



Charismatics

The Faith Newsletter of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Articles of Spiritual Enlightenment for Christians

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by Br. John M. Samaha

in recent years literally hundreds of apparitions of the Virgin Mary have been reported. And the majority allege messages from the Blessed Virgin Mary. How do we place these reported experiences in perspective?

In the official teaching of the Catholic Church apparitions belong to the category of private revelation. This means apparitions are a private communication from God to particular persons to assist them on their own faith journeys. Apparitions are not public revelation. Public revelation was given to all by Jesus Christ and handed on to us by the Apostles, the inspired Scripture, and the life of the Church. Public revelation is binding on the whole faith community. Private revelation is not.

Faithful not Obligated to Accept Apparitions

When the Church officially authenticates an apparition it means simply that the message, practices, and prayers associated with a specific happening are in accord with the message and faith of the Gospel. In effect, then, persons will not be led astray if they follow that particular message. Howev-

er, as with all practices of spirituality, persons should feel confidently free to follow their consciences as the Spirit guides them.

In 1973, shortly after the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic bishops of the United States issued a joint pastoral letter, *Behold Your Mother, Woman of Faith*. In that instruction they stressed that there is no obligation to accept apparitions: "Even when a private revelation has spread to the entire world, as in the case of Our Lady of Lourdes, and has been recognized in the liturgical calendar, the Church does not make mandatory the acceptance either of the original story or of the particular forms of piety springing from it."

How Does an Authentic Apparition Happen?

What happens in an authentic apparition? One explanation is offered by the late Father Karl Rahner, one of the leading theologians of this century. The Holy Spirit, using language and images already present in a person's memory, inspires the imaginative faculty of the recipient in an intense way so that the person sees and hears a communication from heaven. The figure is not physically present so no one else can see it, but as with all religious experience, this does not make

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Until Death Do We Part by Fr. Joe Landi



This is not an article about the Catholic marriage covenant or an observation on the Scott Peterson verdict. It's about the Catholic social teaching on capital punishment—the death

penalty that Christians should part from the mainstream thinking.

Perhaps the notoriety of the Scott Peterson verdict, the federal judge's rejection of the appeal of condemned murderer Donald Beardslee on his scheduled execution at San Quentin on January 19, and the January

26th scheduled execution of Michael Ross (Connecticut) has brought the debate over capital punishment to our consciousness again. According to a January 2004 Harris Poll, a two-thirds majority of Americans support capital punishment "even though almost everyone (95%) believes that innocent people are sometimes convicted of murder. On average, this mainstream of Americans believes that 11% of all those convicted are innocent. But the two-thirds of the public who support the death penalty seem to feel that that is an acceptable price to pay." Acceptable, unless it's their loved one being gassed,

injected or hung.

When a prosecutor seeks the death penalty, how can there be an impartial jury? It becomes intrinsically faulted because potential jurors with a moral objection to the death penalty must be removed from the jury. The fifth commandment forbids direct and intentional killing as gravely sinful (CCC2268ff.) If a potential juror feels that the death penalty is the same as murder and that by finding an individual guilty know they are condemning a person to death, how can they contribute to the verdict when the fifth commandment forbids doing anything

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the whole phenomenon of Church movements is very rich from the theological point of view.

When the Pope speaks of “ecclesial maturity”, he wants all movements to live this to its fullness. Your vocation and mission in the Church are extremely important.

To consider the ecclesial maturity of movements, we must dwell a little longer on the question of ecclesial identity, one of the great challenges of our times. Here we emphasize that the two adjectives, “ecclesial” or “catholic”, when used in reference to communities and movements, should not be seen as empty words or just embellishments. These adjectives are essential and they entail serious commitment as well as a definite program. Unfortunately, nowadays it is not always like that. Sometimes, there is a lack of theological preparation by certain leaders and members of



some communities. There may be a lack of a “census Ecclesiae” on the part of individuals or a lack of a spirit of filial obedience to the Magisterium of the Church. For this reason, some communities or associations of the faithful may find their sense of being in communion with the whole Church weakened and it may even reach crisis point. All the communities within the Catholic Fraternity should be clear about this: Catholic and ecclesial identity is one of the fundamental characteristics of each lay association and each movement. This identity is a treasure that we must defend, particularly nowadays. The basis of this identity is a genuine love for the Church - our Mother and Teacher.

How to Determine a Movement’s Ecclesial Identity

How can we recognize and verify the ecclesial identity of a movement or community? In response to the request of the Synod of Bishops on vocation and mission of the lay faithful

in 1987, the Pope, in his post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles laici*, formulated the five “criteria of ecclesiality” of associations and movements (cf. n.30). Let us just remember them briefly here.

1) The paramount importance given to each Christian’s call to holiness:

This entails a solid preparation in the Christian faith, one that deals with the unity between faith and life and where the objective is fullness of Christian life. The Pope never tires of repeating: “Do not be afraid to be saints!” Christian communities should be real schools of holiness for their members.

2) The responsibility to confess the Catholic faith:

This is specifically about fidelity to the Church Magisterium in the fields of doctrine and morality. Within the movements and communities, members should be given the necessary guarantee

Movements in the Church

by Bishop Stanislaw Rylko

of orthodoxy, and the security that they are following the correct guidelines. If this is missing, and there is some confusion and lack of clarity, the ecclesial dimension is diminished.

3) The witness given by steadfast and convinced communion with the Pope

who is the visible center of unity between the universal Church and the Bishop, principal and foundation of the unity of the local Church. *Ubi Petrus ibi Ecclesia - ubi Episcopus ibi Ecclesia* (Wherever Peter is, there is the Church - wherever the bishop is, there is the Church). It is a very specific principle and it is expressed at a diocesan level in obedience to the bishop and in willing collaboration with other movements and associations. The Pope firmly emphasizes: “Moreover, Church communion demands both an acknowledgment of a legitimate plurality of forms in the associations of the lay faithful in the Church and at the same time, a willingness to

temptation of rivalry and competition and refuse to collaborate with the others, then this is giving very bad witness. This means that they have not understood the meaning of ecclesial communion.

4) Compliance with and participation in the apostolic aims of the Church:

This involves active commitment in favor of world evangelisation. Each community and ecclesial movement should be distinguished for its strong missionary thrust, that is, participation in the missionary mandate that Christ entrusted to the whole Church: “Go throughout the whole world and preach the Gospel...” It is very necessary to guard against closing in on oneself and within one’s own circle and forming a closed ghetto. Ecclesial movements carry out their own vocation best within the Church and especially in the mission.

5) Committed presence in society:

This is really the task to build society according to the spirit of the Gospel. Today more than ever we need witness of active solidarity with every man and woman, and it must be expressed in defending and furthering the dignity and rights of the human person. The lay faithful have a particular obligation in this respect because, by vocation, they are closely connected with the world: “They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven” (*Lumen Gentium*, n.31). So, to be part of a Church movement or community should not be motivated by a desire to find refuge from the world in a disembodied spiritualism. The Christian is not of this world, but nevertheless lives in the world and feels responsible for the world.

Movements Must Evaluate Themselves According to These Criteria

All Church movements, including Renewal in the Spirit, should often return to these “criteria of ecclesiality” and draw comparisons. It is the best guarantee of a healthy development of your community life and of the basic integration of your community into the ecclesial fabric of your respective parishes and dioceses. The Pope concludes: “The fundamental criteria mentioned at this time find their verification in the

cooperate in working together”(Christifideles laici, n. 30). If, in a parish or diocese, some communities and movements fall into the unwholesome

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The Death Penalty From Page 1

with the intention of indirectly bringing about a person's death? To do so would make them, in their estimation, a murderer no better than the accused.

There is a lot of discussion that execution brings closure for the wounds suffered by the victim's loved ones. That doesn't seem logical. The time between crime and execution is so lengthy that it would seem capital punishment would only cause the wound to fester, not heal. The average length is 14 years; but in Beardslee's case it is 24 years and in Ross' case, it is 25 years. In probability, they may have outlived their victims' loved ones.

Capital punishment is a state's issue and California and 37 other states still have the death penalty applicable in capital cases sometimes limited by special circumstances. Down from 98 USA executions in 1999, there were 59 executions in 2004 and we—yes, you and I, executed more people per year in the USA than any other country except China and Iran.

Apparently many Christians think that the death penalty is in keeping with Christ's teaching because the Hebrew Scriptures advise of "an eye for an eye"

and therefore "substantiated" as the Rev. Don Murray, pastor of Hollister Vineyard Christian Fellowship said in an interview with Melania Zaharopoloulos (12/31/04 Gilroy Dispatch). One would think that a church with the name "Christian Fellowship" might be advocating something closer to the "new covenant" brought by Christ's teachings. Remember that adultery was punishable by death by stoning when "eye for an eye" was in vogue. Yet Jesus took a different approach. We are called to follow his lead.

Many Protestant religious leaders, Pope John Paul II, and Catholic Bishops like Archbishop Henry J. Mansell of Hartford (Connecticut), put their actions where Christ would by joining forces with the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty. In a recent letter distributed to all the Hartford Archdiocese parishes with a petition drive to end the death penalty in Connecticut, Archbishop Mansell reflects Christ's approach of not throwing the first rock: "The Gospel mandates us to respect human life from



The Gas Chamber at San Quentin (Photo (c)2003 Marino Colmano)

conception to natural death."

The state has the right to curb the spread of anti-social behavior harmful to the basic rules of civil society and of safeguarding the common good. The traditional teaching of the Church "does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." (ccc2267) "If however,

non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means..."

John Paul II, in *Evangelium vitae*, sums it up for us: "The cases in which the execution of the

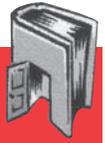
offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically non-existent."

Some food for thought for those who hold that capital punishment is a deterrent to crime. According to a survey of U.S. police chiefs by Hart Research, they ranked the enforcement of the death penalty last among effective approaches to reducing crime. When Amnesty International held its summit on capital punishment in 1977, only 16 countries had outlawed the death penalty. Today, 117 have banned it by law or practice.

Need more convincing that we should abolish this barbaric practice? Check out THE ARENA FotoMovie (www.marinocolmano.com/quentin.html) Highlights include an exclusive and intimate revelation by Ullis Powell, the author of "The Onion Field," and an unusually gruesome gas chamber story told by a guard.

In the USA, there are 14 executions scheduled in the first three months of 2005 alone. (See www.amnestyusa.org) Until death do we part? Yes! It is time to kill the death penalty.

A n eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth.



Reader's Choice

A Book Review

Saint Gianna Molla: Wife, Mother, Doctor (by Pietro Molla and Elio Guerriero) just released in English by Ignatius Press, is about a woman for all times and all walks of life. Coauthored by her husband, it tells the life story of a young and energetic physician, the 10th of 13 children, who lived life to the fullest, yet generously risked death by cancer to save the life of her unborn child. Gianna refused a hysterectomy to eliminate uterine tumors, since the procedure would have likewise aborted her fourth child. She even opted for riskier surgery in a further attempt to save the baby – which was successful. Gianna died of an infection seven days after the little Gianna Emanuela was born in 1962, leaving her heartbroken husband, Pietro Molla, with four young children. Gianna was just 39.

Saint Gianna Molla by Pietro Molla & Elio Guerrero

First Canonized Married Laywoman and Physician

This glimpse into the contemporary life of newly canonized Saint Gianna profiles this modern-day Italian pediatrician who risked her life to preserve the life of her unborn baby. As the first canonized married laywoman and physician, St. Gianna is now looked upon as protectress of mothers, spouses and professionals, and as a modern-day saint with whom virtually everyone can identify.

St. Gianna's "baby," which was to be her fourth child – Gianna Emanuela Molla – is now in her early 40s, is also a physician, and recently attended the canonization of her mother on May 16, 2004 in Rome with her father and her remaining siblings.

In 1997, at a Conference of the Family held in Brazil, Pope John Paul II was visibly touched by then-

Blessed Gianna's family testimonies about her. The Pope began to cry as he listened to young Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla — for whom Blessed Gianna gave her life — address a word of thanks to her beatified mother. "Thank you mother, thank you for having given me life two times: in conception, and when you permitted me to be born, deciding for my life. Intercede and help always all mothers and all families that come to you with confidence."

Three Perspectives

Illustrated with photos of St. Gianna Beretta Molla and her family, the 156-page book is divided into three parts which impart distinct perspectives on her life. The first gives both her and her husband's backgrounds, describing their families and childhoods, how they chose their professions and eventually met and married, and the central role Catholicism played throughout their lives.

The second part is a question-and-answer interview with St. Gianna's husband, Pietro.

The last section of the book is a personal look at Gianna by her husband, who talks of how his wife enacted the virtues in her daily life. He writes simply and candidly of her letters and writings, his feelings when he met her, her profound influence on his view of life and on his faith, and the irreplaceable joy of their engagement, marriage and family.

As Christ said: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:12-13). A few days before young Gianna was to be born, St. Gianna said to her doctors, "If you have to choose, there should be no doubt: choose the life of the baby. I demand it." Because she chose life over "therapeutic abortion," St. Gianna died one week later, on April 28, 1962. Her feast day is April 28.

--Available from Ignatius Press at www.ignatius.com

Faith Odyssey

--A Journey Through Lent

By Richard A. Burrige

A Lenten book like none ever written. The author invites readers to journey through the season of Lent with devotional readings that combine Scripture with stories from science fiction and popular culture.

\$15.00—Paulist Press

Into the Abyss of Suffering

--A Catholic View

By Kenneth R. Overberg, S.J.

Rooted in our faith, this book views our human suffering through the lens of Jesus' human and divine suffering and reassures us that we are loved even in and through our pain. "Humanity still experiences Good Friday," writes the author.

\$9.95—St. Anthony Messenger Press

Where God Walks

--Everyday Encounters With Mystery

By William Breault, S.J.

"It's a mystery," we'll say. A common refrain we'll use to dismiss something we don't understand or find hard to explain. The author relates personal experiences that convey a sense of the mystery that is at the heart of life. He explores and interprets personal events and encounters that fall outside the realm of cause and effect, events and encounters that move beyond the veil that prevents us from seeing deeper than our senses allow..

\$9.95—Ave Maria Press

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Teen Chat



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OK, would someone mind explaining to me the whole reasoning behind purgatory?

There is nothing that I have found in the Bible that supports this, and I don't see how it's logical to think that even after what Christ did on the cross for us, taking ALL of our sins away, that we would still need something besides the blood of Christ to "cleanse ourselves" before entering heaven. That almost seems to me like you're telling Christ that His sacrifice wasn't enough.

Posted 12/23/2004 1:43:00 AM by sleeplesseyes166

On-line replies to this message:

Re: Purgatory

I, myself, do not believe in Purgatory because of what you just said- nothing in the Bible supports it. Purgatory is a manmade thing, and it's not real. There's heaven, there's hell, and there's earth. I'd like to see some Scriptures that prove its existence before I believe it. ...

Re: Purgatory

Whoa!!! Guys, first & foremost, God is not a God of punishment! He's a God of mercy and forgiveness.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, second edition, it states that Purgatory is "A state of final purification after death and before entrance into heaven for those who died

in God's FRIENDSHIP, but were only imperfectly purified; a final cleansing of human imperfection before one is able to enter the joy of heaven."

Ok, simpler words, God knows our hearts, right? RIGHT! If you died and there are sins you have not asked God forgiveness for, but in your heart you are sorry for them, God gives those who are in "FRIENDSHIP" with him, meaning bound to go to heaven, a last chance to cleanse your soul before entering heaven.

You see our souls must be pure of all sin before we are in front of our Lord. We have been forgiven for all of our sins when Jesus died on the cross for us, but the ticket to forgiveness, just like any other gift from God, we have to ask for the forgiveness....

Re: Purgatory

This is a very hard topic to discuss, because to a large degree, Purgatory is and will remain a huge mystery. There are several Bible passages that relevantly pertain to the subject of Purgatory: they are 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Pet 1:17; and 2 Macc 12:44-45.

Basically, Purgatory is a place where people who have died are being purified, and are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy and perfection of Heaven.

It really makes sense, if God is perfect who would want to stand before Him without the purification of their sins. That was a really great point about how Jesus' death "not being enough", but what Jesus' death and resurrection did was open the gates of Heaven.

For God to give us a place that assures our eternal salvation and protects us from eternal damnation, so that we can purify ourselves before coming totally in union with Him and His spotless perfection is such a huge confirmation of His love and mercy for us.

Sorry this is so long, but St. Gregory the Great comments

on Purgatory referencing towards Mt. 12:31, he said, "As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in an age to come...an age when forgiveness and purification are still taking place."

(By the way, I got all of this info from the Catechism of the Catholic Church; it totally rocks.)

The CCC also says that Purgatory (this purification period) frees us from what is called "temporal punishment" of sin, however this "punishment" must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin (which is unhealthy attachments to created and worldly things, an absence of God).

So needless to say, Purgatory is very real, and we must pray for the hopeless souls in Purgatory, because they rely solely on our prayers for them. The doctrine of purgatory is a controversial one, yet it is firmly grounded in Scripture. In 2 Maccabees 12:46, God tells us, "Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."



Condensed from Teen Talk, the chat room at www.lifeteen.com & www.sfspirit.com



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in coping with the forces of hell in what is called spiritual warfare, a certain kind

of courage or fearlessness can be reckless, rash, and irresponsible.

Its opposite is an appropriate and prudent fear. Jesus incisively advocates a *prudent* fear of the evil one and his machinations, as distinguished from fear of a temporal threat: “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!” (Lk 12:4-5).

We can fear the devil and yet not fear his efforts to attack us, if we avail ourselves of God’s trustworthy protection. A child who is terrified of a rattlesnake in the yard is not frightened when he is picked up and held safe, snuggling in his father’s protective arms, distanced from the threat.

Fellowship With the Lord is the Best Protection

A trusting, warm fellowship with the Lord is the best protection from fearful demons. You may be severely tempted and harassed by forces of evil, as so many of the saints were; Jesus, himself, while in the desert, was tempted three times by Satan, and was confronted by him while performing exorcisms. As long as you stay close to God, however, trusting in his care, you cannot be enslaved by the Evil One. The

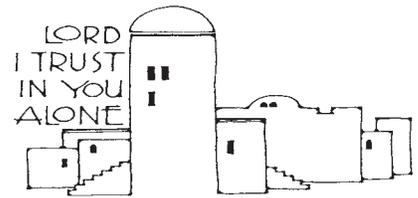
they once were, as the words of Jesus take on a deeper meaning: “Do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ ...For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things” (Mt 6:31-32). Vanity will not be an issue, with the immediate prospect of bodily decay. Amassing money won’t be a driving force either, for, as the proverb says, “There are no pockets in a shroud.” You can’t take it with you. Detachment is hard in this life, but easy when we are about to leave to be launched into eternity.

Detachment is Useful—Now

It wouldn’t do us any harm if we could adopt now, while still fully alive, something of that deathbed detachment--minus any overtone of morbidity, of course. Job, in his desolation and forced detachment, still passed the test of *trusting in God* in his most

Spiritual Warfare, Detachment and Trust

by John H. Hampsch, C.M.F.



Fear and Courage Work Together

In the next few sentences, however, Jesus tells us how to prevent an unwarranted fear in resisting the devil, namely *by exercising a profound trust* in the Lord who cares for each of us lovingly: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. *Do not be afraid*; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Lk 12:6-7, emphasis mine). Thus, paradoxically, fear and courage can work together through a combination of fear of evil and a secure courage in trusting in the Lord’s protection from that evil.

devil himself knows that “you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (1 Cor 10:21).

Detachment and Trust

On the morning of his execution, a death row inmate was offered a choice of menu for his last meal, according to the prison tradition. He requested scrambled eggs, but made only from Eggbeaters, not regular eggs. Asked why he refused ordinary eggs, he replied, “I’m watching my cholesterol.”

There’s a kind of absurdity in seeking long-range benefits when faced with a short-range opportunity to enjoy those benefits. Things that are important to us in life will be regarded as not all that necessary when viewed from our deathbed. At that momentous occasion, detachment from material things will not be much of a challenge. Menu decisions won’t be as pressing as

ravaging deprivations. He didn’t need to be taught how to relate the spirit of detachment to trust: “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Jb 1:21).

The pagan Socrates chose to convert his spirit of attachment to that of detachment by dumping all of his possessions in the sea, in order to be totally undistracted from philosophy. How much more should we Christians, whose goal is to “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Mt 6:33), be ready to relinquish those material gifts, even while using them for his glory? When we are deprived, can we imitate Job by still praising the Lord?

--Condensed from **Pathways of Trust** ©2005 John H. Hampsch, Servant Books. Available at www.AmericanCatholic.org



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The U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Office of Film and Broadcasting



Co n -
sider
this...
Someone
who loved
God so
much, she
said "yes"
to some-
thing that
would have cost her life!

In that era under Jewish law, Mary, with a child out of wedlock would be done away with. Joseph, in his betrothal to her, would have been responsible for her being stoned to death. Yet, despite such a consequence, the selfless submission of this young virgin girl to the will of God became the opening of God's Grace to us. Through her statement of surrender and consent, Light entered the world. "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered, "May it be done to me according to Thy Word" (Luke 1:38).

Scripture reveals nothing about Mary's life prior to the Annunciation, other than her blood-line, confirming

lamations of man—which God inspires and confirms, in order to fulfill.

To be waiting with expectancy for the fulfillment of these promises was at the very heart of the Jewish people. Therefore, teaching their children the observance of commandments and regulations of the law was commonplace. God called them to be set apart. These children inherited a reverence from early age for a Holy God with the power to save and condemn. One God worthy of worship!

Mary was a child purposed for Righteousness sake. The angel Gabriel only confirmed and made personal her greater knowing: The Messiah would come through the line of David, to reign over the house of Jacob forever. He would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace... "And you are to give Him the name Jesus" (Luke 1:31).

This Seed of hope, placed within a virgin's womb, was the greatest Gift ever given! Where an omnipotent God, the Creator of all stooped down to be identified with

maidservant: Generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is His name" (Luke 1:46-55).

Mary Still Labors for the Fullness of the Word

God pierced our darkness through the life of this young virgin girl! Yet still she labors, even now, for the fullness of the Word to come: birth pangs for Christ's reign through mortal men! She, through decades of appearances (often to humble children), has beckoned the masses to deeper conversion through prayer and fasting, resulting in countless numbers coming to repentance through faith in Jesus. There is, for example, her appearance as the Lady of All Nations [Amsterdam, May 31, 1997] urging the faithful to pray to Jesus—asking Him to send, NOW, His Holy Spirit over the earth; that He let the Spirit live in the hearts of all nations, so we are preserved from degeneration, disaster and war.

Mary received the full portion for every believer because of the attitude of her heart. For the eyes of the Lord probe to and fro throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are

fully committed to Him (2 Ch 16:9). Because of the attitude of her heart, Mary received in full magnitude the portion since sanctioned for every believer. In the totality of the human dimension (body, soul and spirit), she was made one with God to realize the Christ child, holding in her hands the visual reality of God's coming Kingdom.

Through the Fire of new beginnings, the prelude to our Pentecost, Mary became the first to comprehend the true commission of those solely devoted to God's highest call: That Christ be formed in you—the Power of His authority both realized and revealed.

--Diana Gardner-Hagerty is active in the Charismatic Renewal in the Monterey Diocese.



Mary: Matriarch of Obedience

by Diana Gardner-Hagerty

the lineage of her boy child. Still, we know she had found favor with God through the greeting of angel Gabriel, who appeared to inform her of what God purposed for her (Luke 1:26-37).

God Prepared Mary for her Right Response

Mary's right response, though courageous, was not peculiar. God prepares His own way to enter through. Her openness to receive came as a result of generational witness and testimonials. Prior prophets and priests pronouncing the promise of future events, proc-

His fallen creation, to satisfy sin's penalty. The supremacy of such an act is beyond human comprehension without revelational knowledge.

Gabriel Foretold the Spirit's Overshadowing

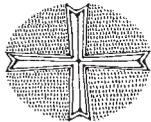
For Mary, revelation came in the form of an angel, foretelling of the Spirit's overshadowing: her encounter with the re-creative Power of the Divine. Gabriel established that through this mystical plan concerning the Life to grow within—God will be glorified. She rejoiced in its hearing, to become the "matriarch of obedience" for the fruit that it bore her... "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His

Catholic Radio Hour



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Hollywood doesn't get it—can't get it. It will remain for the vast majority of the film community an unknowable mystery how Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* could touch so many people, and so profoundly. The film's recent win for "Favorite Drama" at the People's Choice Awards further flummoxed the moviemaking crowd. They fling constant invective at the movie, but with every insult that they hurl, they reveal themselves as utterly missing the point of the film, as well as failing to see why the public is so drawn to it. It is really very simple. People are drawn to this movie because with heartfelt devotion and cinematic talent, Mel Gibson and his exceptional cast of actors powerfully and unflinchingly remind us: **He loves you this much.**



Lent arrives early this year, the starkly beautiful season in which we strive to prepare, chiefly through prayer and penance, for the flowering of His awesome love at Easter. It is then that the infinite dimensions of that love are best revealed to us, when the eternal God in blood, sacrifice, and glory redeems us.

We begin our Lenten journey of purification that will culminate in that Easter glory with an opening salvo of ashes upon our foreheads reminding us of our mortality and our obligation to turn away from sin. We are exhorted, "Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God..." (Jl 1:13). Our sanctuary environments are spare and purple, our Masses stripped of the triumphant *Gloria* and Alleluias, and even ordinarily boisterous and joyful Charismatic Masses are purposely subdued. It is the devout custom for even the very young to "give something up" for Lent. Efforts are strongly encouraged to pray more, to

fast even when we are not canonically obliged to do so, to reflect on Our Lord's Passion, death, and Resurrection, and especially to attend Mass more often.

To achieve authentic spiritual renewal, though, it is extremely important to remember that simple performance of these magnificent devotional practices, excellent as they are, is not enough. Real Lenten purification demands not just simple performance of such practices, but true participation in them—to experience with the Lord Jesus His Spirit-led 40 days in the desert, where in addition to knowing the rigors of the wilderness, His very real humanity also knew hunger and temptation. This very real humanity triumphed over those trials completely, triumphed over the ancient tempter himself. "Get away, Satan! It is written: "The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you

Lent and God's Love

By Mary Chang Flynn

serve." Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him" (Mt 4:10-11). This is the level of spiritual strength that we are to derive from God, in part through our Lenten observances.

Experiencing the Desert

To experience Lent as God wishes us to experience it, our 40 days of Lenten practices should mirror the Lord Jesus' 40 days in the desert. (Not literally, of course. For example, the Lord is clearly *not* asking that we eat absolutely "nothing during those days," (Lk 4:2) as that would be obviously ruinous to our health.) Instead of a flurry of devotions or practices superficially performed, we may be better served—and better servants of the Lord—by very prayerfully and thoughtfully participating in a smaller number of practices against a desert background of silence and self-denial that allows quiet and space for the Holy Spirit to speak to us, to act in us. Jesus' sojourn in the desert was completely guided by the Holy Spirit. It was He

Who led Jesus there following baptism by John. The intensive prayer, self-denial, and triumph over temptation

that our divine Lord lived in preparation for His public ministry were inspired by His Spirit.

To mirror Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and prepare properly for Easter, we must open ourselves to that same mystical Spirit through quiet in our souls, maintaining a stillness that invites the Lord's presence: "Be still and confess that I am God" (Ps 46:11). Jesus' prayer, self-denial, and silence should be our own, adjusted as the circumstances of our state in life and our contemporary lifestyle dictate. So while we may not be able to engage in total silence for hours at a time, we can skip listening to the radio as we drive along. We may not be able to skip a business lunch, but we can select a meal at that lunch that we are not overly fond of and so find a creative way to fast. We may not have a block of time available to pray with devotion the 14 Stations of the Cross all at once, but we can pray one station at a time throughout the day. And so on. But we are to engage in these practices and devotions mindfully and with loving mortification—dying to our selfish, sinful side.

Lent Not an End in Itself

Just as the Lord's time in the desert was not an end in itself, but a preparation, so it is with Lent and its practices. Lent's aim is to produce a spiritual renewal that prepares us for the unparalleled divine triumph of Easter. The aim of our devotions and practices is to purify ourselves, to open ourselves as fully as possible to the unimaginable grace of redemption that He showers on us through His Passion, death, and Resurrection. It is indeed a time for us to "rend our hearts" and feel genuine pain at the distance that we have allowed sin to create in our relationship with God. It is a time to humbly reconcile with so good a God, to stand in full awareness of our human flaws and failings in the shadow of the Passion, the bloody sacrifice of the Lamb without blemish, the utter greatness of His love. Lent prepares us for the mystery of our redemption by reminding us gently for six weeks: **He loves you this much.**

--Mary Chang Flynn is a member of St. Cecilia Parish, San Francisco and does Layout and Design for the *Charismatics*.

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moses had a press agent named Samuel. When he and his people got to the Red Sea with the Pharaoh's armies in hot pursuit, he called for Samuel and asked: "Where are the boats?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Moses," Samuel said. "I was so busy with the press releases, newspapers and bookings, I forgot to order the boats."

"You idiot!" Moses exclaimed. "What do you want me to do—raise my staff and ask God to part the Red Sea?"

"Hey, boss," Samuel said, "If you can do that, I could get you two pages in the Old Testament."



with
God's
Word
in your
hearts

A woman's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she had stayed by his bedside every single day. One day, when he came to he motioned for her to come nearer. As she sat by him, he whispered, eyes full of tears, "You know what? You have been with me through all the bad times."

When I got fired, you were there to support me. When my business failed, you were there. When I got shot, you were by my side. When we lost the house, you stayed right here. When my health started failing, you were still by my side... You know what?"

"What dear?" she gently asked, smiling as her heart began to fill with warmth.

"I think you're bad luck."

On a very cold, snowy Sunday in February, only the pastor and one farmer arrived at the village church. The pastor said, "Well, I guess I won't have a service today."

The farmer replied: "Heck, if even only one cow shows up at feeding-time, I feed it."

The pastor obliged and did the entire service. As the farmer was leaving, the pastor shook his hand and said, "How did I do?"

"It was okay," the farmer replied. "But if only one cow shows up at feeding-time, I don't drop the full load on it."

The 10 top things we learned from the story of Noah's Ark

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. Remember that we are all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.
4. Stay fit. When you're 60 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
5. Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
8. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
9. When you're stressed, float awhile. No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.
10. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.



A man buys an exquisite and expensive parrot for his mother. He comes to visit his mother a week later and is invited to dinner. His mother serves him a delicious bird. When he asks her what kind it was, she explains that she'd baked the parrot he'd sent

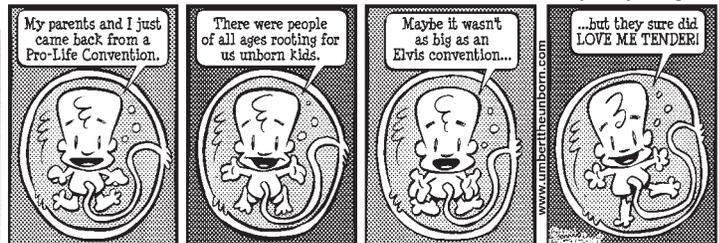
her.

The man gasps, "How could you do that? That was a rare parrot. It cost two thousand dollars. It could talk ten languages."

"Really?" His mother says, "If it could talk so many languages, why didn't it say something?"

Umbert the Unborn

by Gary Cangemi




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I was not born into a Catholic family. In fact, my mother despised the Catholic Church. From the time I was very small, she tried as hard as she could to make me feel the same way, but failed. Sadly, my mother was not a nice person. She was cruel to everyone around her and I'm sure this made me question her stories about the Church. Her negativity towards the Catholic Church had the opposite affect on me than what she had intended.

My family was Anglican, and even as a child, I hated going into an Anglican church. No matter how many people were there, the building felt empty to me. I felt the same emptiness in all churches except the Catholic church, where I felt God's presence the first time I entered. His presence is so powerful that I can't understand how some people do not feel it.

I knew He was there, present in the Blessed Sacrament, even before I knew the Catholic faith was centered on this belief. I knew it was not the bricks and stones, or the

Catholicism when I saw it portrayed on the screen, in films like *Boys Town* and *Going My Way*. Through watching these movies, I felt drawn to the Church immediately. It was as if a hand had reached out and touched me, and a voice inside me was saying, "You belong here."

I remember a day long ago like it was yesterday. It was when I was only 14 years old, browsing in a record shop. I recall picking up an extended play album of Mario Lanza, the famous opera singer who died in 1959. The record had "The Lord's Prayer" on it, which I had heard sung in the past and had liked. However, I had never heard Lanza's version of this beautiful song. I asked the lady in the shop if he was a good singer, and she said yes, and played it for me. I bought the record and when I got home, I played the entire recording. I discovered that I had found the most beautiful piece of music I had ever heard, and still feel the same way about it today.

The track was on Charles Gounod's "Ave Maria." When I listened to it, I felt like I was in a huge

drug that made my problem worse. I stopped functioning, couldn't concentrate, and was suicidal. I stopped my instructions, and Moya could not understand what had gone wrong. I was not well enough to find the words to explain it to her. Then I moved to a different city, and my mental health continued to get worse despite changes in the amount of medicine I was taking.

Moya, who has always had a great devotion to the Little Flower, kept in touch and continued praying for me. Then, when St. Therese's relics were brought to Australia, Moya went to visit them without telling me. She knelt, placed her hand on the box they were in, and asked St. Therese to help me in any way she could.

Our Lady and St. Therese's Intercession

A few weeks after that I walked into the doctor's office and told her that if she didn't change me to a drug that I had taken successfully years earlier for depression, I would leave and find a doctor who would. She took a deep breath and agreed. In doing so, she went against the advice of two psychiatrists who felt the newer drug was better, even though I knew it was making me more depressed.

I am convinced that it was Our Lady and St. Therese who gave me the courage to face the doctor and speak to her that way, and that they influenced her to agree to change my medicine.

Once the different medicine kicked in, I began to think a lot about St. Therese and Our Lady. Moya had once sent me a picture of St. Therese, which I had shoved into a drawer, but clearly had not forgotten. I hunted it out and started trying to pray again.

I downloaded a virtual rosary and began saying it regularly. Then I wrote to Moya asking her to get me a picture of Our Lady, and one of Our Lord. I also asked her to send me some rosary beads, and told her I would send her the money for whatever they cost. I needed her to shop for me because I didn't know where to buy them. Then I went to church for the first time in years.

MY POWER IS
MADE PERFECT
in weakness
CORINTHIANS 12:13

His Presence is Powerful

by Grace Tolson

people that gave me this feeling of His presence, but that He was actually there in the tabernacle.

Despite my mother's influence, I believed that only the Catholic Church taught the truth. It was in this Church that I was able to feel the actual presence of God, and where I discovered that, in Our Lady, I had another mother who was not of this world. She was one who cared for me, loved me, and who would help me.

Getting to Know Catholicism Through Movies and Music

I first came in contact with

cathedral with music soaring up into the rafters and right into heaven. I knew the instant I heard it where my destiny lay, and that the voice that had been calling me for so long now sang in my heart. I knew I would become a Catholic, and that it was only in that Church where I would find God.

Becoming a Catholic

During the early 1990s, I began taking instructions so I could officially join the Catholic Church. The elderly parish priest had one of his parishioners teach me. The lady's name is Moya, and she is a wonderful person, and a great friend.

During that time, I was battling severe depression and was taking a prescription



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Movements From Page 2

actual fruits that various group forms show in their organizational life and the works they perform, such as: the renewed appreciation for prayer, contemplation, liturgical and sacramental life, the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life; a readiness to participate in programs and Church activities at the local, national and international levels; a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians” (Christifideles laici, n.30).

At this point we can conclude the first part of our meditation on the “ecclesial maturity” of movements, so desired by Pope John Paul II. At the center, as we have seen, we find the concept of “ecclesial identity” which each Christian community should build with firm commitment, perseverance and humility. It is an ongoing task. Besides, nowadays, if Church movements wish to be faithful to their own identity, not infrequently they become “signs of contradiction”, like Christ himself. But we know that this is one of the surest signs that confirm that we are on the right path.

--Bishop Stanislaw Rylko is Secretary for the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Vatican City.

Powerful From Page 10

My first action was to go to confession. I asked the priest to help me with my confession, and explained what had been happening in my life. He asked if I'd had doubts about the Catholic faith, and I said yes. He told me I could trust what the Catholic Church teaches because it teaches the truth. He spoke with such authority in his voice that, right there in the confessional, I sent a prayer heavenward thanking Our Lady and St. Therese for bringing this priest to me.

Moya sent me the pictures and rosary beads, and when I rang to thank her, she asked what had happened to me. I explained about the reaction I had to the first medication, and how I had felt St. Therese and Our Lady reaching out to me and calling me home to the Catholic Church. Then I told her how I felt them give me the courage to confront my doctor about changing me to a different drug. That was when she told me she had asked St. Therese to help me when she had visited her relics.

I was finally confirmed into the Church here in Mansfield, and believe that Jesus called me to become Catholic. He used Our Lady and St. Therese to reach out and reel me in, similar to the way He promised the apostles that they would become “fishers of men.” I am convinced that the gift of feeling Him in the Eucharist had to come from Jesus.

--from **201 Inspirational Stories of the Eucharist** compiled by Sister Patricia Proctor, OSC ©2004 Franciscan Monastery of Saint Clare, Spokane, WA. Available at Amazon.com, \$10.47.

Apparitions From Page 1

the truth of it any less real.

Father Edward Schillebeeckx, the noted Dutch theologian, suggests this explanation. Such experiences mediate God's presence here and now to the insignificant persons of history. Almost all recipients or visionaries are outside the pale of official church power. They are young, usually female, country dwellers, uneducated, or otherwise of little notice. They have no control over the mediation of God's grace through word and sacrament. Apparitions bring God's nearness close to these lives in a way independent of the institutional church.

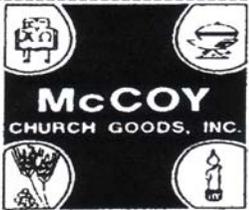
Few Apparitions are Approved by the Church

Very few apparitions receive Church approval. Most are relegated to the silence of files because they project an ambiguity about the experience that raises doubt and suspicion. In her wisdom and experience the Church realizes that the search for something tangible runs counter to solid and mature faith, which operates by the grace of enlightened faith and not by sight. Predictions of apocalyptic retribution distract the faithful from the Gospel call to establish justice and charity in the world here and now. In some instances elements of superstition and magic add to the confusion. Yet even these non-approved phenomena are presented to the Church as a prophetic challenge. What spiritual need is being met by apparitions that the basic forms of word and worship central to the Christian life are not meeting? How many persons find their religious hunger actually satisfied by the way Sunday Mass and the sacraments are celebrated?

Loving Our Lady not About Superficial Sentiment

Pastoral prudence and Christlike sensitivity are needed to avoid quenching the feeble flame of faith in persons attracted to these phenomena. In their pastoral letter the U.S. bishops indicate the right direction: “With the Vatican Council, we remind true lovers of Our Lady of the dangers of superficial sentiment and vain credulity. Our faith does not seek new gospels, but leads us to know the excellence of the Mother of God and moves us toward a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.”

--Marianist Brother John Samaha, a former high school and adult education teacher in the U.S., including the Oakland Diocese and Lebanon, is now retired and residing at Villa St. Joseph in Cupertino, Ca.



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After multiple sclerosis crippled my father, making him quit work, the family drew Social Security Disability Insurance.

Some years later my father joked about how the government finally cured him. He showed me a letter he got from the Social Security Administration that read, "Dear Mr. Rausch, With your 65th birthday, you are no longer disabled. You are retired."

But, his retirement lasted only fifteen days. Two weeks after his birthday, he suffered a heart attack and died. With that, his check came to my 69-year old widowed mother.

Social Security arrived when I was eleven and my sisters were teenagers. It gave my family stability when it faced the crisis of my father's illness, and afforded my mother dignity in her senior years. Today over 47 million benefit from Social Security, the Old Age Survivors and Disability Insurance program, many of whom reflect my own family's history.



Trust Fund: \$0 in 2042?

In 2004 the Social Security Administration crunched the numbers and targeted 2042 as the year the trust fund would hit zero balance. Political opportunists seized the projections to promote their own agenda--privatization. For people of faith the current alleged crisis pits the ideology of rugged individualism (neo-liberalism) against the concept of community proclaimed by the social teachings of the Church.

Consider these ideas for the current debate:

Social Security appears as strong as ever. In 1996 Social Se-

curity's trustees projected a zero fund balance by 2030. In 2000, they adjusted the projection to 2036, and today it's 2042. Projections keep changing because the trustees continue to make unrealistic, low-end assumptions about future economic conditions, like a GDP average growth of just 1.8 percent for the next 75 years. If the economy grows at a more realistic 2.4 percent annual rate, the increase in real output and real incomes will insure the trust fund never going to zero. The opportunists have hysterically changed public policy from "keep an eye on it" to "the sky is falling."

Privatization Makes Social Security a Gamble

Privatization will transform Social Security from insurance to risk taking. By investing part of their Social Security money in private accounts, younger workers are enticed by promises of better returns at retirement. Current wisdom:

It's Not Broken...

by Fr. John S. Rausch

investors do far worse than the market generally. Retirement money will fluctuate with poor investing or a declining market. Privatization threatens communal justice by changing "we're all in this together," to "every man (woman) for himself."

Privatization=Profit

Finally, privatization will produce great profits for banks and brokerage houses, but reduced benefits for Social Security beneficiaries. To track the proposed millions of private accounts, administrative costs

that cut into benefits will rise ten-fold, if handled by a single government-managed system, and possibly thirty-fold, if by private financial institutions. Currently, Social Security administrative costs represent less than 0.6 percent of annual benefits.

The debate about privatization can find economists with numbers to support either side. Yet, neither side can deny critical decision making time remains decades away. Meantime, merely mid-course corrections and slight policy adjustments of Social Security "can keep an eye on it."

Preserving Social Security represents the safety net that has lifted one million children out of poverty and helped another million avoid extreme poverty (living below half the poverty line). Today, about 10 percent of seniors over age 65 live in poverty. Without Social Security, that rate would climb to 50 percent.

The proponents of privatization are framing an important question: what kind of society do we want to create—one based on exaggerated self-reliance, or a community of care encouraged by the Gospel?

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

Coming Events

Feb 4 FIRST FRIDAY MASS of the Sacred Heart
7:00pm Rosary, 7:30pm Mass
Epiphany Church
845 Vienna St., SF
Fr. Joe Landi, Principal Celebrant

Feb 20 SUNDAY CHARISMATIC MASS, 2:00 PM
St. Patrick Church,
756 Mission St. (between 3rd & 4th Sts.) SF
Contact Judy 415/826-7827

Mar 4 FIRST FRIDAY MASS of the Sacred Heart
7:00pm Rosary, 7:30pm Mass
St. Catherine of Siena Church
1310 Bayswater, Burlingame
Fr. Joe Landi, Principal Celebrant

Umbert the Unborn

by Gary Cangemi



I am planning my wedding. It will be at a restaurant, performed by a minister, and my partner is non-Catholic. However, having the marriage “blessed”/recognized by God is important to me. Can we do this later, or can this be incorporated into the ceremony at the restaurant?

In order to take up your question, we are going to have to assume certain things since you do not include them in the information given. For example, in your question, you say that your partner is non-Catholic, but then you do not say if you are. So, let's assume, for the sake of this discussion, that you do consider yourself to be Catholic. If that is true, it is difficult to understand why you would not want to be married in a church, and yet desire that it be blessed by God. Something is missing here.

Christian Marriage is a Sacrament

In wanting to get married in a restaurant, you are essentially leaving God out of the picture and failing to recognize Christian marriage for what it truly is. Christian marriage is a sacrament – a bestowal of grace for the man and woman. Just as Christ united Himself to the Church at the Cross by dying for her in order to save her, so a man and woman unite themselves to each other in order to save themselves, to help each other on the journey to heaven. The ultimate



purpose of this sacrament is the salvation of married Christians. This is why it is called a sacrament of service.

Christian Marriage is a Union Between a Man, a Woman, and God

Unfortunately, many couples get married hastily. Often, we hear them say simply that they love each other and want to be married. And they do not want to wait. You say that it's important to you to have God's blessing. But, I ask you, how important is it? You must realize that Christian marriage is a union between three persons – a man, a woman, and God. God is the author of marriage. It was He who created man and woman and gave them to each other. The

oratory” (Canon n. 1118). In order to be valid, it must also be celebrated in the presence of the local bishop, pastor, priest, or deacon and in front of two witnesses. (Canon n. 1108).

Thus, you see that a marriage ceremony in a restaurant is not permitted under any normal circumstances. However, at some later time, and if certain conditions are met, it might be possible to have the marriage validated in the Catholic Church. This would require a special permission or dispensation by the local bishop and the proper preparation on the part of both parties.

To Receive God's Blessing, One Must Conform to His Will

It is so crucial to your spiritual life that you consider with great care what you are planning to do. God loves you beyond all

Catholic Church's requirements regarding the way that marriage

Dear Grace... by Grace MacKinnon

is to be celebrated are not based on something the Church made up – they are based on God's divine plan.

Church Requirements for Marriage Based on God's Divine Plan

Let us look at what two of those requirements are. Canon law states that “marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic party is to be celebrated in a parish church; with the permission of the local ordinary [bishop] or the pastor, it can be celebrated in another church or

measure, and He wishes to bless you, but in order to be able to receive that blessing, you must conform yourself to His will for you and your life. By wanting to marry outside His Church, it is you yourself who are saying no to His blessing. This is something to think about and ponder deeply.

--Grace holds an MA in Theology and is a syndicated columnist and speaker on Catholic Doctrine. ©2005 Grace D. MacKinnon. Contact Grace at www.deargrace.com



Vision Statement of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (Adopted January 2004)

The Lord is calling the Charismatic Renewal to be bold in a united voice to make an impact on the Church and society by proclaiming:

- 1. the priority of the Lordship of Jesus**
- 2. the Father's love for all**
- 3. the power of the Spirit in all we do**
- 4. the radical call to a witness of holiness.**

No deja nunca de asombrarme cuando atestiguo la forma en que viven su vida algunos Cristianos. Proclaman creer en Dios y amarlo, pero su forma de vida no parece demostrarlo. No pretendo preguntar esto a manera de crítica, pero ¿no se supone que creer en Dios significa algo?

Querida Gracia por Gracia MacKinnon

Sí, indudablemente, se supone que significa algo. Infortunadamente, las palabras con frecuencia surgen más fácilmente que las acciones. El decir “yo creo en Dios” es una cosa, pero respaldar esas palabras con nuestros actos puede ser un asunto totalmente diferente para algunos. Sin embargo, si nos detuviéramos a pensar sobre ello, nos daríamos cuenta de que si toda la gente que proclama creer en Dios realmente tomara y comprendiera en plenitud lo que esto debe significar, el mundo sería un lugar diferente.

El Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica enseña que “creer en Dios, el Único, y amarlo con todo el ser tiene consecuencias inmensas para toda nuestra vida” (CIC #222-227). “¿Qué clase de consecuencias?” podrías preguntar.

Significa llegar a conocer la grandeza y majestad de Dios. ¿Realmente reconocemos a Dios por ser Él quien es – el Todopoderoso, el Incomprensible, el Creador de todo, el Señor y Dador de

Vida? ¿Qué tan a menudo nos damos el tiempo para contemplar asombrados las maravillas de la creación y pensar en Dios? Cuando observamos la salida del sol, vemos la magnificencia de una montaña o sostenemos a un precioso bebé recién nacido – todas estas cosas deberían llevarnos a detenernos y contemplar asombrados la grandeza de Dios. ¡Él puede hacerlo todo! Toda la creación es Suya. Y sí, nosotros le pertenecemos a Él y Él nos ama tanto.

Significa vivir en acción de gracias. Alguien dijo una vez que “una vida vivida en la fe es una vida vivida en gratitud.” ¡Cómo cambiarían nuestras vidas si cada día agradeciéramos a Dios por todo lo que tenemos! Pero, verás,

muchos de nosotros damos por hecho muchas cosas en nuestras vidas. ¿Nos levantamos cada mañana y decimos, por ejemplo, “Gracias, Señor, por otro día – otra oportunidad para demostrarte a Ti y a los otros en este mundo lo mucho que te amo?” Tristemente, fallamos en reconocer que no tendríamos nada de lo que tenemos si Él no hubiera deseado que lo tuviéramos. Con frecuencia pasamos mucho tiempo de nuestra vida queriendo más o deseando aquello que no tenemos, en lugar de apreciar lo que sí tenemos.

Significa conocer la unidad y la verdadera dignidad de todos los hombres. Si decimos que creemos en Dios y que Él es nuestro Padre, entonces debemos creer que todos somos hermanos y hermanas en el Señor. Y esto incluye no sólo a aquellos que amamos y que nos aman, sino también a aquellos por quienes no sentimos amor o que parecen no amarnos. Esto en ocasiones puede ser todo un reto. Podríamos decir, “Algunas gentes sencillamente no son fáciles de amar.” ¿Pero sabes por qué? Es porque fallamos en ver a Cristo en ellos. Es por eso. Se dice que el secreto de la santidad de la Madre Teresa se debía a su capacidad de ver a Jesús en los rostros de los pobres, enfermos y moribundos a

quienes atendía a diario. Sólo piensa en ello por un momento. Es la realidad de cómo son las cosas – cada ser humano está hecho a imagen y semejanza de Dios y por lo tanto, tiene dignidad y merece nuestro amor y atención.

Significa hacer buen uso de las cosas creadas. Dios, quien es la bondad misma, crea todo bueno. Entonces nosotros, quienes proclamamos creer en Dios, estamos llamados a hacer buen uso de todo lo que Él ha creado. Y esto incluye a otras personas, el medio ambiente e incluso nosotros mismos. Es una injusticia hacia el amor de Dios el abusar en alguna forma de aquello que Él ha creado. El uso de drogas ilícitas, el abuso sexual o físico de otras personas y aun la mutilación o negligencia de nuestros propios cuerpos, son sólo algunas de las formas en que hacemos mal uso de la creación de Dios.

Significa confiar en Dios en toda circunstancia, aun en la adversidad. Esta es otra orden muy alta para nosotros. Ve lo que sucede con tanta frecuencia cuando tenemos un problema o una crisis en nuestra vida. Pensamos que tenemos que preocuparnos desmesuradamente por ello. Al hacer esto, en esencia le estamos diciendo a Dios, “Señor, no confío en que puedas manejar esto, así es que debo preocuparme por ello hasta que pueda resolverlo.” ¿Pensamos acaso que Dios no puede darnos lo que sea que estemos necesitando? Dios puede traer la solución desde sitios que nunca imaginamos posible. Y aunque Él quiere que usemos nuestro intelecto, sabiduría y conocimientos para resolver nuestros problemas, primero desea saber que tenemos fe y que confiamos en Él, sabiendo que Él puede proveer a todas nuestras necesidades.

Pero ¿cómo podemos hacer todo esto? ¿Se requiere práctica! Todos hemos escuchado el dicho “la práctica hace al maestro.” Debemos asegurarnos que cuando decimos “yo creo en Dios”, verdaderamente signifique algo en nuestras vidas. Entonces, la gente en el mundo señalará y dirá, “He ahí un Creyente.”

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En mis dos columnas previas, señalé que hay una causalidad mutua entre el aborto y el abuso infantil. Aunque esto no significa que todos los que fueron abusados han abortado, o que todos los que han abortado van a abusar sus hijos, sí indica que hay una correlación significativa e influencia en ambas direcciones.

He abordado algunas razones por las cuales haber abortado puede llevar al abuso de otros niños. Voy a explicar ahora por que el abuso o abandono cuando se es niño aumenta la probabilidad de abortar el hijo propio.

La persona que es abusada o abandonada de niño está herida profundamente y esa herida se proyecta sobre la adultez. Dado que el daño ha sido causado en áreas clave que determinan como uno se ve a sí mismo, como confía en otros, como ve la relación padre-hijo y que expectativas tiene uno sobre el mundo y su futuro, este daño afecta de una manera obvia tanto el deseo como la habilidad de dar a luz y educar a un hijo.

La vida y la esperanza están unidas indisolublemente. Se necesita esperanza para tener el coraje de decir sí a una nueva vida, y la esperanza es una de las cosas más preciosas que el abuso y el abandono destruyen en las víctimas. Si las esperanzas y los sueños de la persona abusada están hechos trizas, tendrán poca esperanza en el futuro de sus hijos y por lo tanto abortarán.

Más aún, el abuso y el abandono hacen que la persona sea más débil en cuerpo y mente. La víctima de abuso tiene mayor dificultad en confiar en su cuerpo para sobrellevar el dolor o el estrés, y tiene mayor dificultad para desarrollar pensamientos maduros y flexibles. Por estas razones, dirá a menudo que un embarazo “es demasiado.” El aborto parece la opción más fácil.

El miedo al abandono es otro factor importante. Los niños que han sido abandonados o descuidados tienen terror a que esto vuelva a ocurrir. Luego,

sido abusado o abandonado ha perdido su infancia de una manera esencial y busca aferrarse a ella o recuperarla. Ello aumenta la falta de deseo de perder esa infancia de otra forma, como sería la aceptación de la madurez que exige la paternidad. Esto se ve como la pérdida de la última oportunidad de ser protegido por un padre.

El aborto y el abuso infantil – Por Padre Frank Davone

una víctima de abuso embarazada es particularmente vulnerable a amenazas de abandono por parte de los que exigen que aborte. También temerá que el niño la abandone y prefiere abortar antes que enfrentar ese tipo de abandono.

Un problema relacionado es la relación con los padres. Una mujer que fue abusada o abandonada por sus padres en la infancia no pensará que ellos estarán presentes, apoyándola durante el embarazo. Cuando era niña y necesitaba ayuda desesperadamente, sus padres no la ayudaron; está convencida entonces que no la ayudaran ahora. Esto aumenta la tentación a abortar.

Además, el embarazo y el parto catapultan a una persona hacia las demandas de la adultez. Alguien que ha

Para mayor información sobre esta y otras razones por las que el abuso lleva al aborto, consulte al Dr. Philip Ney (www.messengers2.com)

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