rowling has created a world with real good and evil, and Harry is definitely on the side of light, fighting the "dark powers." The books contain laugh-out-loud scenes and display wonderful examples of compassion, loyalty, courage, friendship, and even self-sacrifice. No wonder young readers want to be like these believable characters.

So what's all the fuss about? Many people believe the books are about witchcraft and are fearful of having children read about the occult, which is indeed an ensnaring, seductive

false religion from which children must be protected.

The good news is that while no major Christian leader has come out to condemn J.K. Rowling's series, many have given it the thumbs-up. One of the most quoted supporters of the Potter books is *Christianity Today* columnist Charles Colson, who noted that Harry and his friends "develop courage, loyalty, and a willingness to sacrifice for one another—even at the risk of their lives. Not bad lessons in a self-centered world." Colson dismisses the magic and sorcery in the books as "purely mechanical, as opposed to occult. That is, Harry and his friends cast spells, read crystal balls, and turn themselves into animals—but they don't make contact with a supernatural world. [It's not] the kind of real-life witchcraft the Bible condemns."

Apparently *The Christian Century* has no quarrels with Harry Potter either. In an editorial, "Wizards and Muggles" they make some excellent points about Christians and fantasy. "Such critics are right in thinking that fantasy writing is powerful and needs to be taken seriously. But we strongly doubt that it fosters an attachment to evil powers. Harry's world, in any case, is a moral one."

In a quote from a CNN interview, author J.K. Rowling said, "I have met thousands of children now, and not even one time has a child come up to me and said, 'Ms. Rowling, I'm so glad I've read these books because now I want to be a witch.' They see it for what it is. It is a fantasy world and they understand that completely. I don't believe in magic, either."

Readers of the Harry Potter books will discover wizards and witches in a genuinely imaginary world that will only stimulate imaginations. And how you handle what you read in any book shows your maturity, strength of character, and faith in God.

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Pettitte Performs Well Off the Field

andy Pettitte, the owner of four championship rings, walked through the dugout before taking the mound and felt how much he was needed, stirring his emotion. And while his professional record is impressive - ninth all-time in career pitching wins for the Yankees, has won 10 postseason games, third best in baseball history - his personal journey is just as impressive.

"Growing up, I was a pretty good kid. But everything was just about me - what was best for Andy and what Andy wanted to do."

When Andy was 11, his sister invited him to go with her to a church revival at a Baptist church she was going to with a friend. It was the first time Andy heard about the Gospel and having a relationship with Jesus. "I realized I needed him in my life, and I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior that night. My life was changed from that point on."

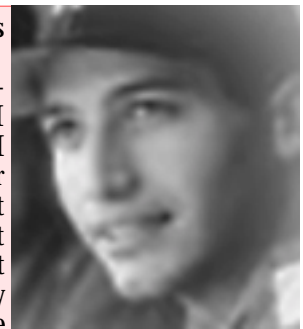
But he didn't really begin to understand the commitment he had made until he was 15 and began dating his (now) wife Laura. Her father was a pastor and her family was involved in the church, so Andy knew he had to make some serious decisions in his life, especially if he wanted to stay with Laura. It was about God now - what was best for Him

and what He wanted. And it still is today, although it's hard.

"My teammates and everyone in the organization know what I stand for and how I live my life. I want to do things that bring honor and glory to God. And it's about continuing to live that life in that standard, because I definitely don't want to do anything that hurts my testimony in the clubhouse and on the field."

"I hope they see the love of God through me - that I care about them, respect them, and want to do the best that I can to help them. I hope they see that there's something different about my life and understand that it's Jesus."

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Like Wife

From Page 2

than Joseph to be the husband related to Jesus by the spiritual ties of fatherhood.

In the words of Leo XIII, "If God gave Joseph as a spouse to the Virgin, He assuredly gave him not only as a companion in life, a witness of her virginity, and the guardian of her honor, but also as a sharer in her exalted dignity by reason of the conjugal tie itself."

Joseph's Great Holiness

On Calvary when Jesus entrusted Mary to St. John's care for the rest of her earthly life, it was a sign of divine predilection. And we marveled at John's holiness. Yet, what must have been the divine predilection when Joseph was chosen to be Mary's husband for the many years of the Hidden Life; to be one of the few persons entrusted with the secret of the Incarnation; to be the only man to receive the primacy of Mary's affections for humans, and to return that love? Mary would not have been perfect in her wifely vocation if she loved any creature more than her husband. And for Joseph the converse was true.

The similarity of holiness between Mary and Joseph must, of course, be kept in balance. Mary's relationship to

Jesus was far superior to Joseph's. But Pope Leo XIII reminded us that after Mary no one was of greater dignity than Joseph, none possessed greater holiness than Joseph.

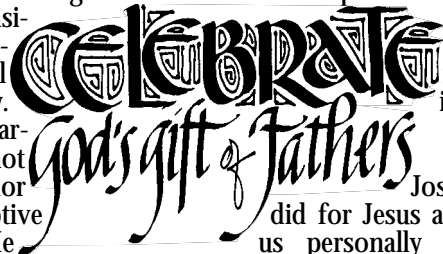
How shall we understand that Joseph is all that he is because of Mary? This means Joseph was given

his fatherly responsibility for Jesus because of his virginal marriage with Mary.

Through this marriage Joseph was not a mere fosterer, nor was he an adoptive father of Jesus. He was much more than that. Jesus was given to Mary not simply because she was a single maiden, but because she was the virginal and true wife of St. Joseph. Jesus was given to the family of St. Joseph, and that was accomplished only through Mary. Even though St. Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus, he was given the spiritual ties of fatherhood over a Son who was his own because he was the Son of Mary.

Holy Family is Inseparable
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph com-

prise the Holy Family, the basic human unit of God's strategy for the Incarnation and Redemption. They belong together in the history of salvation. The three are inseparable, and should always be seen and understood together theologically, pastorally, and in church art. Their special identities in God's plan are interrelated. To see them separately is regrettable and misleading.



Let's not forget St. Joseph. What St. Joseph did for Jesus and Mary, he will do for us personally and for the universal Church.

Like wife, like husband.

With the advent of the Third Millennium, Jesus and Mary will bring us closer to Joseph as we realize more clearly and deeply the mission of the Holy Family in salvation history. Veneration of St. Joseph will increase in proportion to the intensity of our devotion to Jesus and Mary.

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

Unconditional Love

From Page 1

about the "unconditional love of God" which we often hear from spiritual and theological writers?

Unconditional Obedience—The axiom "the Son has no other wish than to fulfill every wish and will of the Father". Christ, the Image of the Invisible God, carried out His mission with the fullest fidelity as He never said "No" to the Father but made it possible to "let the Father's will be done unto Him". His entire redemptive work is covered by his unconditional obedience to the Father that doesn't entail compulsion but a love unto the end more than just a command. We see this clearly in the Johannine account: "For I have not spoken on my own accord, but he who sent me." (John. 12:49-50). The Son does freely and spontaneously whatever the Father commands him to do. In consequence, Christ's loving obedience is not just the dutiful carrying out of a command, since the Father leaves him free. Rather, its realization lies in the unconditional love from the Son, a continuous "Yes" to what the Father asks from Him without setting any condition. This form of loving self-surrender that springs, not from duty, nor from strict

command but from the essence itself of God's love, is to be the model and type of every Christian's love and self-giving as Christ exemplified to us. This love is characterized as a complete selflessness or sacrificing one's ego in order to serve more and wish the best for the beloved. We see this more clearly with Christ's obedience from the moment of His Incarnation up to His Passion. The Son freely accepted with His Unconditional Fiat the Trinitarian decree that He should undertake the risk of creation by His death on the Cross while the Father at the same time embraced this free offering of love with as much love as that with which the Son embraced.

Love and the Trinity—But how do we understand the respective roles of the persons in the Trinity in the Son's "personification" of unconditional love, a value demanded to every Christian? It is evident that the Three have an active sharing of love as manifested in the many words of the Son that have reference always to the Father. Having stated this, allow me to push the topic a little bit more by sharing my further reflection on the three Persons' role in this perfect

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Tax and Mend

By Fr. John S. Rausch



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

When Susan Pace Hamill received the first bill for her property tax after moving to Alabama, the amount was so low she thought she got a monthly assessment rather than the annual one.

Conversely, her grocery receipts showed a high sales tax of 8 percent for bread and milk. An article in her local newspaper comparing state tax rates, "Alabama's Income Tax Least Fair," cited the state's low \$4,600 threshold that triggered income-tax liability.

To Susan Hamill, a lawyer and person of faith, the regressive sales tax and tax burden on the poor patently demonstrated the inequality and unfairness of the whole system.

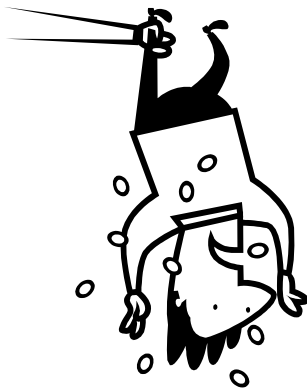
Her article, "An Argument For Tax Reform Based on Judeo-Christian Ethics," published in the Alabama Law Review sparked conservative Republican Governor Bob Riley to propose a state constitutional amendment to revolutionize tax policy in Alabama. Last September Alabamians went to the polls, but the so-called Amendment One was soundly defeated 2 to 1.

What We Get

The public's view of tax policy evolves on both the national and state levels. The Bush administration promotes tax cuts and smaller government. Besides creating huge deficits the recent \$330 billion

tax cut aims to shrink government programs that foster social justice and shift social services from federal to state and local levels.

A survey probing how Alabamians voted on Amendment One revealed strong economic and ideological reasons. Curiously, voters seemingly gave less weight to religious and church opinions. For tax reform to succeed in Alabama, the survey showed, proponents must link it solidly to education. Issues of fairness, regressivity and morality proved critical for only 3 percent of the respondents.



While the reluctance of Alabama voters to change their tax structure reflects, perhaps, a suspicion about government, Catholic social teachings offer two moral principles that apply directly to taxation: the common good and preferential option for the poor. Catholic teaching rejects both statist and laissez-faire governments, affirming instead participation in appropriate government.

Last October the bishops of Iowa published 5 suggestions on taxation that incorporate the common good and an option for the poor.

Their practical points will help guide Iowa voters and all people of faith across America.

1. State spending should first address as a priority the basic needs of all—especially the poor and vulnerable—before other appropriations

are made. Unfortunately, in the past two years 34 states have cut spending on Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program because of severe budget deficits.

2. All citizens have the right and responsibility to contribute to the common good through the payment of taxes. Paying taxes represents one way citizens give something back to society, and corporations share that obligation.

3. States should seek and maintain revenues sufficient to meet the basic needs of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Tax cuts should result from a reduction in revenue needs, not as a political gift to special interests.

4. Taxation in any form should be based on one's ability to pay. Catholic social teaching favors a more progressive form of taxation, not a flat tax.

5. All forms of taxation should be fair and just in their treatment of the poor. For example, no sales tax on food and essentials.

Some politicians rail against "tax and spend" proposals. But, with states facing budget deficits totaling \$85 billion in the coming year, and localities laying off teachers, firefighters and social workers, closing libraries and health clinics, cutting childcare and public transit, responsible citizens informed by Catholic teachings might change the mantra from "tax and spend" to "tax and mend."

Catholic Radio Hour



KEST 1450AM
7:00 pm

Catholics Speaking in Tongues

Kristina Cooper

Of all the spiritual gifts that the Charismatic Renewal has helped restore to the Church, the most controversial is the gift of tongues.

"Our Lord sometimes gives the soul feelings of jubilation and a strange prayer it doesn't understand", wrote St Teresa of Avila in her book *The Interior Castle*. "I am writing about this favor here so that if he grants it to you, you may give him such praise and know what is taking place."

There is a certain mystery about this gift. "It seems like gibberish", St Teresa continues, "and certainly the experience is like that, for it is a joy so excessive that the soul wouldn't want to enjoy it alone but wants to tell everyone about it so that they might help this soul to praise our Lord". She comments: "Oh what blessedness, sisters! If only God would give it to us all!"

There are numerous biblical references to the gift of tongues, although not all scholars would interpret these in the same way. Within the Charismatic Renewal we would understand Mark 16:17 as the first mention of it, when Jesus prophesied that believers "will speak in new tongues". This happened on the day of Pentecost and in Acts 10:44 at the house of Cornelius. "While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gifts of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God" It also happened at Ephesus (Acts 19:6).

There are various types of manifestations of tongues.

I have heard tales of missionaries in particular being gifted in certain situations and being able to communicate and preach in a rare tribal language they have never learnt. Much more common, though, are people who, in praying over others, have prayed in tongues and been told by the people they have been praying for that they have spoken a few words in their own language. Usually for some reason it has been important for

the person concerned to hear some word of consolation in his or her mother tongue. Sometimes in a charismatic prayer meeting a prophecy will be given in tongues. If this happens someone usually responds with an interpretation in the vernacular. Usually the content will be nothing startling but simply something which will edify people in their faith. What is most common at charismatic gatherings, however, is the communal singing in tongues, which can be very beautiful, and seems to start and finish spontaneously.

But as St Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 14, tongues is primarily for private prayer.

He stresses that "I should like all of you to speak in tongues", but he prefers that they prophesy, because whereas "whoever speaks in tongues builds himself up, whoever prophesies builds up the Church" (1 Cor 14:4). He himself obviously spoke in tongues as he establishes his own credentials: "I give thanks to God that I speak in tongues more than any of you." But, he goes on, "in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, so as to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor 14:18-19).

After I became involved in the Charismatic Renewal, these chapters (12-14) of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians became alive for me in a new way, because the advice was as relevant to the situations I was experiencing as it was to those first Christians, and not merely some interesting biblical event. It was when he attended a charismatic prayer group and saw the gifts of prophecy and tongues in operation that the Pope's preacher, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, became convinced of the authenticity of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. He remembers that, "studying the history of ancient Christianity as I did, I could understand what was happening in these meetings. For they were in fact very similar to what happened in the first Christian communities in the early Church. Yet I could see that it was something spontaneous and not done in imitation of them. I could see that it was a real thing, although going on in a new fashion."

The main benefit of tongues seems to be that it opens up people to

the non-rational and is a gift of surrender to the Holy Spirit. I have observed that the more rational and in control people like to be, the more difficult it seems to be for them to be released into the gift of tongues. I think this is because they keep on wanting to understand what is happening, and this becomes a block to them actually receiving it. This was so in my case. I believe I received the gift of tongues when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit 20 years ago this Pentecost. But as I had never heard it before and did not know what was happening, I did not cooperate with the gift.

I wanted to pour out my soul to God, but I had no words or thoughts to verbalize, so although I felt my tongue wanting to move, I said nothing. It was only later, when I started mixing with people involved in the Charismatic Renewal and talking to them, that I realized what had happened to me. It took me another five months for me to be open enough to yield to it again. I more or less fell into it accidentally as I was humming along to some Gregorian chant alone in my bed late one night.

Dr Dan Montgomery, a clinical psychologist, believes praying in tongues has beneficial psychological side effects and brings relaxation and serenity. He had a direct experience of this while at graduate school when he was hooked up to a sophisticated machine for measuring brain wave patterns and muscle tension, and decided to pray in tongues while the practitioner was out. He believes that "speaking in tongues involves a hemispherical shift from left-brain thinking and speech production to right-brain surrender and creativity. This is similar to the shift from left brain to right brain we experience when we hold a newborn infant. We don't say, 'This is a fine looking specimen of humanity'. We utter oohs and ahs."

Many people worry that if they yielded to the gift of tongues, it might take them over.

This is not so, as speaking in tongues is always a choice. Thus, although those who pray in tongues do not control the syllables they utter, they do choose when to start and when to finish. For me the gift of tongues is simply a gateway, and one I do not totally understand, to communication with the Holy Spirit. As St Paul says, it may be the smallest of the gifts, but it's worth having!

—Kristina Cooper is the editor of *Good News*, the Charismatic Renewal's magazine in Britain. ©2004, *The Tablet*.

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a man owned a small farm in West Texas. The Wage and Hour Department of Texas claimed he was not paying proper wages to his help and sent an agent to interview him.
"I need a list of your employees and how much you pay them", demanded the agent.
"Well, there's my hired hand who's been with me for 3 years. I pay him \$600 a week plus free room and board. The cook has been here for 18 months and I pay her \$500 a month plus free room and board. Then there's the half-wit that works about 18 hours a day. I pay him \$10 a week and buy him chewing tobacco", replied the farmer.
"That's the guy I want to talk to; the half-wit", says the agent.
The farmer says, "That would be me".

Authentic Graffiti

I've decided that to raise my grades, I must lower my standards.

* Houghton Library, Harvard University.

It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere.

* Written in the dust on the back of a bus. Wickenburg, Arizona.

If voting could really change things, it would be illegal.

* Revolution Books. New York, New York.

If pro is opposite of con, then what is the opposite of progress? Congress!

* Men's Restroom, House of Representatives. Washington, D.C.

It's hard in the morning to soar like an Eagle when the night before you were out hooting with the Owls.

* San Diego Zoo.

Guys—The only girl that likes to be whistled at is Lassie.

* Wall of construction site, Los Angeles



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

Top 10 Reasons God Created Eve

10. God worried that Adam would always be lost in the garden because men hate to ask for directions. *
9. God knew that Adam would one day need someone to hand him the TV remote. (Men don't want to see what's ON television, they want to see WHAT ELSE is on!) *
8. God knew that Adam would never buy a new fig leaf when his seat wore out and would therefore need Eve to get one for him. *
7. God knew that Adam would never make a doctor's appointment for himself. *
6. God knew that Adam would never remember which night was garbage night. *
5. God knew that if the world was to be populated, men would never be able to handle childbearing. *
4. As "Keeper of the Garden," Adam would never remember where he put his tools. *
3. The scripture account of creation indicates Adam needed someone to blame his troubles on when God caught him hiding in the garden. *
2. As the Bible says, "It is not good for man to be alone!" *
1. When God finished the creation of Adam, He stepped back, scratched His head and said, "I can do better than that."

—a woman's reader's response to last month's "Why God Made Men Happy."

How to Get a Traffic Ticket—Fast

A cop pulls a young woman over for speeding and he notices her eyes are red. He says, "Gee, your eyes look red. Have you been drinking?"

The woman replies, "No officer, but gee, your eyes look glazed. Have you been eating doughnuts?"

A preacher was making his rounds to his parishioners on a bicycle, when he came upon a little boy trying to sell a lawn mower. "How much do you want for the mower?" asked the preacher.

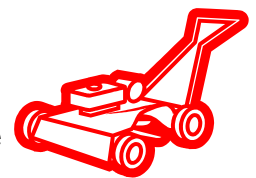
"I just want enough money to go out and buy me a bicycle", said the little boy. After a moment of consideration, the preacher asked, "Will you take my bike in trade for it?"

The little boy asked if he could try it out first, and after riding the bike around a little while said, "Mister, you've got yourself a deal."

The preacher took the mower and began to try to crank it. He pulled on the cord a few times with no response from the mower. The preacher called the little boy over and said, "I can't get this mower to start."

The little boy said, "That's because you have to cuss at it to get it started." The preacher said, "I am a minister, and I cannot cuss. It has been so long since I have been saved that I do not even remember how to cuss."

"The boy replied, "Just keep pulling on that cord. It'll come back to ya!"



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Effective Initiation

David Thorp

Born into a devoutly Catholic household, I was baptized in less than three weeks. By eight years old I received Holy Communion for the first time and at eleven I was confirmed.

The three sacraments which I received, Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, are the Sacraments of Initiation. As a Catholic, I was "fully initiated." However, there seemed to be a real sense in which the faith that I practiced was an "inherited" faith and not yet a faith which I fully "owned."

As a theology student years later, some of my fellow students would ask: "When did you become a Christian?" I knew that they were not looking for a record of my sacramental life,

although that was the best answer I could give because it was then that I became a Christian.

The persons raising the question wanted to know: "When did you start living with Jesus Christ as the center, or the foundation, of your life?" This is a good question for Catholics to hear. I could rephrase the question in these ways: "When did I cooperate in a conscious way with the graces of the sacraments which I had received as a child? When did I "own" the faith, becoming personally and consciously engaged with the Father through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit? When did I stop merely acknowledging that Jesus was the Savior and Lord and accept Him in real and concrete ways as my Savior and my Lord?" While conversion, and cooperating with God's grace, and "owning" the faith is a growing and thus continuous process, there was a time in my life when the process began. I can

recall surrendering to God, saying "yes" to the full life which God makes possible for me. It was for me an awakening or "initiation" moment.

The charismatic renewal has many gifts to offer the Church and the world. None could be more important than making available to people the possibility of having a personal relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, than providing the opportunity for their surrender to God. Prayer groups and communities can be wonderful vehicles of evangelization, of awakening and initiation into the fullness of God's life.

One of the most helpful descriptions I have read of the steps involved in carrying out effective evangelization speaks of three stages:

1. Preparation,
2. Presentation,
3. Preservation.

It is important to pay attention to all three

stages, giving to each their proper weight. While no one would dispute the supreme importance of the message of salvation brought by Jesus Christ, in effective evangelization this proclamation or presentation stage needs to be seen as 10% of the whole process. If there is no proper preparation or preservation (follow-up), the seed of the proclamation may not bear fruit.

Stages of Initiation

Preparation

What are we doing to prepare our members to share their faith with others? Do we remind them of the opportunities they have to reach those who are not living the full life which God intends? These opportunities are in their everyday situations through their already existing relationships with family and friends, with neighbors and co-workers, with others in their parish or school.

In those situations many people share with us their burdens, their fears, their pains. They have opened the door of their hearts to us. In a sense they are saying, "Is

there anyone who can help? Is there any relief? Is there hope for me?" Prayer group members know the One who is our help, our relief, our hope. Do we encourage them, have we "trained" them to bring—simply and gently—their knowledge and experience of that One to the other person? Have we reminded them to invite those people to our prayer meeting, to a teaching day or retreat, to a series that can initiate them more fully into a relationship with God?

When we plan a specific event (say, a series of teachings), there are many details that require our attention: time, place, leadership, preacher, music, hospitality, publicity, etc. If we do not pay attention to these many different aspects the event tends to lack peacefulness. Many people already feel they are sailing on rough seas; we want to bring them into the calm waters so they can hear the message of the Gospel. Our attention to preparation helps our events to be those calm waters.

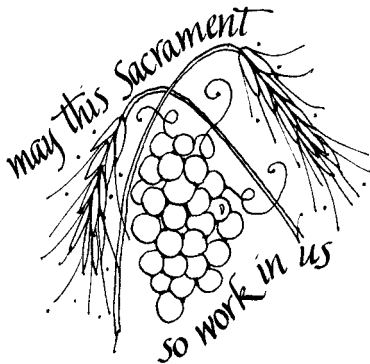
Proclamation

In our proclamation we want to present the basic Gospel message (the kerygma) with clarity and with vitality. We want people to hear about their Father who created them in his image and likeness (Genesis 1). We want them to know that this Father is love (1 John 4) and that He loves each of them.

It is important that we understand the situation in which we find ourselves. A word that I use to describe it is alienation, or separation. We are separated from God by sin. Relationships with others, even those closest to us, are sometimes broken. Even with ourselves, there seems to be a war (Romans 7). Since no one wants to continue in such a situation, we search for an end to it. We try to overcome this state in many different ways but ultimately they all fail because our solutions are neither wide enough to encircle all the separation nor deep enough to get to the roots.

How awful our state would be if this was all there was. But there is Good News, summarized in John 3: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life." (verse 16).

(See "Initiation" Page 15)



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 with Fr. James Tarantino
 Bible Study Saturdays 12:15 pm-2:00 pm
 1 Corinthians—Using "The Little Rock" Study Program
 To register, contact: Moriah 415/756-5505

May 6 NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER— 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm
 Combined choirs beginning 7:00 pm
 St. Mary's Cathedral
 Gough St. at Geary Blvd., SF.

Since 1775, when Congress asked the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a nation, the call to prayer has continued through our history. In 1952 Congress declared an annual National Day of Prayer, and since 1968 it has been specified as the first Thursday of May. Come pray with us! Reception following.
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May 6 HEALING MASS—Most Thursdays in May
 8:00 pm.—Immaculate Conception Chapel
 3255 Folsom St., near Precita St. SF,
 Rev. William Lauriola, Principal Celebrant
 Contact: Rose 415/587-8155

May 7 FIRST FRIDAY MASS—Of the Sacred Heart
 7:00 pm Rosary, 7:30 Mass.
 Fr. John Ledesema, Principal Celebrant
 Corpus Christi Church
 62 Santa Rosa Ave. at Alemany Blvd., SF
 Music by the Gospel Jubilation Singers

May 21 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

May 16 SUNDAY CHARISMATIC MASS 2:00 pm
 St. Patrick Church,
 756 Mission St (between 3rd & 4th Sts.) SF
 Contact Judy 415/826-7827

May 28-30 NORTHERN CAL CHARISMATIC
 CATHOLIC CONVENTION
 Santa Clara Convention Center
 Great America Parkway, Santa Clara
 with Robert Faricy, Sr. Linda Koontz,
 Deacon Bill Brennan, Jim Murphy, Fr. Jim Tarantino
 Sunday Masses: 7:00 am Fr. Joe Landi
 2:30 pm Fr. Jim Tarantino
 Registration Information 1-800-474-6644

Jun 4 FIRST FRIDAY MASS—Of the Sacred Heart
 7:00 pm Rosary, 7:30 Mass
 Fr. Peter Sanders, Orat., Principal Celebrant
 with Fr. Joe Landi
 St. Timothy Church
 (3rd Ave and Norfolk)
 1515 Dolan Ave, San Mateo
 Music by El Shaddai (San Leandro)

Love

From Page 6

form of love. Their love is characteristically unconditional, setting no boundaries in expressing it.

To facilitate my presentation, let me put it this way: the Father is Love itself (the Eternal Giver or the Lover), the Son is the Beloved (the Receiver and Giver as He returns love) and the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the love between the Father and the Son.

Borrowing the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar's words: "For the sake of the beloved, love would gladly renounce all its possessions if it could thereby enrich the beloved". This love without condition is fundamentally a give and take relationship of the Lover and the Beloved.




Unconditional Love

If there's any way that we would call this love conditional, it is because of the Trinitarian truth that the Lover would gladly accept love *if* it knew the Beloved would find its best and happiness in the act of giving love. In love, even receiving is a form of self-giving, for the good of the other. This love adorns itself, not to be beautiful for its own sake, but to appear beautiful to the beloved. It will just as readily deprive itself of all adornment *if* by this means it can adorn the beloved. This love chooses to forget itself for the sake of the beloved and to remain present to the beloved *only so long as* the beloved desires the presence of a living and personal other. While it is true that there are "ifs" in this love it is quite obvious that the unconditionality of this love remains substantially dominant. Isn't this the kind of love that was shared to us by the Father by sending His only Son to all, the good and evil, the righteous and unrighteous? Isn't this the perfect love shown to us by our Savior and Redeemer by accepting wholeheartedly His mission without condition?

We are blessed enough to have the opportunity to participate in this unconditional love as it is extended unselfishly to the Church, a divine institution mysteriously founded out of His love. We could do it in our own way inspired by the gospel challenge "to love not only your friends but also your enemies and your persecutors".

—Deacon Mark Reburiano, a student at the North American College at the Vatican, is a Transitional Deacon serving in his pastoral year at St. Cecilia Church, San Francisco.



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Council

From page 1

ing, some bishops opened up public discussion of the possibility of organizing a national Plenary Council. The idea drew enough interest to assign it to a committee headed by Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB of Indianapolis. Next spring the bishops will decide whether or not to move ahead.

As the bishops consider the question, they would do well to reflect on earlier efforts to organize the national church. Research on this history, and careful theological and pastoral reflection on the findings, would make an important contribution to the process, whether or not there is a national Plenary Council. I would suggest attention to three specific areas.

1. Plenary Councils

Between 1829 and 1884 the American bishops met ten times in formal councils to deliberate on the needs of their rapidly growing church. Seven of those meetings were provincial councils called under the authority of the Archbishop of Baltimore. The last three, in 1854, 1866 and 1884, called when there was more than one province, were Plenary Councils called under Vatican authority and presided over by a Vatican legate appointed by the Holy See. In each case the Vatican chose the Archbishop of Baltimore, throughout that period the de facto leader of the American church.

Until 1908 the United States was a mission country and its church was under the jurisdiction of the Congregation of the Propaganda, the arm of the Vatican in charge of missions. In mission churches the Code of Canon Law did not apply, although many American priests were quite familiar with its provisions. The American church expanded rapidly under the leadership of missionary priests whose distance from a diocesan center gave them considerable independence. From the start there was considerable ethno cultural diversity as well, and tensions between French, German and Irish communities sometimes threatened the unity of the church. All these pressures arose in a country where the church's very existence seemed precari-

ous because of the widespread popular suspicion directed at Catholics and their church.

The bishops in Councils, then, legislated for the American church, slowly developing a set of pastoral, disciplinary and administrative norms considered appropriate for the unique conditions of freedom, diversity and church-state separation in the United States. From these councils came the decision to end lay trusteeism and work to bring all church property under control of the bishops. At first bishops had all but absolute legal control over their priests, but gradually they adopted some of the traditional canons protecting clergy from oppressive bishops. In 1884, at the last of these councils, the bishops endorsed a national catechism, committed themselves to build parochial schools for all Catholic children, and began the process of establishing a national Catholic university.

The year 1884 marked the high point and the end of the self-government of the US church. No further Councils were held. In 1893 the Vatican appointed a permanent Apostolic Delegate to connect Rome and the American church, rejecting the American bishops' proposal that one of their number fulfill that function by residence in Rome. When Cardinal James Gibbons died, Rome did not make his successor a Cardinal, insuring that no American prelate could claim leadership of his brother bishops. In 1919 the bishops applied for permission to make permanent the National Catholic War Council, composed of the entire hierarchy, which had proven very useful during the First World War. Rome agreed, provided that the word Council was changed to conference to clarify that the new organization was non-canonical. The NCWC had no power to legislate and it was entirely voluntary: no bishop was required to participate.

2. Catholic Congresses

Bishops councils were not the only effort to organize the national church. In the late nineteenth century some lay leaders, supported by progressive bishops, organized three national Catholic congresses, modeled on congresses in Europe which had mobilized Catholic support for the church,

sometimes in resistance to state intervention, sometimes in positive efforts to strengthen the Catholic press, Catholic social action, and Catholic missions. In the United States these impressive meetings encouraged lay people, lay organizations and the Catholic press to join more intelligently in public life. Progressive projects like this were set back by the condemnation of Americanism in 1899. Still, only a few years' later new efforts at national mobilization were made through an American Federation of Catholic Societies. Its founders hoped to unite Catholics across ethnic lines and increase Catholic support for trade unions, social reform legislation, and national Catholic work in education and social services. This promising initiative was ended by the war. It might be noted that the Bishops organized the first NCWC in order to take control of war-related service work initially directed by the Knights of Columbus. Progressive bishops hoped the post-war NCWC could draw on the Catholic societies but instead efforts at lay mobilization came to focus on diocesan-based organizations for Catholic men and women.

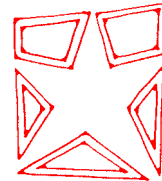
The NCWC, for all its limitations, did enable the church to deal with the national government and to consider matters of common interest. Offices dealing with government relations, education, social action and lay organization supported diocesan work and built networks of communication and mutual support that could sometimes be used for national projects, like supporting national programs to relieve the suffering of the unemployed during the great depression or mobilizing opposition to educational legislation that excluded benefit for Catholic schools. But staff leaders always regretted the parochialism of the twentieth century U.S. church and, in the words of a long time General Secretary of the NCWC, the manner in which lay people remained "mere externs" to even the public work of the church.

3. National Consultation Since Vatican II

Finally, attention should be paid to all the efforts made since Vatican II to organize the church at the national level.

First, there is the US bishops' conference itself, formed to replace the NCWC after the Vatican Council. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference provided coordination of diocesan efforts to implement the decrees of the Council. This was part of the worldwide development of national and regional episcopal conferences. Eventually questions arose about the authority of the

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(See "Council" page 13)

Dear Grace

By Grace MacKinnon

Q: Could you please explain why the Church teaches that having sex before marriage is wrong? What is the basis for this teaching?

A: With the authority given to her by God in Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church has, from the beginning, taught consistently that sexual intercourse "must take place exclusively within marriage. Outside of marriage it always constitutes a grave sin and excludes one from sacramental communion." (CCC #2390) This teaching we firmly believe comes to us from God, and the Church cannot fail in her responsibility to proclaim this truth. Truth is not something subjective which one accepts only when it feels right or happens to fit our lifestyle. The truth is objective, and it changes for no one.

It is clear from Scripture that God intended for the sexual union between a man and a woman to be total and self-giving: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply'" (Genesis 1: 28). He made man and woman for each other and created marriage as the bond that would solidify and protect that union and, thus, the human family. God's plan was that the sexual act be open to life; this is part of marriage, and it is holy and honorable. Gen-

erally speaking, a couple with no permanent commitment to each other will not wish their sexual act to be open to life because of the possibility of children, who they may not be committed to raise and care for. Thus, they go against the plan of God when they have sex outside of marriage.

There are people today who would like to have a right to a "trial marriage" where there is an intention of getting married later. However, carnal union is morally legitimate only when a definitive community of life between a man and woman has been established. Human love does not tolerate "trial marriages." It demands a total and definite gift of persons to one another. (CCC #2391)

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II has provided a clear and powerful summary of the Church's teaching on this matter. He states that sexuality is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person. This total self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving.

We know, of course, that when non-married persons engage in sexual

acts, there is often no thought given to this total gift of self. Pleasure and self-gratification are at times the motivating force. Every baptized person, however, is called to lead a chaste life in whatever state in life they have chosen. In order to be chaste, one must learn self-control. It is when we can do this that we become truly free. We become who we really are, sons and daughters of the living God. We do not belong to ourselves, but to Him who made us out of love.

The Church is often challenged on this issue of no sex before marriage, but that can never change the truth that must be taught. Jesus too was often challenged, but if He had backed down, then He would not have been crucified and we would not have gained our eternal salvation. Many will ask how it can be wrong when so many are engaging in it. But thousands of wrongs do not make something right. Let us continue to pray to God for the grace and strength to do His will in our lives always.

—© Grace MacKinnon, 2003. Contact Grace at www.deargrace.com



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

Council

From Page 12

conferences, their relationship with the local diocese, with other episcopal conferences, and with the Holy See. In July 2001 US bishops reorganized into a single entity, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Steps have been taken to limit the role of non-bishops on Conference committees and to require near unanimity on Conference pronouncements.

The US church, in considering the possibility of holding a Plenary Council, could make good use of a history of the American bishops conference. That history should give particular attention to:

1. The role of lay people, religious and others on conference Committees and staffs.
2. The role and record of the national advisory council, drawn from appointees from the 13 regions of the country. This

body advises the bishops on items on the agenda for national meetings.

3. The consultative and deliberative process used in preparation of pastoral letters, particularly those dealing with moral values (1976), peace and nuclear weapons (1983) and the economy (1986).

4. The consultative process used in preparing for the periodic synods of bishops in Rome. The experience of consulting the clergy on the "ministerial priesthood" for the 1971 synod and the laity for synods on family, and ministry would be particularly helpful.

5. Study and dialogue in the 1970s about the possibility of convening a national Pastoral Council.

6. The background, development, implementation and results of the Bishops Bicentennial Program, "Liberty and Justice for All" and its climax, the 1976 Call to Action Conference, to date the only national convention of the US church.

7. The consultative and deliberative process used in preparing suc-

cessive National Catechetical Directories.

As this list suggests, there has been widespread consultation and many efforts to develop instruments of shared responsibility at the national level. There has also been theological and pastoral uncertainty about the role and mission of the national church, and even questions whether that term has theological standing.

There are worries about compromising the autonomy of the diocesan bishop, limiting the authority of the Vatican, dividing the global church along national lines, even offering legitimacy to dissent. In recent years these questions became part of deepening ideological divisions, even among the bishops. But they are legitimate questions. They came up in one form or another at almost all the regional synods held to mark the millennium. They are questions the church should be discussing in many forums as the bishops deliberate the question of a Plenary Council. One hopes the NFPC and local Presbyterian Councils will encourage that study and deliberation.

—Dr. David J. O'Brien, Ph.D. is an historian and Loyola professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the College of the Holy Cross. © 2004, *Touchstone*



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Conversión

Por Mark Nimo

"Todos nosotros como ovejas erramos, cada uno marchó por su camino, y Yahvéh descargó sobre él la culpa de todos nosotros". Isaías 53 6:

Este pasaje sobre Jesucristo el siervo sufriente me recuerda una de mis experiencias en África como adolescente y joven adulto, desde alrededor de la edad de doce años hasta los veinticuatro. En varias ocasiones saqué las ovejas de mi padre a pastar. Las ovejas que eran más difíciles de controlar siempre se quedaban enganchadas en las zarzas o morían atropelladas por algún vehículo si salían a la carretera. A veces, estas ovejas tan testarudas ponían a todo el rebaño en peligro.

Mi padre siempre me responsabilizaba si algo malo les pasaba a las ovejas mientras pastaban. Me acuerdo de las muchas veces que incluso me castigaba si volvía a casa y el número de ovejas era menor del que había sacado. A veces tuve heridas al intentar soltar a una oveja de las zarzas. Siempre sentí que mi padre me hacía responsable de las ovejas que sacaba. Con compasión y dolor, llevaba en brazos los corderos que nacían en los campos.

Creo que Jesucristo siente lo mismo por nosotros que lo que yo sentía por esas ovejas hace años. Sobre él, nuestro pastor, se descargó la culpa y los pecados de todos nosotros. A menudo mi padre me azotaba por mis faltas y mi descuido. Pero piensa por un momento sobre el hecho de que Jesucristo sufrió como el sin pecado. Elegimos errar como ovejas y constantemente nos alejamos de vez en cuando.

Esta condición del hombre es lo que las escrituras describen como PECADO; errar de la dirección de Dios, rechazar el amor de Dios y elegir nuestro propio camino.

HUMILDAD, HONRADEZ Y ADMISIÓN

Nos cuesta todo tener la humildad de David en el Salmo 51 (50), para decir honradamente, "Pues mi delito yo lo reconozco, mi pecado sin cesar está ante mí; contra ti, contra ti solo he pecado, lo malo a tus ojos cometí. Así eres justo tú cuando sentencias, sin reproche cuando juzgas". Si te has enfrentado con la realidad de la tentación y el pecado en tu vida, esto no es difícil de entender. Al menos, ¡a mí me ha pasado! Nuestra negativa a reconocer nuestra condición pecadora constituye en sí misma la raíz de todo pecado. Esas acciones que se manifiestan entonces sólo son síntomas de una enfermedad que está profundamente enraizada. Se debe utilizar el hacha en la raíz principal si hay que hacer frente al pecado en nuestras vidas.

En el centro del mensaje del Evangelio está la realidad del combate entre la luz y la oscuridad, la verdad y la mentira, la desobediencia y la obediencia, la infidelidad y la fidelidad, el espíritu y la carne, en el corazón de la humanidad. ¡Nos enfrentamos a una elección!

CONVERSIÓN: "¡VUELVE AL SEÑOR!"

Cuando elegimos "volver al Señor" después de alejarnos, entonces nos colocamos en el camino del arrepentimiento. El arrepentimiento es la llave de la conversión. El profeta Oseas amonesta a Israel y en realidad a toda la humanidad: Vuelve, Israel, a Yahvéh, tu Dios, que por tu iniquidad has succumbido. Tomad con vosotros palabras, y volved a Yahvéh. Decidle: "Quita toda iniquidad; que alcancemos ventura y te ofrezcamos el fruto de nuestros

labios" (Oseas 14 2-3).

El arrepentimiento expresado en griego como Metanoia, connota un cambio en el patrón de nuestro pensamiento, que finalmente lleva a un cambio de corazón y de acciones. Por decirlo sencillamente, el arrepentimiento significa cambiar de dirección del camino por el que nos habíamos perdido, al camino de Dios. Nuestros pensamientos a menudo se alejan del Señor. Nuestras palabras nos hacen alejarnos del camino de Dios. Nuestra apatía e indiferencia nos hacen alejarnos del camino de Dios. Nuestras acciones nos hacen alejarnos del camino de Dios.

La conversión es por lo tanto constante. Es un estilo de vida que surge de una relación con alguien por quien nos sabemos amados. "Nosotros amamos, porque Él nos amó primero" (1 Juan 4 19). Siempre es el amor de Dios el que nos lleva al arrepentimiento y a la conversión. A través de nuestro arrepentimiento y conversión somos restaurados y reconciliados de nuevo con Dios y el prójimo.

Lamentaciones 3 20-23: "Recuerda, sí, recuerda, y se hunde en mí mi alma. Esto resolveré en mi corazón, por ello esperaré: Que el amor de Yahvéh no se ha acabado, ni se ha agotado su ternura; cada mañana se renuevan: ¡grande es tu fidelidad!"

CONFESIÓN Y RESTITUCIÓN

"Dad, pues, digno fruto de conversión". Mateo 3:8

La conversión siempre dará fruto; un cambio en la vida de uno. La humildad de pedir el perdón del Señor y del prójimo hace de la confesión un acto de arrepentimiento. El sacramento de la reconciliación hace este encuentro con Jesucristo incluso más poderoso en la Iglesia. Recomponer las relaciones rotas y devolver las cosas robadas como restitución, también nos ayuda a liberarnos de una conciencia culpable. El consejo y la dirección son muy necesarios tanto en la confesión como en la restitución para poder hacernos responsables de nuestras acciones.

CONCLUSIÓN

Nuestro deseo es vivir en la presencia de Dios, tanto aquí en la tierra como para siempre con él en el cielo. Con David, dejemos que nuestra canción sea "no me rechaces lejos de tu rostro, no retires de mí tu santo espíritu. Vuélveme la alegría de tu salvación, y en espíritu de nobleza afiánzame; enseñaré a los rebeldes tus caminos y los pecadores volverán a tí" (Salmo 51 (50) 13-15). El Espíritu Santo nos absuelve de nuestro pecado. Ven Espíritu Santo y toca nuestros corazones de piedra y danos corazones de carne.

El pecado siempre entristecerá al Espíritu Santo que ha sido derramado en nuestros corazones por la pura misericordia y el amor de Dios. Como el hijo pródigo, volvamos a la casa de nuestro Padre de donde nos hemos alejado. El padre está en el camino para darnos la bienvenida a nuestro regreso. ¡Nos espera un banquete! Sí, con duda, miedo y temblando nos gustaría todavía acercarnos a la casa de nuestro Padre. "Vuelve a mí", dice, "con todo tu corazón. Que el miedo no nos mantenga apartados. He esperado mucho para que vuelvas a casa a mí y vivas una nueva vida",



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Initiation From Page 10

This Good News is made even more wonderful by Jesus' words just before He ascends into heaven: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down upon you..." (Acts 1:8). These first century words are a promise to people in every day. Many people feel powerless over temptation or in their attempts to live and love as Jesus taught. Knowing that Pentecost can happen for them transforms their lives.

Our message would be incomplete without the proclamation of the community, the Church. We have been baptized into the Body of Christ; it is not possible to live the Christian life without relationships with others in the community of faith.

In our proclamation we are not merely presenting information to be understood. Rather, we are inviting people to appropriate the message, to say "yes" in a personal way to what they have heard. Providing the opportunity to say "yes," to surrender to God is important. I recall preaching a retreat to youth ministers.

The message of the retreat is what I have summarized above. On the last evening of the retreat, in the context of Mass, I offered the retreatants the opportunity to come forward and say "yes" in their own words to Jesus. I was overwhelmed by the response and the beauty of their surrender. Speaking with one of the people later, she said that no one had ever asked her to do that before and that something new in her relationship with God and in her

ministry happened that night.

We also help people to experience God when we pray with and over them. The work of awakening is not ours; it belongs to God. We place others in God's hands and ask that He brings His work to fullness in them.

The main question for our groups is: do we have events during which we present opportunities for people to accept Jesus Christ in real and concrete ways as their personal Savior and Lord?

Preservation

If all we did was prepare for and make the presentation, we would be doing only about half the job. How are we helping others to preserve the message in their lives? In some places each new participant is assigned to someone who is already a member of the group. This person serves as a kind of "sponsor," maintaining contact with the person during and after the series. This person is there to answer questions, to calm fears, to encourage and support the new or renewed commitment of the participant.

The group may also plan special events just for those who have participated in the series. There could also be additional series (such as a Bible study or prayer

course) as part of the follow-up.

I have often heard people complain that many who came to the initial series are never seen or heard of again. I often ask: Did the group plan any specific ways to maintain contact, to preserve the initial series? More often than not, unfortunately, the answer is "No."

Let Our Prayer be...


Would that we treasure the "gift of initiation" which the charismatic renewal brings to the Church and the world! Through the renewal many millions of people have experienced an awakening to the fullness of life which they received in the sacraments of the Church. Untold numbers have heard for the first time the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and been brought into the Family of God through the Sacraments of Initiation. Let's dedicate ourselves afresh to being effective vehicles of evangelization and initiation.

—Courtesy of ICCRS Newsletter, Vatican City

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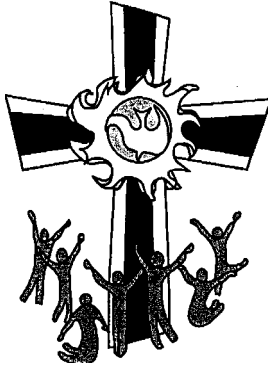
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