

C

.....  
Charter

*Catholicism*



“The world promises you  
comfort, but you were not  
made for comfort. You were  
made for greatness.”  
- Pope Benedict XVI

# ..... Charter .....

*Gonzaga's Journal of Scholarship and Opinion*

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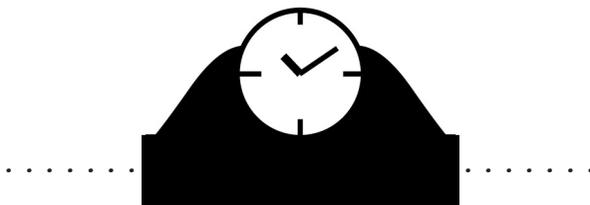
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# Letter *from the Editor*

To our dear supporters and beloved critics:

**W**e've expanded *Charter* for its fiftieth anniversary issue, as your bicep can undoubtedly tell. Our theme, if you didn't notice the cover, is "Catholicism." We've received some truly fantastic submissions. However, being largely a students-only journal made grounding biases equitably and presenting Catholic doctrine faithfully nearly impossible. Our solution: a Talmudic approach, if you'll let us get Jewish for a minute. See, the *Talmud* – rabbinic discussions of the Hebrew Bible concerning Jewish law, ethics, philosophy, custom, and history – consists of many scholarly opinions on various issues. And that's how this issue of *Charter* is organized. The journal is divided into sections which appear in either question form or simply as titles. For your ease, these sections are tabbed on the outer edge of the pages. Following each section, in italics, are excerpts from papal encyclicals, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, writing from Christian apologetics, Vatican commissions, saints, theologians, and the like. Following these are transcribed interviews of Gonzaga theologians and written pieces from students and professors. As a disclaimer, on those articles designated "Interview," it should be noted that these are conducted, transcribed interviews rather than written, submitted pieces. In each section, we've done our best to balance varying sentiments, lay and ordained contributors, and authorship from men and women. We hope this organization will make *Charter* more than just a collection of essays, but a manual for reference and a springboard to dive deeper into what has brought us all, in one way or another, to this university: Catholicism.

As a side note, the *Charter* staff would like to profusely thank the guidance and tireless support of Mr. Chris Wheatley and Ms. Joanne Shiosaki in the Publications

Office; the passion of our advisor, Dr. Eric Cunningham; Fr. Michael Maher, S.J., for scrupulous advice; and each faculty member who acquiesced to incessant, badgering emails for interviews. Without you, this journal would not have the depths of insight or the spectrum of opinion which make this little book an organic dialogue of a comprehensive, academic, mystic faith tradition.

. . . . .

## So Here's the Thing... CONCERNING HAWKING & HIS HOLINESS, BENEDICT XVI

**I**n case you missed the success of our fall Issue, last December, *Time Magazine* ran a periodical about emerging academic publications, where they mentioned *Charter* and the high esteem they hold it in:

*"Charter's overwhelming ability to inspire both self-criticism and moral consciousness within its readers demonstrates its irresistible wit, charm, and understanding of the human condition; the likes of which has never been seen in American scholarship."*

This comment, though evidence in itself of a supernatural ability to publish a journal, cannot allow us to rest on our laurels (and for the record, there is no reason to cross-reference that periodical; just take our word that as a *Time*-validated publication, they really said it).

But, because our staff is ever-striving to enhance our journal, we worked hard to locate one area where we felt that we could improve, and well, it was pretty clear: our letters to the editor in past issues have been weak - after all, we only got four measly lines from Bob Woodward last fall.

This issue, we were determined to do better. The way we saw it, only one person

alive has the knowledge and foresight necessary to bring true context to our difficult topic: Father Spitzer. A quick wiki-search revealed the website of Father Spitzer's latest project, and we managed to send an amiable request for him to indulge us in his knowledge of the cosmos. But, as we were unable to obtain a contribution, it seems that Father Spitzer hasn't yet caught up on his *Time* readings. So, out of our dedication to the underrepresented, and partly out of spite, we then appealed to his arch-nemesis: staunch atheist Dr. Stephen Hawking.

We figured Hawking would jump at the chance to undermine the Catholic Church – especially after we reminded him of the shellacking he took from Spitzer on *Larry King Live*. What we got instead was an email, from his personal assistant, claiming that he was too busy. This neglect was painful on two levels: not only because it was a denial, but because a guy fluent in quantum mathematics didn't even bother to give us a reprintable excuse. In an attempt to appeal to his pride, we emailed Dr. Hawking again to tell him we heard Spitzer say he could beat an atheist in anything from a theological debate to a game of darts. This time we got nothing.

Alas, we were stuck without any letters. Just as we were about to concede to our despair, we came up with another brilliant idea. We were going to email the one individual on Earth whom we could guarantee would respond: the symbol of compassion and guidance who wouldn't, under any circumstances, deny the honest pleas of a few anxious Catholic academicians. After all, were we not moral servants with only the purest of integrities? We excitedly discovered his email address, and passionately pleaded for his input. We knew an individual of his magnitude would help us to live up to our readers' high standards, as set by *Time*. We desperately needed him.

That was four days ago. We still haven't

heard a damn thing. So, until he gets back to us, here's the e-mail we sent him:

*Your Holiness:*

*This email is representing "Charter," an academic publication from Gonzaga University, in Spokane, Washington. Perhaps you caught the article on us in Time. As a Jesuit institution, we strive daily to answer our call to social justice and strive to be reflective, assertive, and compassionate. This mentality has provoked us to center this semester's publication around the theme of "Catholicism" and the way it relates not only to our daily lives as Gonzaga students, but also to our greater global community.*

*Through connections of a few of our faculty members, we acquired submissions from atheists Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking, who have contributed strong positions that severely undermine both our Jesuit Creed and our greater Catholic community. We feel, as honest academics, that they deserve their input. But we cannot, as loyal Catholics, allow their submissions to go uncontested. Alas, we do not possess the knowledge to combat such intellectual brilliance, and feel that only someone in your esteemed, lineage-of-Peter position is capable of saving the faith of our 7,837 students. Thus, we request your Holiness submit to Charter a thorough, annotated argument that recognizes the existence of God, the origin of meaning, and a justification for the Catholic way of life. Thank you so much for your consideration and your leadership. You have proven to be a true inspiration in your short time as Pope, and we hope that we have many more years under your wise guidance.*

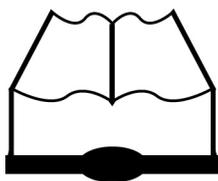
*A.M.D.G.,*

*The Charter Staff*

In case you didn't catch that, we emailed the Pope. And we lied to him. But we did it for you. The penance is yours to take on our behalf.

Enjoy our spring publication.

# Catholicism in a Nutshell:



## The Nicene Creed

**W**e believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered, died, and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

# Whether God Exists?

## *Summa Theologica*

· · · · · ST. THOMAS AQUINAS · · · · ·

### The One God

#### Question 2: The Existence of God

#### Article 3. Whether God exists?

**O**n the contrary, It is said in the person of God: "I am Who am." (Exodus 3:14)  
I answer that, The existence of God can be proved in five ways.

*The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now, whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except in its potentiality to that which is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus, that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now, it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.*

*The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find*

*there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore, it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.*

*The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence — which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.*

*The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph.* Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.*

*The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.*

*from*

# SUMMA OF THE SUMMA

..... PETER KREEFT .....

Three important notes about the “five ways”:

## I

These five are not the proofs themselves but ways, i.e., indications or summaries of proofs. The proofs themselves are elsewhere worked out in much greater detail; e.g., in the *Summa contra Gentiles* the first way takes thirty-one paragraphs (Bk I, chap. 13); here, it takes only one.

## II

These five ways are really essentially one way: the “cosmological argument” or argument from the cosmos. The logical structure of all five proofs is the same:

A) There are really three premises:

- a. An implicit logical principle: the tautology that either there is a First Cause or there is not. (The proofs prove there is a First Cause by showing that the alternative entails a contradiction; this presupposes the Law of Excluded Middle: that there can be no middle alternative between two mutually contradictory propositions; thus, to disprove one is to prove the other. )
- b. an explicit empirical datum (motion, causality, etc.)
- c. a metaphysical principle, which is neither tautological, like (1), nor empirical, like (b), but known by metaphysical insight or understanding: e.g., “If there is no First Cause, there can be no second causes”, or “nothing can cause itself to be”.

B) There are two hypotheses to explain the empirical data:

- a. that there is a God (First Mover, Uncaused Cause, etc.)
- b. that there is no God.

St. Thomas shows in each of the five “ways” that the metaphysical principle (A,c, above) coupled with the empirical data (A, b, above) makes [B, b] impossible. Thus only [B,a] is left, if we admit [A, a] to begin with.

C. However, two “weakening” qualifications must be added:

- a. Each proof individually, and all five together, prove only a thin slice of God, a few attributes of God. More attributes are deduced later in the Summa, and much that is known by Revelation is not provable by reason at all (e.g. the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Redemption).
- b. Each proof ends with a sentence like “And this is what everyone calls God” -an observation about linguistic usage which answers Pascal’s complaint that “the God of the philosophers is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” by saying in effect that the God proved here by philosophy, though “thinner” than the God revealed in the Bible, is “thick” enough to refute the atheist. There are simply no other candidates for the position of First Cause, Unmoved Mover, Perfect Being, Cosmic Designer, etc.

### III

These five ways are not by any means the only ways of proving the existence of God in the history of philosophy. There have been at least two dozen very different sorts of attempts to prove the existence of God. St. Thomas carefully and modestly confines himself to the most scientific proofs alone.

(An extremely Brief Summary of 24 Arguments for God’s Existence)

1. Ontological (Anselm): “God” means “that which has all conceivable perfections”; and it is more perfect to exist really than only mentally; therefore God exists really. The most perfect conceivable being cannot lack any conceivable perfection.

2. Cosmological:

A. Motion: Since no thing (or series of things) can move (change) itself, there must be a first, Unmoved Mover, source of all motion.

B. Efficient Causality: Nothing can cause its own existence. If there is no first, uncaused cause of the chain of causes and effects we see, these second causes could not exist. They do, so it must.

C. Contingency and Necessity: Contingent being (beings able not to be) depend on a Necessary Being (a being not able not to be).

D. Degrees of Perfection: Real degrees of real perfections presuppose the existence of that perfection itself (the Perfect Being).

E. Design: Design can be caused only by an intelligent designer. Mindless nature cannot design itself or come about by chance.

F. The Kalam (Time) Argument: Time must have a beginning, a first moment (creation) to give rise to all other moments. (The “Big Bang” seems to confirm this: time had an absolute beginning fifteen to twenty billion years ago.) And the act of creation presupposes a Creator.

### 3. Psychological:

#### A. from mind and truth

- a. Augustine: Our minds are in contact with eternal, objective, and absolute truth superior to our minds (e.g.  $2+2=4$ ), and the eternal is divine, not human.
- b. Descartes: Our idea of a perfect being (God) could not have come from any imperfect source (cause), for the effect cannot be greater than the cause. Thus it must have come from God.

#### B. from will and good

- a. Kant: Morality requires a perfect ideal, and requires that this ideal be actual and real, somewhere.
- b. Newman: Conscience speaks with absolute authority, which could come only from God.

#### C. from emotions and desire

- a. C.S. Lewis: Innate desires correspond to real objects, and we have an innate desire (at least unconsciously) for God, and Heaven.
- b. Von Balthasar: Beauty reveals God. There is Mozart, therefore there must be God.

#### D. from experience

- a. Existential Argument: If there is no God (and no immortality) life is ultimately meaningless.
- b. Mystical experience meets God.
- c. Ordinary religious experience (prayer) meets God. (Prayer of the Skeptic: "God, if you exist, show me" -a real experiment.)
- d. Love argument: If there is no God of Love, no Absolute that is love, then love is not absolute. Or, the eyes of love reveal the infinite value of the human person as the image of God.

4. The argument from the analogy of other minds, which are no harder to prove than God (Plantinga).

5. The practical argument: Pascal's Wager: To bet on God is your only chance of winning eternal happiness, and to bet against Him is your only chance of losing. It is the most reasonable bet in life.

### 6. Historical:

A. from miracles: If miracles exist, a supernatural miracle worker exists.

B. from Providence, perceivable in history (e.g., in Scripture) and in one's own life.

C. from authority: Most good, wise, reliable people believe in God.

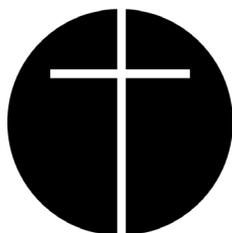
D. from saints: You see God through them. Where do they get their joy and power?

E. from Jesus: If God is unreal, Jesus was history's biggest fool or fake.

(This list is not exhaustive, but illustrative. Maritain and Marcel, for example, have formulated other, more complex arguments for God.)

# Proof for God's Existence

FR. BERNIE TYRRELL, S.J.



**T**he human mind is a dynamic desire that is unlimited in its scope. It can raise any question. It is dynamic and begins with inquiry into the meaning of data (sense data or interior data such as thoughts, feelings, pain, etc.).

To prove that God Is, one must begin along a three step process: First, the knower needs to be attentive to data. Second, the knower needs to seek understanding of the meaning of the data it inquires about. Third, the knower needs to reasonably weigh the evidence for the truth or falsity of what is understood in the data (like in a courtroom) and then, after grasping sufficient evidence, the knower needs to make a judgment that the meaning grasped in understanding is true or false (e.g. the sun is now shining or it is not).

“Tell any bumpkin a plausible tale and the bumpkin will reply ‘it may be so.’ Here we see that the only route or way to being or reality is through meaning/intelligibility. Intelligibility is the ground of the possibility of being. It thus makes no sense to say that Being may only be partially intelligible. One has to seek complete intelligibility, and God is the only Being that is completely intelligible and grounds the

limited intelligibility of everything we encounter in the universe. Thus, if we find that some being we encounter does not provide an explanation for its own existence in itself, then we need to seek further for a Being that explains not only its own existence but the existence of everything else. Here we must keep in mind that God or the Ultimate Explanation does not cause itself, which would mean that there is a God before God. God does not cause his/her own existence. Rather it is God’s very nature to exist. We cannot then coherently affirm that that the universe of our experience is a mere matter of fact with no explanation. This involves the attempt to affirm that there exists a reality whose existence has no explanation while the only route to any existing reality is through intelligibility. What is intrinsically lacking in intelligibility cannot be. As Aquinas put it: “What is not in principle intelligible cannot be.”

Be Attentive, Be Insightful, Be Reasonable, Be Responsible. St. Augustine says that “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” The same may be said of our intelligence. As long as it does not rest in ultimate Explanation it remains restless and in need of complete intelligibility.

# Theology of a Narcissist

TAYLER MUSTION

**M**y senior year of high school I developed a close relationship with an individual that became a near perfect compliment. We were united by a similar taste in food, identical positions on politics, our verbal abuse of the same insecure girls, similar ambitions, a desire to undermine the same teachers, and a general preference for each other's company. As a favorite pastime we would buy industrial adhesive and glue twenty fifty-cent pieces to the sidewalk outside the halfway house and watch in pure satisfaction as the occupants strained to pry the attached coins from off the concrete. To those without an understanding of our relationship, our behavior might be labeled as obnoxious, misogynistic, insensitive, immature and ego-centric and if I am going to be completely honest, I would have to regrettably agree. However, as this kinship developed and we learned to appreciate the value of our friendship, a distinction emerged between us regarding the existence of God and the relevance of faith in life. Our friendship remained intact despite this distinction; but no matter how many times we would inflate our egos by arguing in public we could never get any closer to reaching a compromise. Inevitably, people would grow tired of our antics and trickle off, at which point my friend would remind me that I am, "a gullible, republican tool," and I would encourage him to "enjoy eternal damnation and to please send me a postcard."

The reason for illustrating this relationship is simply to demonstrate the ferocity with which atheism and Christianity can often conflict. Though our arguments were self-serving and our inability to reach a compromise derived less from the fact that we couldn't find one and more from the fact that it would have been less pleasing to our friends, we were nevertheless able to relinquish some indispensable points on both sides. Oftentimes it would be these points that would lead to the inevitable end of the dispute. Not because it necessarily proved the other's case incorrect, but rather neither of us knew the answer and our default response to ignorance was a screaming contest.

If presented with an opportunity to relive some of these debates with an atheist that didn't have arrogant qualities, (I know, funny concept, right?) I could potentially fair better. This is because time and reading have allowed for reflection and a slightly more acute understanding of this ongoing dynamic.

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In attempting to address a few of the questions raised in our lunchtime discussions, I think it first necessary to reiterate that two people arguing over principle can never reach a conclusion. However,

two people arguing with the hopes of reaching some unifying medium will be open to input and self-criticism and will ideally have a more complete glimpse of the truth. My evidence of this potential

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stems from the realization that from my desperate attempts to find loopholes in my friend’s beliefs I became inspired to find the validity of my own. Furthermore, it’s generally more effective when dealing with such profound topics as the realities of God that those engaged possess mutual respect, if not friendship. It is easy to disregard a criticism when it stems from an idiot. On the other hand, when you are presented with opposition from a friend, as I was, it’s easier to avoid polarization.

It’s interesting that in serious topics like the existence of God individuals generally strive not so much to be correct, but to prove their opposition wrong. At least this was the nature of our arguments; one of the key ways in which I would begin was to merely request an explanation for the origins of existence. A limited understanding of physics will reveal that matter cannot be spontaneously created. Yet in my friend’s opinion, the vastness of the universe became so dense and hot that it exploded and matter was formed. His argument was that there were preset physical laws that the universe abides by and which

enabled the creation of life out of nothing, no God necessary. I would contend however that preset physical laws are not an origin at all and rather provoke a further question of the source of the laws themselves. It does not seem to be an illogical notion to assume that something had to have predated the laws in order for their placement. Reasoning beyond this would invoke divine creation. Assuming that the physical nature of the universe is its own origin how is it possible that a random explosion can produce life?

A few years ago, Father Spitzer gave a discussion on the existence of God using quantum physics. According to him, the proof of divine interaction rests in the mathematics of Roger Penrose. His calculations reveal that human existence as a result of the Big Bang is at a ratio of ten raised to the ten raised to the one hundred and twenty-three. Admittedly, I know very little about quantum physics, and even less about Roger Penrose, but if this mathematics has any validity it seems the only logical explanation for existence in spite of such overwhelming odds, is a divine intent. This argument of origin, though not overflowing with empirical evidence, leads me to my next point which is simply the evolution of man and the development of morality.

If you are a proponent of evolution and you believe that all beings on Earth developed from the same single-celled organism, then you also believe that over time the human brain acquired the ability for quantum behavior. Though the jump from basic existence to full consciousness seems to be a bit farfetched, if at all conceivable, what it doesn’t explain is the basis for the human development of morality. The universal understanding of right and wrong must be derived from a common source and because ethics is not something that can be quantified, it is impossible to work out using biology, physics, or mathemat-

ics. What does that leave? Well, if you're a Christian then obviously it is evidence for the existence of God. But for individuals skeptical about divine intervention, the argument would be that Christian morality is not really morality at all, but an evolved set of guidelines that allow a civilization to function. My friend would contend that morality is actually a clever way to disguise human pragmatism and selfishness. Rather, it is the fear of retribution, and not an ingrained moral code, that keeps people from sinning. In the Christian sense, we don't sin because we want to avoid hell, not because we want to emulate Christ. If it were this simple then my friend would be correct.

A Platonic illustration seems appropriate here. If I was given the Ring of Gyges (or of Sauron) that allowed me to be invisible, and I could perform any illegal action without retribution, what would I do? Simple: I'd murder Justin Bieber and Taylor Lautner, and it would be merciless. However, it is a fair judgment to say that the freedom from society would not remove my comprehension of justice. I would still understand that murder is unjust. If we are truly pragmatic beings, then there would be no conception of justice and life would be essentially meaningless. C.S Lewis (the poor-man's theologian), makes this point very well. In his book *Mere Christianity*, he states:

*"A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"*

The idea of origination again comes to light, but he concludes further that:

*"In the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist-in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless-I found I was forced to assume that one part of*

*reality-namely my idea of justice-was full of sense. Consequently, atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning."*

Essentially, it is our awareness that makes us human and our concept of justice that gives us direction. These things appear to possess a magnitude that would reflect a development much more intention than mere evolution.

In times past it would have been useful to submit these arguments of origin to my cohort but I fear his response would be obvious. Instead of dwelling on the progression of humanity as a single moral entity he would inquire about the party responsible for the vast amount of dying infants and starving widows. Our argument in fact was reminiscent of a conversation held in one of my favorite books, *Catch 22*, where Joseph Heller approaches virtually every facet of society with clever irreverence and hilarious skepticism.

*"Don't tell me God works in mysterious ways," Yossarian continued, hurtling on over her objection. "There's nothing so mysterious about it. He's not working at all. He's playing. Or else He's forgotten all about us. That's the kind of God you people talk about - a country bumpkin, a clumsy, bungling, brainless, conceited, uncouth hayseed. Good God, how much reverence can you have for a Supreme Being who finds it necessary to include such phenomena as phlegm and tooth decay in His divine system of creation? What in the world was running through that warped, evil, scatological mind of His when He robbed old people of the power to control their bowel*

*movements? Why in the world did He ever create pain?"*

*"Pain?" Lieutenant Scheisskopf's wife pounced upon the word victoriously. "Pain is a useful symptom. Pain is a warning to us of bodily dangers."*

*"And who created the dangers?" Yossarian demanded ... "Why couldn't He have used a doorbell instead to notify us?"*

If I were to respond to this today I would begin by saying that God does not impose nor desire evil on anyone. Rather he has created this Earth and all its occupants with a set of predisposed rules which he will not or perhaps cannot, break. Our greatest blessing is also our sourest curse. By giving us free will God has provided us with the opportunity to both improve our environment and to destroy it. If we were to have a world of perfection, free from evil, sickness and death, it would require that we be deprived the choice to bring it harm. In Deuteronomy 30 God says, *"I have set before you the path of good and the path of evil, the way of life and the way of death. Choose Life."* Clearly, God intends for us to make a decision for ourselves whether we want to produce evil or produce good. However, the inherent value does not explain the existence of sickness and pain. It is not inconceivable to think that we could somehow exist in a world of free choice and free of pain. That, however, is not our world. Our globe follows natural laws preset by God and the disasters that occur are those derived from the functions of nature. God's choice not to intervene is not an indication of his apathy towards our pain, but rather, an avoidance of the disparity that would exist between condemning free will and removing disease.

Rabbi Harold Kushner demonstrates this point best in his book, *When Bad things*

*Happen to Good People* (he also mentions the above references but I swear I had prior knowledge of them),

*"Insurance companies refer to earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters as 'acts of God'. I consider that a case of using God's name in vain. I don't believe that an earthquake that kills thousands of innocent victims without reason is an act of God. It is an act of nature. Nature is morally blind, without values. It churns along, following its own laws, not caring who or what gets in the way. But God is not morally blind. I could not worship Him if I thought He was. God stands for justice, for fairness, for compassion. For me, the earthquake is not an 'act of God.' The act of God is the courage of people to rebuild their lives after the earthquake, and the rush of others to help them in whatever way they can."*

In Kushner's eloquent words, the real act of God is not that he intends punishment and ill will towards people that don't deserve it, or that he is testing our loyalty as he did with Job (a sentiment that I personally find to be complete bullshit). The act of God is that he provides us with the strength for perseverance and solidarity with one another. God is evidence in the stories of dying children who retain good humor to their last breath and Auschwitz survivors that find the fortitude to forgive their Nazi perpetrators. We cannot expect God to give us free will and then punish us for having it. If that were the case then I would have to agree with my friend in saying that God might be a prick, and would hold no blame for his choice to abandon notions of an Almighty. But that is not the truth as I see it.

Pain and suffering are the result of living

in a world of imperfection. The question is, *are we going to make meaning out of it?* Understandably, this thought rings very shallow to individuals confronted with dying loved ones. But suffering is inescapable and it is our purpose as children of God to develop community in times of tribulation. If we allow the result of our pain to bring further evil into the world through resentment then we have failed one another. It is paramount to our existence that we use our painful experiences to develop significance and not generate despair.

This brings me to my final, and I promise, brief, point which is the importance of faith in our individual lives. I always find myself resorting to my favorite mantra that, “You won’t find many atheists in foxholes.” I like this expression because it reveals a deep insight into human nature. We are distinguished from other animals because, as related prior, we have conceptions of justice, awareness and desires that exist beyond natural instinct. Lewis contends that these desires actually prove the existence of the divine because we have a desire that cannot be quenched on Earth. If an individual is in a foxhole and suffering an onslaught of mortar fire, he is not wondering about how the world was created or how human kind developed fine mortar skills. He is simply hoping that the next giant bomb does not have his name on it. At this moment of weakness it would be reasonable to assume that anyone would be willing to make a deal if it guaranteed their survival.

At these moments of peak vulnerability, our desires for control and meaning are most exposed. It is here that I see the need for faith most revealed. Without faith, discovering meaning becomes much more difficult. This is not to say that it can’t or hasn’t been approached. Devout atheists might contend that conceding to the vulnerability is the only possible probability.

If this is possible, I would like to shake the hand of anyone who has possessed this fortitude. But living a meaningless life is not a comfortable proposition. With faith, we have purpose. We have the strength to face all of the suffering of the world and understand that there is meaning to be derived from it. In a Christian context we

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understand that God’s will is at work and that through our faith we can trust that his purpose will be achieved. With faith we can find peace while facing pain and suffering or being in a foxhole. We are not forced to suffer without direction. We can rely on it to motivate our actions and promote general well-being. How can such a transcendent peace be obtained without the existence of the divine? Can misguided intellect and thousands of years of evolution truly bring mankind to such a point? Our need for faith reflects our human need for purpose. Lacking purpose in a foxhole makes for one uncomfortable experience. But an understanding of faith and our purpose as the benefactors of God’s love brings our turbulent souls to

ease. The deep longing of humanity must be satisfied in some capacity and our faith in God's love can bring resolution to our confusion, our suffering and explain our sophisticated beauty.

In *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Kushner references the playwright Nahum Glatzer, who wrote:

*"Man depends on God for all things; God depends on man for one. Without Man's love, God does not exist as God, only as creator, and love is the one thing no one, not even God Himself, can command. It is a free gift, or it is nothing. And it is most itself, most free, when it is offered in spite of suffering, of injustice, and of death."*

Without our fallacies we have no freedom, without our freedom we have no love, and without our love we have no purpose. As Creator, God deserves our love. Not because he delivers us from pain but because he gives us the strength to bear it. We don't cherish him for creating us perfect but for creating us at all. We can't try to explain our way out of his existence because in the end we arrive at the same conclusion. Our origination needs a purpose, and by trying to overwrite our purpose or undermine it we become hopeless, desperate and cynical. We need God's validation for our own sake, not the other way around.

I wish desperately I could go back with my current knowledge and reexamine our conversations. Perhaps our feelings and distinctions might have evolved into collaboration if I had presented the impressions I currently possess. When two people seeking truth can combine their different perspective into a single motivation it usually follows that something other than entertaining spectacle can be achieved. But as fate would have it I am not clinging to

any misconceptions about the future of our conversations. For, in the presence of egotistical company, oftentimes it is difficult to demonstrate sincerity. Rather, our years at university have revealed to both of us that we are just as smart as we thought we were in twelfth grade. Therefore, with our advanced intuitive skills we shall glean the metaphysical realities of social observance. For the one thing that we can both agree on is that God is present in the hilarity of watching the halfway house inhabitants try to pry freshly-glued half-dollars from the remorseless sidewalk.

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## On the Catechism

CARDINAL  
AVERY DULLES, S.J.

**"The Catechism of the Catholic Church... is the boldest challenge yet offered to the cultural relativism that currently threatens to erode the contents of the Catholic faith."**

*From Avery Cardinal  
Dulles, S.J.: A Model  
Theologian, page 454*

# ..... Who is God? .....

**G**od is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end of everything. The [Nicene Creed] begins with God the Father, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and foundation of all God's works... [Faith in God] means coming to know God's greatness and majesty. It means living in thanksgiving. It means knowing the unity and true dignity of all men. It means making good use of created things. It means trusting in God, even in adversity. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 198, nos. 222-227).

## “How Can We Speak About God?”

**I**n defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists.

Since our knowledge of God is limited, our language about him is equally so. We can name God only by taking creatures as our starting point, and in accordance with our limited human ways of knowing and thinking.

All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. The manifold perfections of creatures - their truth, their goodness, their beauty all reflect the infinite perfection of God. Consequently we can name God by taking his creatures' perfections as our starting point, "for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator". [Wis 13:5]

God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, imagebound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God--"the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable"--with our human representations. [Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora] Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God.

Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. Likewise, we must recall that "between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude"; [Lateran Council IV: DS 806] and that "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him." [St. Thomas Aquinas, SCG 1, 30]

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

# Concerning God's Nature

FR. BERNIE TYRRELL, S.J.

*Interview*

**W**hat we have learned of God is this: God is not a datum to be understood; rather God is the explanation of all the data we've got. So what data do we have? Well, we have the universe; we have our own existence and our own interiority. We are present to ourselves as the primary subject of life. In Jesus Christ, God is revealed, and so before I would say anything philosophically, I would want to say, theologically, how did we know who or what God is? We know what God is because of Jesus who is the unique manifestation of God on earth.

But, if we are not Christian, or we are not monotheist, then we see the world because of our individual experiences which are unique for all people. Peter Berger, the sociologist, talked about rumors of angels and argued that there were all different types of beings that are of God, which can attract us so that we seek something further such as the Transcendentals, like Beauty. When you really see something beautiful, it just captivates you. Augustan put it, "Oh beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved thee". Well, beauty was a way for Augustan to get some idea of what the divine must be. We experience beauty in a limited way, but there is something in the depths of our hearts and our minds that wonders about the unlimited Beauty. The beautiful realities that we encounter all draw us further into the mystery of unlimited Beauty.

Now you can take any number of things and say that these are not so much rumors of angels, but rumors of the divine, of God. Of course, the proof that I gave [page 14] is

one way. But, we only know God through a glass, darkly. If we knew what God was, we would be God. In other words, if one could understand everything about everything, they would be divine. We will never understand everything about everything but we keep being called to transcendence. We are all a part of the call to transcendence. Angels are something above and beyond and for some reason they appeal to the modern imagination. They appeal because they are beyond. They transcend us.

Berger's rumors of angels might come into play as an example of our yearning for God. There is a yearning, a deep yearning, money doesn't satisfy it, fame doesn't satisfy it, and health itself doesn't even satisfy it. They say if you've got your health you have just about everything. Not necessarily. You can have poor health and yet, be a mystic. You can have these profound experiences of the divine. We are limited when we talk about God. To define what God is, to say what the essence of God is would be an understanding of what the meaning of being itself is, and its ultimate transcendent source, which is God. Never, even in heaven, will we know God fully.

I can know a person, but I don't totally know that person. If I totally knew him, I would be him. We know God as we know God directly. Not through a glass darkly, but in heaven in the beatific vision. We know God face to face. But just as I can know a person face to face, I do not know that person in every aspect of who he is or what he is. We will see God face to face, the three subjects of one infinite reality, the Trinity, but we won't know them completely. That is one of the fun things about heaven. One of the greatest joys of heaven will be the constant exploration. We will constantly be deepening our understanding and grasping different aspects of reality.

There is this expression; we call it the "beatific vision." You see God face to face and

it beatifies you, it makes you joyous. Well, you can't think that we are all sitting in a huge amphitheater, staring at God. It is a dynamic personal encounter that is just vibrant and alive and changing. It's the joy of discovery. In other words, we will constantly be learning more and more. We will never know everything about everything, but we will keep discovering new things. So heaven is not static; it is dynamic, just as our own universe is not static, but dynamic. The universe itself is full of beauty, goodness, truth, intelligibility, and unity, but with the advent of sin in the world, things are darkened.

However, the beauty of things is not wiped out. The philosopher and theologian Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J. said, "Without faith, the world is too evil for a good God to exist." Now, all we need to do is read the newspapers about what is going on in the Middle East and all over the world. There is an incredible amount of evil in the world but, there is more goodness. What would you say if asked if most of the people you knew personally were good people or evil people? I would certainly say that most of the people I know are good people. They may have their flaws; we all have some sins and so forth. But fundamentally we are good. When God created the universe he looked at it and saw that it was good, as Genesis says. So, I don't exactly agree with Lonergan. I don't agree with the statement that "the world is too evil for a good God to exist." I think there is a lot of evil in the world, but there is more goodness.

In this world there is this transcendent being. By analogy we can say in some ways we can barely comprehend what it is. God is total goodness. And the same with the other qualities: God is intelligibility. We grasp meanings, but they are limited. God is unlimited meaning. We can't fully comprehend just what that means. God is something that cannot be classified according to Fr. Karl Rahner, S.J. and Lonergan.

Rahner calls God, "the holy mystery." Lonergan, in one of his later works, says, "the primordial name we give to God is mystery," and by mystery you don't mean something in the sense of something to be solved, but something much richer, more beautiful, more powerful than we can imagine. The holy mystery.

I think that God is at work in all human beings through the Holy Spirit, due to Christ. Whether you are a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Muslim, God is at work through the Holy Spirit. So faith, hope, and love are also at work. In other words, if we didn't have the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, then the world would be a very bleak place. In scripture it says, "God wills that all human beings should be saved and come into a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Well, if God's spirit is not at

## “One of the greatest joys of heaven will be the constant exploration”

work in all human beings, than that means that only those human beings that are actually believers, Christian believers, would be saved. This goes against what God wills: "God wills that all human beings should be saved and come into a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). God wills that all humans will be saved. God has to give the means for this to occur. The visible mission of the Son is to ensure that all humans are saved and come into knowledge of the truth. The Son is sent by the Father, on a mission. And you have the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit. So people can have the invisible spirit within them, even though they don't know the doctrine that make it possible for them to have this Holy Spirit pouring love into their hearts.

# Who is God?

DR. ANASTASIA  
WENDLINDER

The above excerpts from the *Catechism* [page 21] take to task the complex issue of speaking about God from the Judeo-Christian perspective. Without some further context, however, these passages might be read in a way that is quite contrary to the Church's doctrine of God.

God, in both Christian and Jewish Traditions, is the divine Creator portrayed in the book of Genesis. The one who makes all things directly, intentionally, and in re-

**“The tendency is to speak of God primarily in words that are lofty and exalted while neglecting the lowly and simple”**

flection of divine goodness - especially humanity, who, as the pinnacle of creation, is made in the Divine Image itself. As the Christian Nicene Creed asserts, we believe in one personal God who creates *all* things, both seen and unseen. This first article of the Creed – from which all other Christian faith statements should flow – was developed specifically to combat the competing Gnostic concept of God wherein the physical world was created as a mistake and is therefore inherently flawed. In the Gnostic view, God transcends creation and is unknowable to it, and only that which is non-physical bears any close relationship to the divine. The Gnostic concept

of God is completely contrary to the God of Christian faith; however, as tradition well attests, Christians have persistently struggled to keep from falling into Gnostic forms of speech that sever the physical from the spiritual and elevate God to an unreachable realm. *Care must be taken not to read the above passages from the Catechism in this way, for on the surface they seem to favor highly transcendent, spiritualized language about God, which is not the intent as suggested by the footnotes.*

The difficulty of speaking of God within the Christian framework arises from the notion that God is a Creator who shares an absolutely unique and distinct relationship with creation, not only as its divine source and end, but wholly present within and throughout every molecule of it. This means that God permeates everything: every creature large or small, every experience of suffering and of joy, what may be perceived to be ugly as well as that which is considered beautiful, and in the outrageous and unconventional as well as in the ordinary. Yet, because God is not “this thing” or “that thing,” nor is God the sum of all things, but is always *something more*, there is no one being or object that captures the divine essence more than the others. Further, the likeness of creation to the Creator lies not only in the diverse creations themselves, but also within the continuous flow of their inter-relationships. Because God's existence defies all categories of being and is therefore outside of them, God is distinct from creation. But in this very distinctness, God is able to be more immediately present to every creature than they are to each other. “God is closer than our own breath,” as it is said.

Since our language is developed in a comparison-contrast system, though, there is no truly proper manner in which to speak about God. The tendency is to speak of God primarily in words that are lofty and exalted while neglecting the lowly and simple, which inevitably lends towards

the Gnostic concept. This is a problem that has been all too pervasive throughout

## “The Gnostic concept of God is completely contrary to the God of Christian faith”

Christian Tradition and still plagues Christian speech -- and worship -- today. The type of “transcendence” that is indicated by the Christian doctrine of God is NOT one where God is above and outside of creation, but rather it is a “transcendence-in-immanence,” that is, an immediacy that goes beyond any other type of presence we find between two creatures. For example, according to the *Catechism*, we call God Father to indicate God as the origin of all things as well as the transcendent authority; however, we may also call God our Mother to emphasize God’s loving care and immanence to creation (see 239). We must therefore be cautious when speaking

of God to balance those “transcendent” terms with those which are immanent, the lofty with the lowly, the spiritual with the physical, and the extraordinary with the mundane. Finally, we must realize that all language about God bears a metaphorical character, even when we mean to communicate the most deep and profound experience of God. Just as St. Augustine stumbled over his humble words: God is both just and merciful, “most hidden, yet most present; . . . unchangeable, yet all-changing; never new, never old; . . . ever working, ever at rest; still gathering, yet nothing lacking; supporting, filling, and overspreading; creating, nourishing, and maturing; [and] seeking, yet having all things” so too must we stumble over our words – no doubt to God’s delight.

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“A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, ‘darkness’ on the walls of his cell.”

-C.S. LEWIS, *from*  
The Problem of Pain

# God is Love

MICHAEL HUMPHREYS

The first and most important step to developing a fruitful prayer life is understanding the shocking depth of the phrase “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Fortunately for us, this is a mystery of infinite depth and is the sweet water into which the Saints, and particularly the great mystics, have delved deeply and even shared on paper with us, for us. For the beginner and the mystic, the love of God is vital.

In my personal prayer life, I found that for years I did not believe that God could actually love me, and thus my prayer was dark and dry. I fought with scruples and thoughts that I was unlovable, since I’d had few successful relationships. Though I knew God loved me in my intellect, my heart was strained to accept that the God of the universe could truly find me lovable when I was hard pressed to find a girl who did. This is why realizing God’s love is of vast importance. When we accept in our hearts that Love Himself loves us, we realize that we are not only lovable, but infinitely so, because we are infinitely loved by God.

In this struggle, I found much grace in understanding love and the perfect act of love in the Incarnation of Jesus. To understand love, we need to see the two sides of love: *eros* and *agape*. *Eros* is not merely sexual love, but also the passion and desire that seeks union with “the other”. *Eros*, however, is not enough. It is easily corrupted because of our broken nature. Instead it finds its perfection in *agape*, which is the sacrificial love that seeks not only union with the other, but the good of the other.

This union of *eros* and *agape* comes to fulfillment in the person of Jesus the Christ. There can be no doubt that the Incarnation is the embodiment of *eros*, because Jesus, the King of the Universe, descended from His throne on high and became “for a little while lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:7). God so passionately seeks after us that He desires to share His very nature with us and does so by becoming one

“God so passionately seeks after us that He desires to share His very nature with us.”

of us. As St. Athanasius says, “God became man so that man might become God.” And this *eros* of God, who is Eros, is accomplished not just through the humble act of becoming man, but by His Passion and death, which is the essence of *agape*. Jesus gave His whole self to be mutilated and executed, granting us salvation through His act of love, so that we might share in the highest treasure – namely, union with God, who is *Agape*. This is the very fulfillment of our nature.

This understanding of the love of God helped me realize that He is not just sitting up in Heaven waiting for me to approach Him; but instead, that He is passionately seeking union with me and yearning for my perfect goodness at all times, as a bridegroom seeks his bride. After this realization, my prayer life was transformed from the mere recitation of countless pleas for help into an attempt to reciprocate the infinite love given to me by God. This knowledge of God’s love for us changes the whole dynamic of our relationship with God: from one of a Master-slave or King-peasant to a Father-child or Lover-beloved relationship. That relationship is where prayer really begins.

# How Can We Better Know God?

CARDINAL  
..... MARIA MARTINI, S.J. ....

To help develop a personal relationship with the Triune God, I propose four exercises:

1. *Lectio divina*. ... Nourish yourself with the Gospel ... This is a recommendation of John Paul II: "It is especially necessary that the listening to the Word becomes an essential meeting, following the ancient and present-day tradition of *lectio divina*, enabling us to discover in the biblical text the living word that challenges us, directs us, which gives shape to our existence" (Novo Millennio Ineunte, No. 39). "The Word of God nourishes life, prayer and the daily journey, it is the principle of unity of the community in a unity of thought, the inspiration for continuing renewal and for apostolic creativity" (Setting Out Again From Christ, 2002, No. 24).

2. *Self-mastery*. We need to learn anew that the frank opposition to desires is sometimes more joyful than endless concessions to everything that seems desirable but ends in boredom and satiety.

3. *Silence*. We need to move away from

an unhealthy slavery to rumors and endless chattering, from characterless music that only makes noise, and find each day at least one half-hour of silence and a half-day each week to think about ourselves, to reflect and pray for a longer period. That may seem difficult to ask, but when you give an example of the interior peace and tranquility that result from the exercise, the young take courage and find it to be an unprecedented source of life and joy.

4. *Humility*. Do not think that it is up to us to solve the great problems of our times. Leave room for the Holy Spirit, who works better than we do and more deeply. Do not wish to stifle the Spirit in others: it is the Spirit who breathes. Rather, be sensitive to its most subtle manifestations, and for that you need silence.

*Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, S.J., is the retired archbishop of Milan, Italy. This excerpt is adapted from a talk he gave at the 44th General Chapter of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome on May 3, 2007.*

# Christ Within

FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

*Interview*

**D**iscernment is a process of intense prayer and meditation. Prayer is not just simply kneeling down before an altar and taking part in the sacraments; God knows we could do a little more of that; He wants us to be spiritual. A prayerful kind of greeting is how we ought to conduct ourselves when we enter into communion with God. In spiritual circles, they speak of acts of the presence of God. In other words, when you're doing your work, you better keep your mind attached to what you're doing, but also recognize that you are not alone, and that God is with you. You must be conscious of the fact that you're not alone, God is with you, and what you are doing is always, should always, be for Him.

*Lectio Divina* comes from the attempt to realize the divine life within us. Christ, through his passion, death and resurrection, reconciled us to the Father and to human nature, so we are friends. Before we were enemies of Almighty God, and now we are friends of Almighty God. But He did more than just simply reconcile us to God the Father: what he did was give us a share in his Divine Life. When we make an act of life, like when we get baptized, that Divine Life within us is the life of Christ within us. So we got more than we bargained for when Adam committed a sin and when Jesus came to provide for our reconciliation: He gave us a share of his Life. In fact, when we say the prayer at Mass when the priest puts a little bit of water in the wine ("by the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity") as an acknowledgement of the the divinity of Christ within us. If God lives within us, then, in a special way, we are no

longer citizens of this earth, but citizens of heaven. If we can accept that as fact, we should try to realize that in our consciousness once in a while that what we do is always a devotion to God. That's why I'm saying we must be aware; we must use these acts to make us aware of the divine nature within us. A divine nature that has a divine destiny. If that understanding was livelier in people we would have a much more spiritual outlook on everything, and, in effect, a stronger relationship with God.



## A Personal Testament

JESSICA DALE

*"Nature is an infinite sphere in which the center is everywhere, the circumference is nowhere. We naturally believe that we are more capable of arriving at the center of things rather than embracing their circumference...[yet] it requires no less capacity to reach nothingness as it takes to reach everything; the one is just as infinite as the other...These extremities touch each other and reunite by going in opposite directions and find themselves again in God, and in God alone."*

**W**hen Blaise Pascal wrote the above in *Pensées*, he was in search of life's meaning and where he and God were in relation to one another. He saw God in the "two abysses" of the infinitely larger and the infinitely smaller than himself. His purpose, he thought, had to lie somewhere in between.

My search for life's meaning really began during my freshman year at Gonzaga. Coming here exposed me to many new ideas and possibilities of who I could be and what I could do. Having so many potential roads to go down, I decided to do what many do during their first year of college: decide on my path for the next 15 years. My path involved getting some business experience either in the summers or at school, studying in Florence as a junior, graduating Summa Cum Laude with a Business degree, leaving school with a Marketing job secured in order to gain the necessary experience to open my own over-sized shoe store, getting married at 24 to my high school boyfriend, and being done having my beautiful kids by the age of 30 so that I could be around long enough to travel, run my business, and meet my grandkids. And the thing about me that you need to know is that once I decide on something, I am pretty dead-set on making it happen. I believed that each of these steps was not only attainable, but that together they would ultimately bring me happiness, which would give my life meaning. I did a pretty good job of positioning everything in my life in a way that would continue to propel me down this path, and I stayed on it most of the way through my Gonzaga career. But, as everyone finds out sooner or later, life never goes according to plan, especially not your own plan.

When I arrived in Florence for a year abroad, I was so excited to experience what I had anticipated. I had decided to go not only to see the sights, but also to learn how to be more independent in life. My parents love telling the story of me discovering my ability to do things on my own as a child. The story always begins with them trying to help me with something that I just learned, and me stubbornly telling them, "I do by myself." As I grew up, the phrases I used became more sophisti-

cated, but the idea was always the same. Going to Florence and surviving without their help or anyone else's was simply the next necessary step before finding a job on my own, moving out on my own, and following my life path.

My year got off to a successful start: exercising my Italian language skills in Florence, branching out socially on a trip to Spain, and eventually going on trips to places where I was completely unfamiliar with the culture and language. This sense of adventure and love for new experiences

**“If God could get me out of that darkness, He could get me out of a lot of things.”**

expanded to food – to the surprise of everyone who I had ever eaten with. As the girl who used to order grilled cheese sandwiches at nice steak houses, I was trying anything anyone put in front of me, literally. As I became more adventurous, this European experience started to resemble my initial Gonzaga experience of expanding horizons, but on an exponential level. Not only were there an infinite number of new ideas and possibilities, but that was just in Italy, not to mention the other 14 countries I travelled to. The world was quickly unfolding into infinity with each and every day there, which was amazing and absolutely horrifying simultaneously.

I had always believed in God, and my time in Spokane at Gonzaga the two years before had only worked to solidify that through Catalyst group meetings in Welch, attending and leading spiritual retreats, and shared faith with my new Christian friends of all denominations. I had been especially faithful throughout that time since God seemed to be rooting for me to reach my goals and end up where I wanted

on my 15 year plan. I was happy and pursuing happiness, which made me feel like my life had meaning. Yet, as my worldview was exploding in Florence, the security I had felt in my life beforehand was quite rapidly diminishing. At first, I thought that it just had to do with the culture shock, then maybe with a slight case of homesickness. But, after I had been in Italy long enough that I should have been past these typical study-abroad obstacles, I began to realize that this darkness inside of me was growing on its own accord.

Not knowing what to do, I allowed this feeling to consume me at night. As I lay in my bed in downtown Florence, where I had wanted to be for years, and thought

**“Not having definitive plans is a constant struggle for me to accept.”**

over all of the independence and experiences I had gained in my time there, I felt nothing but sadness. If the world really was this big, with so many different people and places, who was I but this small, insignificant thing? This thought overtook me each night, and no matter how I tried to fight it with the fun I was having in Europe or the plans I was carrying out, it always won out in the end. Some nights, I would cry myself to sleep, hoping to not wake up shivering in the middle of the night from a nightmare-version of the same gloom. I began to really believe that life, especially my life, was completely meaningless and that I couldn't fix it.

Until this time, the only thing that ever made me feel better at all was to pray. I had gotten into a habit after going through Confirmation of praying each night before bed. But these prayers had always been slightly superficial, like asking for help

on a test or thanking God for giving me what I wanted in life. At first, these typical prayers were just something to keep my mind off the darkness. When I realized that this seemed to work from time to time, I began to ask God to really help me. In desperation, I would tell Him that I would do anything as long as He would make the feeling go away. When my darkness would start to subside, I would tell Him of my fears: being insignificant, dying and evaporating into nothingness, being uncertain of if He was really there. These prayers began to expand as the darkness inside of me shrank. I began silent conversations with God at night, not only about my fears, but also about my dreams, about my experiences in Europe, and my future. As these conversations became a nightly ritual, the darkness stopped showing up altogether. I began talking with God because I wanted to, not as a preventative measure.

With the darkness gone, I was able to enjoy my time more than ever travelling and trying new things. I had not, however, addressed the root problem of determining my life's true meaning. This became my new goal, which led me to even better experiences. During my last stint in Europe, I began to see God working in my life through people I met, places I visited, experiences I had, and choices I made. Truly letting Him in through prayer inherently altered how I lived my life. The more I allowed myself to be free and trust that everything would turn out fine in the end, the better I enjoyed myself. Life became fuller, and I became less afraid. If God could get me out of that darkness, He could get me out of a lot of things, so I listened to Him and made sure to include Him in my life abroad. We had some of the best adventures in some of our favorite places there. Through these experiences, I was able to make more sense of the infinitely small relative to the infinitely large in my life and

what Pascal was talking about. Most importantly, I found myself looking to God for the wisdom to comprehend both.

Coming home from Europe was an adjustment. I went into a honeymoon phase, where everything I had missed seemed more incredible than ever. Old things felt new as I fell back into the groove of the familiar, which was great. But, after the newness wore off, I began to realize how different I had become. I was no longer seeing my life as the clear-cut series of events that I had previously. With new experiences came new possibilities, and I was no longer afraid to try them. As a new person trying to fit into my old life, I began to realize what I would be giving up to follow the old path. Coincidence is just something that God planned on when we didn't, and I did not feel like my evolution into a more open and adventurous individual could have happened by accident. I was meant to do something with this new person, I just did not know what.

The first step I took in determining my life's new meaning was to allow myself to live more freely at home, as I had in Florence. By trying new things and looking for new opportunities, I experienced a whole new set of things that I had not over my previous 14 years in my home town. The summer was filled with adventures, and I loved every second of it. My relationship with God was developing as well, as I attempted to see where He was leading me as I made decisions about the next step. After some serious soul-searching and praying, I took another huge step and cut my expectations of getting married and having kids on my own schedule. I decided that my relationship with my boyfriend of five years was not leading me down the path I was meant to go, so I ended it, praying and trusting that God would lead me to my new family path when He was ready. Over the course of last semester, I took another big step and veered off of my job path, allowing

myself to look into other opportunities after graduation in addition to business jobs, like doing volunteer work or becoming a ski bum like my parents had.

Not having definitive plans is a constant struggle for me to accept. Allowing God to dictate my path to me as He sees fit is one of the hardest things I have ever forced myself to do. Often I find myself fighting it, and I have to go back to the time when I thought I had life all figured out to remember that there is no chance of that. Yet, the days that I do accept this ambiguity, I feel the most at peace. I have come to truly believe that God's plans are the best ones, and that I should do whatever I can to trust in and follow them. I still have no idea where I will end up in a couple of months upon graduation, and I may not find out for a while. But, I know that God knows, and each day I am reminded that this is the best way for it to be.

As I have recently decided, I do have a plan for my life. My plan is that each day I will wake up and get into the passenger's seat of the car that God is driving and enjoy the ride. Each day I will seek peace, knowing that I will find it when I will have figured out my purpose for that day. And each day I will remind myself that no matter how hard it is to give up control, the meaning of my life will only be determined through letting God lead me and actively working to follow His directions for me. It is never easy, and many days I don't get it right, but I believe that continually trying to change is the only way to ever possibly live life as a contemplative in action for God.

# Rocking the Cradle

GENAVIVE DODGE

A “cradle Catholic” is someone who has been raised Catholic since birth. Like a large percentage of GU students, I was born into a Catholic family and surrounded by Catholic friends and relatives throughout my childhood. I think having a stable and supportive Catholic community to grow up in is wonderful, yet, I worry that if not careful, this situation may breed complacency in the faith journey of a cradle Catholic. In turn, I worry that many cradle Catholics become too comfortable in their Catholic routines and traditions; I worry that their comfort and complacency will prevent them from ever fully exploring their faith or their spiritual life. So, while the definition of «cradle Catholic» is someone who was born and raised with Catholic teachings, I now see how it could also represent the maturity level of a person’s spiritual life; resembling an adult who is still cradled in the infancy of their faith journey.

When I look at Gonzaga, and some of the people I’ve met here, I can’t help but feel that many of the people I’ve encountered

**“There is an epidemic taking place in the Catholic community”**

have become complacent in their inherited faiths. Whether or not you’re Catholic, take a minute to reflect on your own spiritual journey. I think many of us, myself included, are guilty of simply accepting the beliefs we were raised with, without ever taking the time to ask questions and find answers about our faiths. During my time

at Gonzaga, I have only begun to realize how little I actually understand about my own faith. For the first time in my life, my response to a question of human nature “because that is how God made us” does not suffice. Politics, sexuality, and abortion are all issues that most of us have strong opinions about, but do we ever stop to think where they come from? What shapes those beliefs? Or how does the Catholic Church stand on these issues? I can’t help but feel that too many of us settle with, “this is how I feel” rather than providing logical explanations for these important questions.

There is an epidemic taking place in the Catholic community, and the result is an ever-growing number of cradle Catholics leading non-Catholic lives. It is a plague of ignorance and a lack of prayer. I am more and more confused as I encounter fellow Catholics who are pro-choice, don’t believe in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, or do not follow Church teachings on the sanctity of marriage and reproduction. If your beliefs are in direct conflict with those of the Catholic church, are you really Catholic? All of this inconsistency has made me doubt my own faith. But with much reflection, I have decided that this inconsistency is because of the people, not the faith. The word “Catholic” means universal, so obviously members of the Catholic Church will be coming from a number of diverse backgrounds, but the wonder of this universal faith is that we all unite under one Church. It takes the beauty of worldwide differences, so created by God, and brings us together as a family who can help one another reach our potential relationship with Him and our brothers and sisters in Christ! But how can we become a united family if we disagree on such concrete issues so stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church?

As infants, it is okay to rely on our parents for guidance, but when it comes time that we grow up, and become adults we must educate ourselves on what will be the

foundation of our beliefs. Think about it for a moment: if we cannot explain the reasoning behind our beliefs, then we obviously do not know them enough to reasonably believe them in the first place. How then will we ever feel strongly about anything, let alone be able to defend it? Life is full of determining which path to follow, which path is right for us. College is especially full of these life-changing decisions, but the most important decision concerns our faith and morals, for these alone are substantial, non-material, and what we can identify ourselves with for the rest of our lives.

Identifying ourselves as Catholic, or not, is a part of this lifelong path towards (or away from) Christ. By asking questions and finding answers, it should be clear how

## “One should choose Catholicism based on the truths that the Catholic Church teaches”

you want to identify yourself. One should choose Catholicism based on the truths that the Catholic Church teaches, only then will the Church be truly united, and only then will you be able to identify with answers that the Church teaches. We must educate ourselves about the faith, pray constantly, and look to others for guidance.

If you are still lying in the cradle of your spiritual life (I know I am), then I challenge you to break out. Get past the infancy of your spiritual life so that you may begin the journey of getting to know Christ and understand your purpose in life. I pray that we all fall into a mature love with our faith for what it truly is: our gift from Christ Himself.

# Transcendent & Eminent

RABBI ELIZABETH  
GOLDSTEIN, PhD

*Interview*

**J**ews have an obligation to pray three times a day. In services, there is an established liturgy. There is always room for individual prayer within the liturgy, but I think a lot of the purpose of prayer in the Jewish world is just to get you out there in community with others. Just like exercise, you don't always feel like doing it but you feel better afterward just for having that ritual in your day. I think that is a Jewish way of thinking about prayer. I would imagine in some sense that that is also a Christian way of approaching prayer and God.

However, there's one big difference between Judaism and Christianity: while Judaism is a religion and does mandate a faith, it is as much cultural as it is religious; there are people that can claim Jewish heritage and also not believe in God, which is a really hard concept. This is difficult even for me because so much of my Judaism is believing in God. What makes you a Jew, unless you have a spouse of another faith, is if you're born of a Jewish mother. If you're born of a Jewish father or a Jewish mother, in the Reform Movement, you're Jewish. If you never had anything to do with Judaism and you wanted to be Jewish you would have to go through a conversion process. But that is not to say that if you are not attached religiously you can still be welcome in the community culturally, and

that is different than Christianity.

There is so much history and culture and identity that are part of Judaism that it doesn't necessarily mandate a relationship with God. On the other hand, you can't really say, 'I am a Christian and not believe in God.' You can say, 'I grew up with Christian parents.' But you can't say, 'I don't believe in God.' But you can be Jewish and at the same time not believe in God. That's not

## “You can be Jewish and at the same time not believe in God”

the kind of Jew that I am. By belonging to a synagogue and having prayer be part of your everyday life, in a sense, you're saying 'I believe in God.' The way the Jews access God is through prayer and through working on our relationship with God and through meditation or getting close to nature. I don't think it would be that different than through charitable works and healing and repairing which is a real mystical concept but has translated into the ideas of social justice. So there are all these different ways of connecting to God through connecting through people and also connecting to your spiritual self.

In terms of how personal our relationship is, I think that Judaism embraces both the idea of a transcendent God and the idea of an eminent and close God. In Genesis I, the creation story is very much about a transcendent God. God spoke these things and they came into being and people didn't speak with God, they were simply created. Then, in Genesis II, God creates man and He man them name the animals and He gives man all kinds of authority and God walks in the garden alongside his creation, one gets the sense that God and human-kind are fraternal. Later, God learns that people make mistakes and there's God in the process of learning. I think that you really get both models in Judaism and people look to the Bible to see the models, both

the transcendent and the eminent. I think that when Jews pray, they do believe that God hears them and that they have a personal relationship with God. Some of them do, maybe some of them do it just because it makes them feel spiritual and general but they certainly don't think of God as a peer.

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“Humans are  
amphibians - half  
spirit and half  
animal. As spirits  
they belong to  
the eternal world,  
but as animals  
they inhabit  
time.”

-C.S. LEWIS

*from*  
The Screwtape  
Letters, *Chapter 8*

# The Church and Other Faiths

*Declaration on  
The Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions*

## NOSTRA AETATE

*Proclaimed by His Holiness*

POPE PAUL VI

*On October 28, 1965*

### I

**I**n our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

### II

From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed lan-

guage. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing «ways,» comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ «the way, the truth, and the life» (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

### III

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

### IV

As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith-are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Cov-

*enant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles. making both one in Himself.*

*The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: «theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh» (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.*

*As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and «serve him shoulder to shoulder» (Soph. 3:9).*

*Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.*

*True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.*

*Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.*

*Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.*

## V

We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: «He who does not love does not know God» (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to «maintain good fellowship among the nations» (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men, so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.

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## A Sacred Obligation: Re-thinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People

*A Statement by the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations  
September 1, 2002*

... Encouraged by the work of both Jewish and Christian colleagues, we offer the following ten statements for the consideration of our fellow Christians. We urge all Christians to reflect on their faith in light of these statements. For us, this is a sacred obligation.

1. God's covenant with the Jewish people endures forever.

For centuries Christians claimed that their covenant with God replaced or superseded the Jewish covenant. We renounce this claim. We believe that God does not revoke divine promises. We affirm that God is in covenant with both Jews and Christians. Tragically, the entrenched theology of supersessionism continues to influence Christian faith, worship, and practice, even though it has been repudiated by many Christian denominations and many Christians no longer accept it. Our recognition of the abiding validity of Judaism has impli-

cations for all aspects of Christian life.

2. Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a faithful Jew.

Christians worship the God of Israel in and through Jesus Christ. Supersessionism, however, prompted Christians over the centuries to speak of Jesus as an opponent of Judaism. This is historically incorrect. Jewish worship, ethics, and practice shaped Jesus's life and teachings. The scriptures of his people inspired and nurtured him. Christian preaching and teaching today must describe Jesus's earthly life as engaged in the ongoing Jewish quest to live out God's covenant in everyday life.

3. Ancient rivalries must not define Christian-Jewish relations today.

Although today we know Christianity and Judaism as separate religions, what became the church was a movement within the Jewish community for many decades after the ministry and resurrection of Jesus. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by Roman armies in the year 70 of the first century caused a crisis among the Jewish people. Various groups, including Christianity and early rabbinic Judaism, competed for leadership in the Jewish community by claiming that they were the true heirs of biblical Israel. The gospels reflect this rivalry in which the disputants exchanged various accusations. Christian charges of hypocrisy and legalism misrepresent Judaism and constitute an unworthy foundation for Christian self-understanding.

4. Judaism is a living faith, enriched by many cen-

tures of development.

*Many Christians mistakenly equate Judaism with biblical Israel. However, Judaism, like Christianity, developed new modes of belief and practice in the centuries after the destruction of the Temple. The rabbinic tradition gave new emphasis and understanding to existing practices, such as communal prayer, study of Torah, and deeds of loving-kindness. Thus Jews could live out the covenant in a world without the Temple. Over time they developed an extensive body of interpretive literature that continues to enrich Jewish life, faith, and self-understanding. Christians cannot fully understand Judaism apart from its post-biblical development, which can also enrich and enhance Christian faith.*

5. The Bible both connects and separates Jews and Christians.

*Some Jews and Christians today, in the process of studying the Bible together, are discovering new ways of reading that provide a deeper appreciation of both traditions. While the two communities draw from the same biblical texts of ancient Israel, they have developed different traditions of interpretation. Christians view these texts through the lens of the New Testament, while Jews understand these scriptures through the traditions of rabbinic commentary.*

*Referring to the first part of the Christian Bible as the "Old Testament" can wrongly suggest that these texts are obsolete. Alternative expressions - "Hebrew Bible," "First Testament," or "Shared Testament" - although also problematic, may better express the church's renewed appreciation of the ongoing power of these scriptures for both Jews and Christians.*

6. Affirming God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people has consequences for Christian understandings of salvation.

*Christians meet God's saving power in the person of Jesus Christ and believe that this power is available to all people in him. Christians have therefore taught for centuries that salvation is available only through Jesus Christ. With their recent realization that God's covenant with the Jewish people is eternal, Christians can now recognize in the Jewish tradition the redemptive power of God at work. If Jews, who do not share our faith in Christ, are in a saving covenant with God, then Christians need new ways of understanding the universal significance of Christ.*

7. Christians should not target Jews for conversion.

*In view of our conviction that Jews are in an eternal covenant with God, we renounce missionary efforts directed at converting Jews. At the same time, we welcome opportunities for Jews and Christians to bear witness to their respective experiences of God's saving ways. Neither can properly claim to possess knowledge of God entirely or exclusively.*

8. Christian worship that teaches contempt for Judaism dishonors God.

*The New Testament contains passages that have frequently generated negative attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. The use of these texts in the context of worship increases the likelihood of hostility toward Jews. Christian anti-Jewish theology has also shaped worship in ways that denigrate Judaism and foster contempt for Jews. We urge church leaders to examine scripture readings, prayers, the structure of the lectionaries, preaching and hymns to remove distorted images of Judaism. A reformed Christian liturgical life would express a new relationship with Jews and thus honor God.*

9. We affirm the importance of the land of Israel for the life of the Jewish people.

*The land of Israel has always been of cen-*

tral significance to the Jewish people. However, Christian theology charged that the Jews had condemned themselves to homelessness by rejecting God's Messiah. Such supersessionism precluded any possibility for Christian understanding of Jewish attachment to the land of Israel. Christian theologians can no longer avoid this crucial issue, especially in light of the complex and persistent conflict over the land. Recognizing that both Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in peace and security in a homeland of their own, we call for efforts that contribute to a just peace among all the peoples in the region.

10. Christians should work with Jews for the healing of the world.

For almost a century, Jews and Christians in the United States have worked together on important social issues, such as the rights of workers and civil rights. As violence and terrorism intensify in our time, we must strengthen our common efforts in the work of justice and peace to which both the prophets of Israel and Jesus summon us. These common efforts by Jews and Christians offer a vision of human solidarity and provide models of collaboration with people of other faith traditions.

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# From a Jewish Perspective: The Catholic Church & Judaism

DR. HUGH LEFCORT

*Interview*

There's 2,000 years of Jewish-Christian history so, it's complicated. There's post-Vatican II, and there's pre-Vatican II. The Post-Vatican II relationship is pretty good, but not excellent; pre-Vatican II it's horrible. It's 2,000 years of oppression, so all that baggage is there.

Pope John Paul II and Vatican II did a lot to undo this oppression. But that previous period - it's still around and the problem is the scriptures are still around. It would be one thing if antisemitism was all over and you could forgive and move on, but every spring, Christians, Catholics, sit down and retell the stories; the story of Deicide, of killing the Christian God, and blaming it on the Jews. And so that is a constant irritant to the Jewish people.

That that goes on year after year despite a bunch of theological statements after Vatican II saying, "that's not really what happened" etc. But the story's there - a story of Jews being oppressed by Romans and of Jews killing Christians. It's almost like if you took the story of Abraham Lincoln being assassinated by John Wilkes Booth and said Lincoln was killed by a Christian. And that's the story - when everyone in the civil war story is a Christian and that had nothing to do with why John Wilkes Booth killed Lincoln, nothing. But to then go and say, "Well, we should go after Christians" is just ridiculous.

So, you have a story of Jews fighting Roman oppression, of tens of thousands - possibly hundreds of thousands - of Jews being crucified and that somehow gets turned into a

story where everyone in the story is either a Jew or a Roman. The Christians are still Jews at this point, basically a flavor, and somehow that goes down in the Christian Bible, the Jews as the bad guys, when it's really our story. Jesus gets crucified like tens of thousands of other Jews get crucified, and for the same reason. The sign on the cross ("King of the Jews") is a political crime. The Romans couldn't care less, they were very tolerant of religion; they weren't tolerant at all of political rebellion. So, that causes tension today.

But what's worse than that is for Christianity in the early stages to lead to anti-Semitism. I mean, it's one thing if you just leave. The Latter Day Saints, the Mormons left. They consider themselves Christians, they are Christians, but they moved off. And most Christians view it as, "good luck to them." They oppressed them at first but now it's, "you can believe whatever you want to believe." And most Christians feel no obligation to join in with this new revelation. But, Christianity does something in the early days which then leads to 2,000 years of anti-Semitism, which is the replacement idea that the Jewish Covenant is no longer in place, or at least severely weakened, and that there's a new Covenant. So, basically, Jews are written out of their own story. I mean it's *our* story, Abraham is *my* ancestor, and we'd been praying to Abraham's god for 1,500 hundred years before the time of Jesus. And in the story, suddenly, the Covenant is over and we're out. And these new people have the Covenant with a god that we basically invented. And so the question becomes "what do you do with Jews in the world?"

This leads to Antisemitism. Christians throughout history have gotten it in their heads that Jews should either convert or be an example of what happens to people that lose God's grace. They certainly can't do well because that would mean that the transfer hasn't really occurred. So, then

you get 2,000 years of church-led Antisemitism. It's a complicated history because of all that. Certainly, things have changed since Vatican II, that's not the way it is today at all.

*What should a Catholic attitude towards the Jewish faith be? [find an alternative response from Rabbi Goldstein on page 43]*

I would hope that it's neutral. I don't expect anything other than the minimum of being left alone. I don't want "kudos." Pope John Paul II said Judaism is the "senior brother," I don't even want that. I just want to be left alone and not have a theology based on pushing away another theology. Just a tolerance that there are different religions, there are different paths to God would be enough; Judaism being just one of them. But to build a faith on the back of another one, to push it down, that's the troublesome part. So, if Catholics today could just be aware of their own history and not dig the hole deeper; I don't expect them to change their texts, but if you look at the Vatican's views on Israel, Christians are declining in the entire Middle East; in every single country there are fewer Christians every year. We see this in Iraq and with the Coptic Christians in Egypt. Yet, in one country they are increasing: Israel. If you look at Vatican statements they are neutral or hostile to Israel and they are pro all the other Arab regimes. It's odd that the one country where the Christians are flourishing and the numbers are increasing the Catholic Church chooses to continue to forego lending its support. It has solid political reasons: there are a lot more Arabs than there are Jews and they need to keep these regimes happy to protect those few Christians that are left, I don't doubt that. The Coptic Christians are in risk, and if the Catholics came out they could hurt the Coptic Christians. But it just seems like the Catholic Church could be a little more neutral.

*Dr. Lefcort is a Conservative Jew.*

# Another Jewish-Christian Relations Perspective

RABBI ELIZABETH  
GOLDSTEIN, PhD

## *Interview*

*What is the Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish Faith? What should it be?*

There have been a lot of good books written about the church's relationship with the Jewish people, and I didn't want to give a step-by-step in this conversation, but I feel like I could direct people to good books. There's also a great website called, "The Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations."

Recently, I think it was in 2000, the Jewish scholars who worked on interfaith issues issued the statement, "Dabru Emet": that Jews should reaffirm and reestablish relationships with Christians in a way that would be less skeptical and fear based. In the spirit of dialect, Jews should theologize basically and think about a relationship with Christianity through their own theological lens. No one had really called on Jews to do that before. It was always "we're us and they are them, they used to kill us and now they don't." So, it was pretty innovative, and I think something that could only come out of America, the American University system, and the pluralism that we have in this day and age.

Then there was a Christian Scholars group, which started in 1969 and they actually stated in response to "Dabru Emet" their own response on the part of Christian Scholars. It's really good. One of the first things that they mention, and what the whole document surrounds, is call-

ing upon Christians to affirm the idea that God has an eternal covenant with the Jewish people. For a long time, the idea was that Christianity superseded or replaced Judaism, and Judaism was only a religion of the "Old Testament," and there's a new and better religion so that makes Jews irrelevant. Not that you could kill them, but that you don't need to deal with them in a theological way. So, to affirm that Jews have an eternal covenant with God is a big thing. Not just for Catholics, but for the Christian community at large. This would, in a sense, make Christians have to go back and think about what their religion means to them.

Also, they want to affirm that Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a faithful Jew. A lot of people don't remember that Jesus was a Jew, or that he lived a Jewish life. And while he pushed boundaries in the Jewish community, which is a Jewish thing to do, to call to conscience, there's nothing "not Jewish" about that. While the religions went in different directions, Paul took the religion one way as he reached out to the gentiles and didn't require them to keep Jewish law; he didn't disallow Jews to be a part of it. In fact, he wanted Jews and gentiles to follow Christ.. But some Jews didn't want to do that because they had a hard time seeing God and man come together. So, Rabbis took Judaism a different way. but they really were evolving as two sister faiths at the same time. They both are rooted in the Hebrew Bible. But you can't really know anything about Judaism or Christianity just from reading the Hebrew Bible. You have to study both of them in their later manifestations to really understand anything about the two religions. They are connected because they are both rooted in this history.

I brought together a Jewish community and an Episcopalian community in San Diego, where I did my graduate work. I entitled the program, "Opening the Book: Jews and Christians Studying Text Together." I thought this is a good opportunity to look

at a text that we share, like the Hebrew Bible, and then look at different Jewish and Christian interpretations of the same text. We met for eleven sessions, actually studying different parts of the Hebrew Bible, and I co-taught with a priest and a deacon from the Episcopalian Church. We met eleven times and had really great conversation, not that I don't believe in dialect groups because theology is fun to discuss, but I am particularly interested in textual interpretation. So I particularly liked picking a text, studying it and then I would talk a little bit, and then the deacon would talk a little bit, and then the different congregants and parishioners would speak and ask their questions and it was one of the best experiences of interfaith I have ever had. It also reaffirmed this point that we came from a similar tradition, but evolved in different ways.

I would encourage people to study this document because it is so interesting, and it can provide a lot of great thought.

*Can you address why the sentiment of "I just want to be left alone," exists among some Jews? [page 41]*

The history of Judaism and Jewish people and Christianity, has been one that has not been particularly friendly. I'm sure there have always been individual Jews and Christians that have been friends over all these hundreds of years. But, in terms of communities and social stance and some of the things that happened in World War Two, although there were some really nice things that were done, there also were some things that weren't. I think there is a sense among some Jews that "yeah leave us alone, we live in America now. We live in a place with a very welcome separation of church and state. Let us worship how we want to worship. We just want to live and thrive." I mean six million Jews were destroyed in the Holocaust and I'm not saying that to be dramatic but the sense is that there were not that many Jews before that, so if you take out a quarter of the worlds Jews, I'm not sure about the exact figure, there really is a sense on the part

of many that "I want to raise my children as Jews. I want to have my tightknit Jewish community. I want to live the way I want to live and I'm not interested in helping you understand." That sentiment is that "I feel

**"For a long time, the idea was that Christianity superseded or replaced Judaism, and Judaism was only a religion of the "Old Testament," [rendering] Jews irrelevant."**

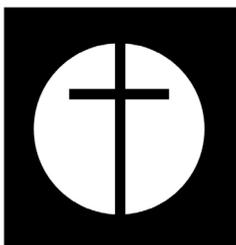
lucky to live in a country where I have the freedom to practice my religion and I want to spend as much time as I can focusing on that."

I don't feel that way at all. I am a committed Jew, I became a rabbi, I have children and I want to raise them with a strong Jewish identity. I love theology, and part of my exploration of God and sacred texts is to understand the way others view God and the sacred texts. Everyone in religious studies has a deep interest in the study of religion which is going to make interfaith dialogue an everyday occurrence. Part of why I like working in this department is because I get to eat lunch with Christians every day and talk about different, cool stuff every day. Having lunch with my colleagues upstairs is my favorite part of the day. That is why I love being at Gonzaga. It allows for the expression of your own religion, and allows you to enter into discussion with other religions, which is what I love to do.

*Rabbi Goldstein is a Reform Jew.*

# A Catholic's "Universal" Response

..... AMANDA PRZYBYLA .....



*"My sister's a Mormon."*

**F**or such a pointed statement, the responses get pretty convoluted. It usually begins with forced openness: "That's so *interesting*. How do you really *feel* about that?" Then, there's unbridled bigotry: "How *tragic* that your Catholic family raised a black sheep in the fold!" Okay, perhaps the wording has been slightly dramatized, but the weak attempts at cross-spiritual understanding can never hide the tongue clicking. Instead of fruitful inquiry, I field questions about "magic" underwear and the validity of *Sister Wives*. One time, a distant Catholic acquaint-

**"I fled, thinking I would lose something if I talked to them."**

tance asked, "So your sister's the one who turned Mormon, huh?" I learned that day that Mormons are often perceived as outsiders to Christianity – more like a disease to a "proper" faith like Catholicism (which certainly doesn't rely on enchanted undergarments for salvation) than a legitimate faith in itself. My acquaintance painted a

metaphoric image of my sister Jill's conversion, with her absentmindedly picking the wrong pair of shoes one morning, clicking her heels together and whispering, "There's no place like Temple..." Simply, my acquaintance suggested that, like my sister, if one loses focus, getting sucked into another faith against one's will becomes a real possibility.

I shamefully lived under a similar notion before Jill converted during my freshman year at Gonzaga. Though my Catholic schoolteachers enforced religious tolerance from as early as my days in kindergarten, even my interreligious dialogue course in college did not rationalize the problem of a convert in the family. My cradle-Catholic life had inflated into an all-consuming bubble where I only heard about other religions but never consciously witnessed another faith in action. Mormonism is rarely taught in class; instead, we rely on crude jokes, cable television, or Barats and Bereta videos for guidance in understanding the religion. Regardless of whether or not I learned proper religious tolerance over my 16 years in Catholic education, the word "tolerance," I soon discovered after Jill's conversion, is an abomination to spiritual jargon. "Tolerance" is a notion you can fab-

ricate when a homeless person sits across from you on the bus and babbles about the next alien invasion. Despite what I've learned in my classes, in practice I've found that tolerance, though appropriate in the public transit system, does not belong in theological discourse.

I failed at my first attempt at dialogue with Jill. So much of Mormon doctrine appears foreign to Catholic beliefs that denial seemed easier than directly addressing the issue. Marriage quickly became the hot-button topic for the rest of my family. Since Mormons value marriage as a bond that exists for eternity, the temple "sealing" is so sacred that only fellow Mormons may witness it. Simply, I will not get to wear a bridesmaid dress and sit through my sister's wedding ceremony (not that I would fully understand the rites anyway). My parents fumed at the thought of not seeing their daughter wed; they argued that Catholics are so universal that we welcome everybody into our places of worship. That theology, and the natural want of parents to see their daughters married off, ignited my parents' confused anger. My response was different. I ignored the conflict until Jill became engaged to her boyfriend, Matt, in December. Matt, a former missionary and Super Smash Brothers extraordinaire, was the one whose transparency convinced me that an inter-religious dialogue is possible.

Until I met Matt, I labored under the impression that dialogue meant outward inclusiveness coupled with backhanded theological competition. Thus, when Jill started taking me to her Mormon ward events a few years ago, I shrank from the missionaries there who could easily have cornered me with challenges on scriptures or doctrine. Instead of seeking clarity, I fled, thinking I would lose something if I talked to them (as Jill allegedly lost her good Catholic shoes and found her ruby-red Mormon ones). Matt told me that the last time he had been in a Catholic church the priest drove him away and refused to answer his questions. If we are indeed sup-

posed to be "universal," I thought, where could this isolated attitude stem from?

Matt's visit with my family in December squelched some of my hasty judgments that covert proselytizing is the only way to change someone's point of view. My family presented him with the option to

**"I labored under the impression that dialogue meant outward inclusiveness coupled with backhanded theological competition."**

accompany us to Mass, and he accepted. Instead of calling us cannibals who can confess anything away at reconciliation like I expected he would, Matt asked sincere questions. *How does the Eucharist work? Why are you guys so into Mary? Why do you constantly sit, stand, and kneel?* The faith-busting I had expected was never delivered. Matt never addressed matters of absolutist right and wrong like I had seen from other (slightly dramatized) Mormons (e.g., *Isn't it terrible that we're the one true church and you aren't?*). For the first time in my supposedly universal life, I witnessed dialogue. It's true: my Mormon sister's fiancé is the most catholic person I know.

Understandably, my family will need more time before they can settle into the reality of Jill's conversion. Still, the ongoing conversation is a long-overdue chance to reaffirm my faith, instead of blindly hiding behind it. If that means correcting people about "magic" underwear, Lord, then Thy will be done.

# Agnosticism *& the* Doctrine *of the* Catholic Church

**T**otal or complete Agnosticism--see (2)--is self-refuting. The fact of its ever having existed, even in the formula of Arcesilaos, "I know nothing, not even that I know nothing", is questioned. It is impossible to construct theoretically a self-consistent scheme of total nescience, doubt, unbelief. The mind which undertook to prove its own utter incompetence would have to assume, while so doing, that it was competent to perform the allotted task. Besides, it would be Impossible to apply such a theory practically; and a theory wholly subversive of reason, contradictory to conscience, and inapplicable to conduct is a philosophy of unreason out of place in a world of law. It is the systems of partial Agnosticism, therefore, which merit examination. These do not aim at constructing a complete philosophy of the Unknowable, but at excluding special kinds of truth, notably religious, from the domain of knowledge They are buildings designedly left unfinished...

...The Agnostic denial of the ability of human reason to know God is directly opposed to Catholic Faith. The Council of the Vatican solemnly declares that "God, the beginning and end of all, can, by the natural light of human reason, be known with certainty from the works of creation" (Const. De Fide, II, De Rev.) The intention of the Council was to reassert the historic claim of Christianity to be reasonable, and to condemn Traditionalism together with all views which denied to reason the power to know God with certainty. Religion would be deprived of all foundation in reason, the motives of credibility would become worthless, conduct would be severed from creed, and faith be blind, if the power of knowing God with rational certainty were called in question. The declaration of the Council was based primarily on scripture, not on any of the historic systems of philosophy. The Council simply defined the possibility of man's knowing God with certainty by reason apart from revelation. The possibility of knowing God was not affirmed of any historical individual in particular; the statement was limited to the power of human reason, not extended to the exercise of that power in any given instance of time or person. The definition thus took on the feature of the objective statement: Man can certainly know God by the "physical" power of reason when the latter is rightly developed, even though revelation be "morally" necessary for mankind in the bulk, when the difficulties of reaching a prompt, certain, and correct knowledge of God are taken into account. What conditions were necessary for this right development of reason, how much positive education was required to equip the mind for this task of knowing God and some of His attributes with certainty, the Council did not profess to determine. Neither did it undertake to decide whether the function of reason in this case is to derive the idea of God wholly from reflection on the data furnished by sense, or merely to bring out into explicit form, by means of such data, an idea already instinctive and innate. The former view, that of Aristotle had the preference; but the latter view, that of Plato, was not condemned. God's indirect manifestations of Himself in the mirror of nature, in the created world of things and persons, were simply declared to be true sources of knowledge distinct from revelation.

Excerpts from newadvent.org

# Spare Me Salvation

MATT PATTERSON



Every year that I've held the elusive title of "Gonzaga University Resident Assistant," I've had the privilege of coming back to Spokane two weeks earlier than my peers, to participate in training sessions hosted by the university's Housing and Residence Life department. Now, while I must admit that I spend the vast majority of these sessions, in Wolff Auditorium, sleeping, I've always managed to stay engaged and awake for the handful of sessions where I feel like I might learn something. One session, which is always led by one of Gonzaga University's Jesuits, is regarding the relationship between University Ministry and Residence Life, and the goals that University Ministry has for Gonzaga's incoming students. The talk always ends like this:

*Our goal isn't to convert everyone to Catholicism. That's not our mission. If a student comes in as a Protestant, we hope that student leaves Gonzaga as a stronger Protestant. If a student comes in as a Jew, we hope that they leave*

*a stronger Jew. If they come in believing in Islam, we hope that they leave as a stronger Muslim. And if someone comes in as an agnostic, then we hope that they leave Gonzaga with some sort of faith practice.*

I point out this particular description of hopes for Gonzaga University students because I like the way it portrays Agnostics: as lost<sup>1</sup>. I like it because it portrays Agnostics as undecided in their faith practices. I like it because it portrays Agnostics as parallel to America's ever-growing population of voters who identify themselves as "independent" - bound to eventually come to their senses, and vote one way or another. I like it because I am Agnostic, and because this portrayal of Agnostics is ignorant and incorrect.

I don't think it's just our University Ministry, or perhaps even just this particular Jesuit, who might feel this way about Agnostics; I've encountered similar feelings and thoughts from several of my Catholic peers

**“My only problem with Catholics is their insistence upon converting me.”**

at Gonzaga. One of my friends here once told me, "I think you'd make a good Catholic." *Thanks?* I thought. And I suppose it was a compliment, but it seemed like a strange one to me. Suppose someone told you, *You'd make a great Buddhist, or You'd be a great Muslim* - what does that even mean?

As part of this issue of *Charter*, the editor conducted several interviews with professors, Jesuits, and other members of the

<sup>1</sup> Although the word "Agnostic" is not traditionally capitalized, I would make the argument that it is just as worthy of capitalization as the Catholic, Jew, or Muslim.

Gonzaga community regarding Catholicism. In one interview, with Fr. Tim Clancy [page 61], the editor asked bluntly, “Why is being Catholic worth it?” Clancy said:

*Having religion in your life is a practice. It’s like playing an instrument: if you’re not involved in the practice, if you can only look at it from an outsider’s point of view, it may be kind of mystifying as to what the point is. You see, I don’t play a musical instrument, so I don’t know what the rewards are of playing a musical instrument. People can tell me what they are, to the extent that they can communicate them, but I don’t have an insider appreciation. I have a classic example to illustrate this: I did my doctoral studies in Chicago, and I knew the Chicago symphony was one of the great world orchestras, and I said, “Tim, you owe it to yourself to go to a symphony while you’re here.” And I did. It was Mahler’s 8th symphony, which has this huge chorus, and I guess it’s a very complicated symphony. I paid twenty bucks to go, and at the end everyone was on their feet shouting “Bravo!” and clapping like crazy, but all I could think was, “For half the price, I could have gotten the CD and I’d have the music forever.”*

*Now, there is something I didn’t get. I couldn’t appreciate the added value of a live performance and my honors kids who are in music could tell me that I could gain an appreciation but it would take time. I’d have to develop an ear and I’d have to know what to listen for, but I am just not that interested. Now, am I missing out? Probably. But, I’m still not that interested. And I see religion in very similar terms. If you’re not engaged in the practice of religion,*

*if you’ve only gotten an outsiders point of view on it, or, if you practice religion and then you walk away from it for whatever reason, then your insider practice becomes frozen. So, you might end up in your fifties with a high school understanding of Catholicism, or a high school appreciation for Catholicism. It wouldn’t be a mature adult appreciation because you haven’t been religious as an adult. So the key question, “is it worth it?” I think the only real response you can give to somebody is, “Try it and you’ll like it.” I can try to communicate what I think makes it valuable, but, of course, I might not articulate it very well, and it might be like these poor people trying to explain to me how much richer my life would be if I appreciated classical music.*

Maybe being Agnostic makes me an outsider to the religious world, and I’ll just never be capable of appreciating the richness that the Catholic traditions would provide my simple life. But I don’t know that that’s true. And if I decided today that I wanted

**“Call me crazy, but having an eternal life isn’t too attractive to me.”**

nothing more than to be Catholic, and live in the light of our (well, not my) Lord God, then I’m sure I’d make a great Catholic. But, I just don’t think it’s for me. When I was told that I’d “make a great Catholic,” after I wiped the stupefied look off my face, I asked my complimentor, “And why should I be Catholic? What’s the purpose of being Catholic?” My friend replied by telling me that if I was Catholic, I’d be able to spend eternity with God. He was obviously alluding to John 3:16, where the Bible says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his

one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Now, call me crazy, but having an eternal life isn't too attractive to me. I don't know if you've ever heard of Nicholas Flamel, but he lived to age 665, and he didn't seem too bitter about calling it quits then.<sup>2</sup> Some people interpret John 3:16 to mean that not only does Catholicism lead to an eternal life, but that it is an eternal life with God. Again, that doesn't sound too attractive to me.<sup>3</sup> I think that what makes our lives, and the moments in our lives so beautiful, is this ever-present idea that our lives will all inevitably end in death. It is what unites us. In David Benioff's screenplay for the 2004 movie *Troy*, Benioff adds a line for Achilles that wasn't in the *Illiad*. In his hut, to Paris' cousin Briseis, Achilles says:

*I'll tell you a secret, something they don't teach you in your temple. The gods envy us. They envy us because we're mortal, because any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now, and we will never be here again.*

Now, obviously Achilles was a hero from Homer's *Illiad* who was noted for his hubristic personality. And sure, maybe the Catholic Church's God isn't envious of the mortal men who worship him, but I think that Achilles (Benioff) and I are on the

same page.<sup>4</sup>

Still, I believe there must be some merit to Catholicism beyond the simple end goal of an eternity with God. Otherwise, if Catholicism were merely a means to an end, it'd seem a little shallow. Perhaps the Church teaches some set of values and beliefs that are inherently good? Perhaps the doctrines of the Church are such that a person

**“It seemed to me that Catholicism was simply an attractive lifestyle choice for someone who bought into Pascal's Wager.”**

outside the Church could not comprehend them? According to Galatians 5:22-23, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness. Gentleness and self-control.” Now, if those afore mentioned values truly are the fruit, or values, that one acquires via Catholicism and/or a relationship with God, then I don't believe they're anything that can't be comprehended through secular experiences, or a secular lifestyle.

After my friend, the complimentor, who told me I'd make a good Catholic, talked to me about the purpose of Catholicism, I asked him about Catholicism's major premise - God. *Now, let's suppose that in the news tomorrow morning, there is undeniable evidence proving that God doesn't exist. Would you still be Catholic?* He replied by saying, “Of course not. There would be no point.” Now, this answer did two things for me: 1) suggested to me that people aren't Catholic simply because of the values the Church teaches, and 2) suggested

4 Granted, Benioff's words for Achilles are a little more artistic than mine, but he also makes considerably more money from his writing than I do.

2 Nicholas Flamel is a character from J.K. Rowling's first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. In the book, Flamel is a renowned alchemist who creates the elixir of life and the sorcerer's (philosopher's, in the UK) stone to extend his life. After the stone is nearly stolen by evil wizard Voldemort, Flamel agrees that the stone ought to be destroyed. Flamel is believed to have died shortly thereafter.

3 If the Harry Potter reference I just made offended you, then you're taking your life too seriously. Breathe.

that the whole Catholicism thing might be as shallow as I feared. It seemed to me, even if it was only for this one person, that Catholicism was simply an attractive lifestyle choice for someone who bought into Pascal's Wager.<sup>5</sup>

Now, I wouldn't go as far as to suggest that all people who are Catholic only believe in God for the selfish sake of spending an eternity with him, but I would have to believe that the vast majority do. I wonder, if you're Catholic, what would you do if it were proved that God doesn't exist?

Conversely, a Catholic could counter by asking me what I might do if I were to find out that God *does* exist. Would I start attending Mass regularly? Would I kneel in prayer everyday, and hope to be saved? To be honest, I wouldn't.

Frankly, if there is a God, and He wants to send me to hell, or do whatever He does with non-believers, then I'm sure He will -

## “I think you'd make a good Catholic”

He'd be God. But, I don't think He would. If there is a God, I believe that He would save all of His children, not just those who sing his praises. In 1787, in a letter to relative Peter Carr, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear.” Now, I don't know if you've heard of Jefferson, but he was a pretty smart fellow who got a handful of things right in his lifetime: namely “freedom” and “America.”

One of my fears regarding Catholicism is

<sup>5</sup> Pascal's Wager [page 13], also referred to as “Pascal's Gambit”, is an idea from French philosopher Blaise Pascal, essentially arguing that a person has more to gain and less to lose by believing in God than by not believing in God, and therefore, should believe in God.

this idea that some Catholics may become too comfortable in their religious lifestyles, as though every event in their life were the will of God, or as though their skills and abilities were simply given from God. Cultural icon Michael Jordan has an interesting quote about this that he shares in a commercial for Nike. In his *Becoming Legendary* Campaign, in a commercial titled “Maybe,” Jordan says: *Maybe I led you to believe that basketball was a God-given gift, and not something I worked for, every single day of my life.*

I think the biggest struggle I encounter from Catholics, is what the purpose to life must be without something like the Church, or without something like God. In a book by the late Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. titled *Cat's Cradle*, one of Vonnegut's characters has an interaction that I'll never forget:<sup>6</sup>

*“What is the purpose of all this?” asked the man.*

*“Everything must have a purpose?” asked God.*

*“Certainly,” said the man.*

*“Then I leave it to you to think of one for all this,” said God. And He went away.*

I don't know what the point of life is, but I can't believe that it's to serve God. And if it is, there's no way in hell (which may be my eventual residence) that I'd spend it that way. If God created us so that we should sit around all day praying to Him, and asking Him questions, then I'd have to believe that he's a terribly insecure Being. And if He is that insecure, or that narcissistic, then there's no way I'd want to spend eternity with Him. I'd rather hang out in hell.

I don't have any problems with Catholics, or with any other religious denominations for that matter - besides the fact that I think they're terribly dated, and fail to

<sup>6</sup> And I was a cynic long before falling in love with Kurt Vonnegut. I was a humanist, too.

intelligently or practically deal with contemporary social issues. And hey, I think they have enormous potential to teach basic human values to people who might otherwise be incapable of comprehending things like love, patience, and kindness.

My only problem with Catholics is there insistence upon converting me. I understand that it's often done as a courtesy, to enlighten me with the Truths which only they have become privy to. I understand that it's often done to save me from my inevi-

tably looming destiny with the dark one. I understand that it's often done out of kindness. But, I don't care.

I'm Agnostic, and not because I'm lost, or confused, or anything of the sort. I'm not interested in being saved, or converted, or in spending eternity with God. I'm Agnostic because I just don't care about religion, or about having any sort of relationship with God. So, please, spare me salvation. Leave me alone.

. . . . .

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

– C.S. LEWIS *from Mere Christianity, pages 40-41*

# How Ought Catholics Read the Bible?

## “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”

*Presented by the Pontifical Biblical Commission  
to Pope John Paul II on April 23, 1993*

(as published in *Origins*, January 6, 1994)

**T**he problem of the interpretation of the Bible is hardly a modern phenomenon, even if at times that is what some would have us believe. The Bible itself bears witness that its interpretation can be a difficult matter. Alongside texts that are perfectly clear, it contains passages of some obscurity. When reading certain prophecies of Jeremiah, Daniel pondered at length over their meaning (Dn. 9:2). According to the Acts of the Apostles, an Ethiopian of the first century found himself in the same situation with respect to a passage from the Book of Isaiah (Is. 53:7-8) and recognized that he had need of an interpreter (Acts 8:30-35). The Second Letter of Peter insists that “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private interpretation” (2 Pt. 1:20), and it also observes that the letters of the apostle Paul contain “some difficult passages, the meaning of which the ignorant and untrained distort, as they do also in the case of the other Scriptures, to their own ruin” (2 Pt. 3: 16).

The problem is therefore quite old. But it has been accentuated with the passage of time. Readers today, in order to appropriate the words and deeds of which the Bible speaks, have to project themselves back almost 20 or 30 centuries—a process which always creates difficulty. Furthermore, because of the progress made in the human sciences, questions of interpretation have become more complex in modern times. Scientific methods have been adopted for the study of the texts of the ancient world. To what extent can these methods be considered appropriate for the interpretation of holy Scripture? For a long period the church in her pastoral prudence showed herself very reticent in responding to this question, for often the methods, despite their positive elements, have shown themselves to be wedded to positions hostile to the Christian faith. But a more positive attitude has also evolved, signaled by a whole series of pontifical documents, ranging from the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* of Leo XIII (Nov. 18, 1893) to the encyclical *Divino Af-*

*flante Spiritu of Pius XII (Sept. 30, 1943), and this has been confirmed by the declaration Sancta Mater Ecclesia of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (April 21, 1964) and above all by the dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum of the Second Vatican Council (Nov. 18, 1965).*

*... the first conclusion that emerges is that biblical exegesis fulfills, in the church and in the world, an indispensable task. To attempt to bypass it when seeking to understand the Bible would be to create an illusion and display lack of respect for the inspired Scripture.*

*When fundamentalists relegate exegetes to the role of translators only (failing to grasp that translating the Bible is already a work of exegesis) and refuse to follow them further in their studies, these same fundamentalists do not realize that for all their very laudable concern for total fidelity to the word of God, they proceed in fact along ways which will lead them far away from the true meaning of the biblical texts, as well as from full acceptance of the consequences of the incarnation. The eternal Word became incarnate at a precise period of history, within a clearly defined cultural and social environment. Anyone who desires to understand the word of God should humbly seek it out there where it has made itself visible and accept to this end the necessary help of human knowledge. Addressing men and women, from the beginnings of the Old Testament onward, God made use of all the possibilities of human language, while at the same time accepting that His word be subject to the constraints caused by the limitations of this language. Proper respect for inspired Scripture requires undertaking all the labors necessary to gain a thorough grasp of its meaning. Certainly, it is not possible that each Christian personally pursue all the kinds of research which make for a better understanding of the biblical text. This task is entrusted to exegetes, who have the responsibility in this matter to see that all profit from their labor.*

*A second conclusion is that the very nature of biblical texts means that interpreting them will require continued use of the historical-critical method, at least in its principal procedures. The Bible, in effect, does not present itself as a direct revelation of timeless truths but as the written testimony to a series of interventions in which God reveals Himself in human history. In a way that differs from tenets of other religions, the message of the Bible is solidly grounded in history. It follows that the biblical writings cannot be correctly understood without an examination of the historical circumstances that shaped them. "Diachronic" research will always be indispensable for exegesis. Whatever be their own interest and value, "synchronic" approaches cannot replace it. To function in a way that will be fruitful, synchronic approaches should accept the conclusions of the diachronic, at least according to their main lines.*

*But granted this basic principle, the synchronic approaches (the rhetorical, narrative, semiotic and others) are capable, to some extent at least, of bringing about a renewal of exegesis and making a very useful contribution. The historical-critical method, in fact, cannot lay claim to enjoying a monopoly in this area. It must be conscious of its limits, as well as of the dangers to which it is exposed. Recent developments in philosophical hermeneutics and, on the other hand, the observations which we have been able to make concerning interpretation within the biblical tradition and the tradition of the church have shed light upon many aspects of the problem of interpretation that the historical-critical method has tended to ignore. Concerned above all to establish the meaning of texts by situating them in their original historical context, this method has at times shown itself insufficiently attentive to the dynamic aspect of meaning and to the possibility that meaning can continue to develop. When historical-critical exegesis does not go as far as to take into account the*

final result of the editorial process but remains absorbed solely in the issues of sources and stratification of texts, it fails to bring the exegetical task to completion.

Through fidelity to the great tradition, of which the Bible itself is a witness, Catholic exegesis should avoid as much as possible this kind of professional bias and maintain its identity as a theological discipline, the principal aim of which is the deepening of faith. This does not mean a lesser involvement in scholarly research of the most rigorous kind, nor should it provide excuse for abuse of methodology out of apologetic concern. Each sector of research (textual criticism, linguistic study, literary analysis, etc.) has its own proper rules, which it ought follow with full autonomy. But no one of these specializations is an end in itself. In the organization of the exegetical task as a whole, the orientation toward the principal goal should remain paramount and thereby serve to obviate any waste of energy. Catholic exegesis does not have the right to become lost, like a stream of water, in the sands of a hypercritical analysis. Its task is to fulfill, in the church and in the world, a vital function, that of contributing to an ever more authentic transmission of the content of the inspired Scriptures.

“The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its makeup, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise but in order to state the correct relationship of humanity with God and the universe. Sacred Scripture wishes simply to declare that the world was created by God.

-Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*  
October 3, 1981

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## Regarding The Bible

FR. MICHAEL MAHER, S.J.

We should interpret the Bible as the church tells us to.

## Bible Interpretation

DR. ROBERT HAUCK

*Interview*

**H**istorically, Christianity has been seen as a replica religion - the revelation of God in Christ. Christians have seen the scriptures as witnessing to Christ, and if Christ is the model for how we form our lives. The access to that for Christians has largely been the Bible.

In the New Testament, after Jesus' resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, he meets

his disciples. And going through the law and the prophets he explains to them how it witnesses to the coming of the Messiah. That's the basic model. For Christians, the Bible serves as a witness to God's revelation in Christ.

Different traditions have taken this differently. Historically, the Catholic tradition has always understood that the fundamental revelatory action in Christ that forms the church is central. That comes to the church through the written tradition, which is the Bible, and the oral tradition, which is handed down through the historical deposits of the church. So, Bible and tradition go together, and the community interprets the Bible together. The Bible has always been foundational.

Now, during the Protestant Reformation, the Protestants didn't trust the tradition. They felt the tradition had been the imposition of human culture and opinion, so

they wanted to jettison the tradition and argue for Bible alone. As a result of the feud that developed between Protestants and Catholics, Protestants didn't trust the Catholic tradition and Catholics kind of got ingrained in not trusting the Bible because it was a "Protestant thing." I think that lack of experience with the Bible in modern Catholicism comes from this feeling that "we're not Protestants and we don't want to be Protestant." Yet, the church has always, officially and practically, seen the Bible as the primary access of understanding what God has been revealing to humanity and his creation. The question with the Bible is how to interpret it and how to apply it; those issues come and go and have changed throughout Christian history.

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## What I Wish Jesus Hadn't Said

FR. KEN KRALL, S.J.

In Matthew Five, Jesus said to his disciples: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I tell*

*you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with brother will be liable to judgment; and whoever says to brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.*

*"You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.*

*"It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage is unlawful - causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

*"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you*

vow. *But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one.*"  
Matthew 5:17-37

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If the pope ever asks me to re-do the gospels, the gospel reading from the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (February 13, 2011) contains statements I will most definitely and most happily drop. But don't worry, the odds are better that there will be a snowball fight in the lower regions, than that the pope will ever ask me to do anything with the gospels, other than reading them, studying them and then sharing them with others.

And just what certain statements in today's gospel reading so bother me? It's those statements which begin with Jesus saying something like this: "You have heard the commandment imposed on your ancestors. . . ." And why do such statements so surely get my goat? Because in the words which follow those opening statements Jesus takes one of the Old Testament laws and makes keeping it even more difficult. That is to say, living out these Old Testament teachings was hard enough, is hard enough. But Jesus told his audience and us that just keeping that law and no more was/is no longer good enough. But let me give you an example of what I'm talking about.

The first Old Testament teaching Jesus talks about is God's teaching about murder. It also happens to be one of the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai soon after God had wondrously led the Israelites out of their many years of slavery in Egypt. So this teaching about murder is a very important teaching. But listen to what Jesus has to say. "You have heard the commandment imposed on your

ancestors 'You shall not commit murder; every murderer will be liable to judgment.'" Having then stated God's words on murder and what God says will happen to anyone who commits murder, Jesus says: "What I say to you is: All those who grow angry with their brothers or sisters will be liable to judgment". See what Jesus has done? Having stated the Old Testament teaching that every murderer will be liable to judgment, Jesus says, on his own authority, mind you, "What I say to you is: all those who get angry with their sisters

**"I do believe that this commandment against adultery is much more difficult to keep than the commandment against murder."**

and brothers will be liable to judgment". A person who murders and a person who gets angry with a brother or a sister, both persons, according to Jesus, end up being liable to judgment. But if the punishment for two crimes are the same, then the two crimes must be equal. Therefore, murdering someone and getting angry at someone are equal crimes. Well, that's not what Jesus is saying here. For certainly the punishment for murdering someone is not the same as the punishment for getting angry at someone. So what Jesus seems to be saying here is that just as murder is something serious, so too is getting angry at someone something serious. But even still what Jesus is saying certainly doesn't sound fair and that's what bothers me.

Now take a look at the next teaching Jesus changes or, better, widens. "You have heard the commandment, 'You shall not commit adultery'. What I say to you is: anyone who looks lustfully at a person has already

committed adultery in his or her thoughts". Though I don't have any statistics to prove it, I do believe that this commandment against adultery is much more difficult to keep than the commandment against murder. That is to say, it's very probably true that in this world of ours there are many more adulterers than there are murderers. Yet what does Jesus do with this already difficult commandment? He makes it even more difficult. Not only does the word "adultery" mean what it means, Jesus now says that by looking lustfully at someone else we can be guilty of committing adultery in our minds. And that boils down to saying that not only is committing adultery bad, even thinking about committing adultery is bad. And so Jesus is making the burden of living right even more difficult, even more burdensome. And that's why, if ever given the chance, this is one of those statements I would drop out of the gospels. After all, didn't Jesus somewhere in the gospel pages call the scribes and the Pharisees on the carpet for adding extra burdens to peoples' already heavy burdens without lifting a finger to help them (Mt.23:4; Lk.11:46)? That seems to be what Jesus himself is doing in today's Gospel selection.

And yet, though I hate to admit it, there is a very valid type of reasoning going on in these passages. Let me explain. If I want to avoid murdering someone, the best thing I can do is to avoid any and all things which might lead me to murder. What sort of things should I avoid? Getting angry with that person. Using abusive language against that person. Allowing my heart and mind to fill up with hatred for that person. For by getting angry, by using abusive language, by feeling nothing but contempt for that person, I allow myself to see that person as less valuable, as less worthy and therefore as more expendable, more "murderable", if there is such a word. (And there must be, since I just used it.) Anger and abusive language and contempt cloud my vision, eat away at my resistance and open up to me the possibility of doing something I would not normally do. And if I have this correct,

most murders are acts of passion. People kill when in a fit of anger. People kill when insulted. People kill when they are full of contempt for people. Therefore, Jesus' advice seems to be quite good. If we work hard at not getting angry, at not using abusive language, at not allowing contempt to fill our hearts and minds, then most likely we will not murder. Make getting angry, using abusive language, and feeling contempt something very serious, and the murder rate will go down. Therefore, just as murder is something serious, so too is getting angry, is using abusive language, is feeling hate, for all make us liable to judgment, so Jesus says. And it's important for us to pay attention to what Jesus says.

And what about equating adultery with lustfully looking at another person? It's the same logic at work here as in Jesus'

**“This change for the better begins with each one of us here. It's hard to believe that what you and I do in these matters can and will have an effect...”**

restrictions about getting angry, using abusive language and avoiding contempt. If I don't want to commit adultery, then I need to keep my mind away from entertaining thoughts that can lead me to adultery. That means that I don't purposefully spend my time watching, reading, listening to materials that accept adultery as a natural and unavoidable part of everyday life; materials that promote extramarital affairs as liberating and self-fulfilling, materials that are so heavily sexual that they in fact offer sex, all sex, and nothing but sex.

But avoiding adultery and avoiding adulterous thoughts do not by themselves help people to be faithful to their spouses. Well then, what does promote such marital fidelity? Reading, watching, and listening to materials that actively promote a solidly Christian approach to the holiness of marriage. By being with people whose ideas about marital fidelity are deeply rooted in the teachings of Jesus. By getting involved in programs that can strengthen weak or dying marriages; programs that can help new marriages to grow; programs that can reinvigorate older marriages and programs that help engaged couples prepare to live good Christian marriages.

As Monika Hellwig, a modern woman theologian, has written about today's gospel passage:

The beginning of violence and destruction is not murder but all the many ways of putting [other people] down, of hurting, excluding or despising another, of holding grudges and [being unwilling] to discuss [the] problems [with which we live]. Likewise, personal insecurity and the breakdown of families come about not only through sensational adulteries but through every lack of serious commitment and [by every lack of] enduring fidelity in personal relationships. The lustful eye that sees another [person] as less than [a] person, [that sees an individual only] as [an] instrument for [one's] pleasure, [for one's] profit or [for] one's own advancement, [that lustful eye] is at odds with the reality [and the demands] of the Reign of God.

We live in a world where the number of murders committed each day is probably both unknown and unknowable. We live in a world where strong, dedicated marriages seem to be fewer and fewer. And we live in a world where it seems easier and easier to throw in the towel, to give up the ship,

to go with the flow and to see all of Jesus' teachings as basically unattainable and, therefore, as basically useless. However, in spite of all that seems to be against us, such a reading as today's gospel can give us hope, can give us help. For it tells us what we as individuals can try to do to help our world. By learning to control our own anger, our own use of abusive language, our own contempt for others, we are not only making ourselves better, holier people, we are also adding goodness to our families, our campus,

**“When we live as we should, then we are doing God’s work, work which God and only God will bring to a happy and blessed conclusion.”**

our country and to our world. By learning to strengthen and deepen our respect for lasting marriages, and by refusing to allow our sexual urges to control our lives and the lives of others, we are not only making ourselves better and holier, we are also doing the same to our families, our campus, our country, and our world. And this change for the better begins with each one of us here. It's hard to believe that what you and I do in these matters can and will have an effect on the campus, on the country, on the world in which we live. But when we live as we should, then we are doing God's work, work which God and only God will bring to a happy and a blessed conclusion. God, of course, could do it all alone, but for some unfathomable reason God, through Jesus, asks us to help. So each day God gives us here on earth may we use that day well, for God's sake and for our own.

# Does the Church Seek the Truth? Is it on the Right Track?

## The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth;  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God,*

*the Father almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.  
Amen.*

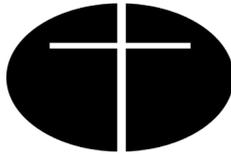


# Brevity

DR. ERIC CUNNINGHAM

The Church does address and seek Truth. As to whether it's on the right path, I think the Church, according to Christ's promise, IS the right path. Although the historical Church has been prone to many human errors, I think God makes all crooked paths straight. We'll see quite clearly. I'm not sure exactly when, but the historical process was the idiosyncratic detour. The Church, Christ's Body, is the Dao.

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## Why Preserve the Tradition?

FR. JAMES DALLEN

I am approaching this question first as a believer, then as an academician. As a believer, it's because I see it as the presence of God in our world and in our history. When I taught full-time, a course I taught every semester was an undergraduate course on Catholicism; a course I taught every-other year was a graduate course in ecclesiology (Theology of the Church). I would give the same kind of emphasis there, that we experience the presence in action of the Triune God shaping and forming the communion that we call "Church."

I always used an example from Jaroslav Pelikan, who is a Lutheran church historian, when we talked about tradition. I always use his distinction of capital "T" and small "t" tradition. "Tradition" with a capital "T" is the living faith of the dead; "tradition" with a small "t" is the dead faith of the living. Tradition can be something alive, or

it can simply be a dead routine. And the "traditions" can sometimes be dead and weaken the "Tradition." So, the Church's value, as a believer, is the presence in action of God.

As an academician, even apart from faith, I see the Christian tradition as preserving certain very basic values. Fr. John Mossy, who is a Jesuit in our department, and I are mostly responsible for putting together this set of values, though we did it while the Catholic Studies program at Gonzaga was in its planning stages, and there were committees for each discipline within the program. We discussed the basic characteristics of Catholicism and the things that ought to be emphasized in a Catholic Studies program. Out of that discussion, as I recall, John and I sort of tried to pull it all together, and we identified six basic characteristics all of which would apply:

### (1) *Sacramentality:*

A sacramental perspective “sees” the divine in the human, the infinite in the finite, the spiritual in the material, the transcendent in the immanent, the eternal in the historical. For Catholicism, reality is sacred.

### (2) *Universality:*

Catholicism is universal and inclusive; i.e., radically open to all truth, cultures, peoples, nations, times. It is neither a sect nor a schismatic entity, nor inextricably linked with the culture of a particular region of the world.

### (3) *Unfolding Tradition:*

Catholicism continually reflects upon scripture, its own corporate life and teachings, creeds, history, liturgy – human and Christian experience in all its forms. The Catholic tradition is dynamic; i.e., open to the development of doctrine and correctives in the light of new information.

### (4) *Faith Seeking Understanding:*

Catholicism respects and emphasizes the role of reason in understanding and expressing Christian faith. Catholicism reciprocally engages the contributions of humanism, sciences, and philosophy applied to the data of faith in order to understand better, appropriate, and implement the tradition.

### (5) *Structured Community of Faith:*

Catholicism is, first and foremost, a community of faith. It is also a structured community with designated offices of leadership: pope, bishops, priests, deacons, and laity, who exercise various responsibilities from administration to liturgical ministry.

### (6) *Conversion and Responsibility:*

Catholicism is a twofold invitation to personal holiness in imitation of Jesus and the gospels and to a communal faith that does justice. In these ways Catholicism expects personal, ecclesial, and societal reforms and transformations.

# Why is Catholicism Worth It?

FR. TIM CLANCY, S.J.

*Interview*

**H**aving religion in your life is a practice. It’s like playing an instrument: if you’re not involved in the practice, if you can only look at it from an outsider’s point of view, it may be kind of mystifying as to what the point is. You see, I don’t play a musical instrument, so I don’t know what the rewards are of playing a musical instrument. People can tell me what they are, to the extent that they can communicate them, but I don’t have an insider appreciation. I have a classic example to illustrate this: I did my doctoral

“If you love God and you don’t love your neighbor, you’re a hypocrite.”

studies in Chicago, and I knew the Chicago symphony was one of the great world orchestras, and I said, “Tim, you owe it to yourself to go to a symphony while you’re here.” And I did. It was Mahler’s 8th symphony, which has this huge chorus, and I guess it’s a very complicated symphony. I paid twenty bucks to go, and at the end everyone was on their feet shouting “Bravo!” and clapping like crazy, but all I could think was, “For half the price, I could have gotten the CD and I’d have the music forever.”

Now, there is something I didn’t get. I

couldn't appreciate the added value of a live performance and my honors kids who are in music could tell me that I could gain an appreciation but it would take time. I'd have to develop an ear and I'd have to know what to listen for, but I am just not that interested. Now, am I missing out? Probably.

**“You cannot read every good Catholic theologian or every good Catholic mystic, there’s just too many of them. You can’t read everything there is to know about the New Testament – it just can’t be done. So there’s this inexhaustible richness there.”**

But, I'm still not that interested. And I see religion in very similar terms. If you're not engaged in the practice of religion, if you've only gotten an outsiders point of view on it, or, if you practice religion and then you walk away from it for whatever reason, then your insider practice becomes frozen. So, you might end up in your fifties with a high school understanding of Catholicism, or a high school appreciation for Catholicism. It wouldn't be a mature adult appreciation because you haven't been religious as an adult. So the key question, "is it worth it?" I think the only real response you can give to somebody is, "Try it and you'll like it." I can try to communicate what I think makes it valuable, but, of course, I might not articulate it very well, and it might be

like these poor people trying to explain to me how much richer my life would be if I appreciated classical music.

*Why Catholicism over Protestantism?*

I grew up with Catholicism, so I think it's very important. I think you lose something if you convert away from the religion you were raised in, because a lot of the power of religiosity and piety isn't verba, its more ritual. If those rituals go way back in your life, then they've got roots that you can return to in times of struggle or anxiety or despair. You can go back to those early familiar roots that are the base of your being, almost like the "Our Father," and the Hail Mary.

if I converted to Buddhism I would be starting at fifty, and I wouldn't have that whole history of my life and my identity intertwined with it. I was never in the situation of Descartes, where I said I am going to suspend belief in everything and see what I can prove. If you think of my mother as Catholic, I have been Catholic since before I was born. The question then isn't whether to be Catholic, the question is whether to invest myself in that part of who I am, or whether I need to get out of Catholicism. It's almost like, "should I change my religion?" "Should I convert?" Catholicism is the base line. That's who I am. I mean I am critical, the way any family member is critical of their family, but I have never had a reason to run away from home.

What I find powerful about Catholicism is its rich history and its inexhaustible history. You cannot read every good Catholic theologian or every good Catholic mystic, there's just too many of them. You can't read everything there is to know about the New Testament- it just can't be done. So there's this inexhaustible richness there. And I have to put up with these things I don't agree with, which I do, but the payoff is I also learn things I never would have come up with on my own. I win on those payoffs. I get more out of Catholicism than it costs me to remain true to Catholicism.

# The Challenge of Catholicism

FR. MICHAEL  
W. MAHER, S.J.

In 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Greece, a philosopher by the name of Parmenides thought for a bit, then thought some more, and then came up with an interesting conclusion: everything is, but everything is different. Parmenides realized that we use the word “to be” to designate everything that has existence but everything exists in a different way. Parmenides raised the question which identified the commonality of being and its individual manifestation. In doing so he inaugurated the beginning of the entire philosophical endeavor since it marked humanity’s attempt to discern the relationship between multiplicity and unity, the association between the particular and the universal. I mention this episode in the history of philosophy because it has something to say about our understanding of Catholicism and the struggles in which that same Catholicism has found itself for the last 2 millennia. How do we recognize Catholicism amidst the multiplicity of its expressions, what is “essential” Catholicism if in fact can we come to a satisfying response to that question? To illustrate an inherent struggle within Catholicism we may examine the following quote:

Do not act with zeal, do not put forward any arguments to convince these people to change their rites, their customs, or their usages, except if they are evidently contrary to religion and morality. What would be more absurd than

So, it is like a family in that sense. It’s not like I’m uncritical, but overall there’s no place I’d rather be. If I’d been born a Buddhist would I be a devout Buddhist? I would hope so. But I was born Catholic.

*Does that lead to religious relativism?*

Well, it leads to religious pluralism. It doesn’t lead to relativism in the sense that a mature religiosity needs to be self-critical. There are forms of religion that don’t sustain a life. I would like to think if I was born into Scientology, I would grow out of it. I don’t think you grow out of Buddhism or Lutheranism. To me, a big indicator that

“Try [Catholicism]  
and you’ll like it.”

a religion is worth something is its life span. If something has sustained generations and generations of holy people, who am I to say it’s probably wrong? But on the other hand, Jim Jones giving everybody cool aid or waiting for the space people to come and take us, I don’t see any reason why I should give that a lot of credibility or respect. I can respect the people and their longing for something more, but I don’t respect their beliefs as having much value. And they could actually be self-destructive. So it’s not an “anything goes relativism,” but there’s more than one way. The way I like to think of that is like personality. There are good personalities and bad personalities, but that doesn’t mean there’s a perfect personality that everyone should emulate.

*What about Plato and the forms?*

I am a big fan of Plato. It’s kind of like feeling more real in this tradition, because this tradition has such heft and such richness to it. The more I can find my place in this tradition the more real I feel.

*[For a partial commentary on Fr. Clancy’s response, see Matt Patterson’s essay on page 47.]*

to bring France, Spain, Italy or any other European country to the Chinese? Do not bring to them our countries, but instead bring them to the faith, a faith that does not reject or hurt the rites, nor the usages of any people, provided that these are not distasteful, but that instead keeps and protects them.

This quote has a ring of modernity to it and some may even think it came hot from the press of the Second Vatican Council. It may surprise some to realize that this instruction was given in 1659 to members of the French Foreign Mission Society by the Congregation for the Propagation of

**“Those who presume Catholicism has not undergone various cultural expressions probably did not do well in history class.”**

the Faith. The presentation of Catholicism in China by a group of French missionaries created the need for guidance, especially amidst conversation concerning the incorporation of Chinese practices which some deemed as social and not reflecting a religious nature. Much more could be said about the Chinese Rites Controversy (and I would be glad to oblige on this point) but we may for now examine this instruction and identify two important aspects about Catholicism which the Propaganda saw as important. First, that there was a Catholic faith and that this faith could be known and shared and that it is the same faith in various cultures and expressions. Second, that the Catholic faith is articulated in various ways and that local expressions which may assist in the acceptance of the faith in one location

may not work in another. The basic issue of the Chinese Rites question was simple: Did the introduction of indigenous practice and custom so localize the religious expression that it no longer bore a resemblance to Catholicism or did the acceptance of local practice and customs make Catholicism both understandable and attractive?

The instruction of the *Propaganda Fide* points to the challenge which Catholicism has faced through the centuries. We understand Catholicism both as a religion and as a term designated by a small “c” which identifies the word as “universal.” But, as Parmenides pointed out, we can only know the universal in light of the particular. If we modify Catholicism by an adjective do we destroy its character of universality? If Catholicism is not modified or understood within a cultural context does it cease to be known by a specific culture and hence rendered ineffectual or incomprehensible? This, I would argue, is the challenge Catholicism faces today. How do we identify an essential Catholicism which maintains and enables us to use it as a universal term which facilitates common (*koine* in Greek) participation but at the same time creates an understanding which enables us to recognize it within our own time and place? Those who say the search for an essential Catholicism is irrelevant or hopeless because of its varied manifestations should recall that a similar search occurs in science, health care and our overall desire for the truth. Those who presume Catholicism has not undergone various cultural expressions probably did not do well in history class.

Among the Christian religions this struggle between the particular expression of the divine in specific time and place and unchanging truth occurs the most in Catholicism. Catholicism has defended throughout the centuries the reality of the sacraments as expressions of the divine and unchanging presence of God

in the very midst of our lives in specific ritual actions conditioned by culture. The paradigmatic sacrament, the one in which all the other sacraments derive the fullness of their meaning, is the Eucharist. The Eucharist, as the Catholic Church teaches, is the presence of Jesus Christ, humanity and divinity, under the appearance of a piece of bread. The Eucharist stands as the miraculous intersection of created and uncreated, of divine and material. So radical was this notion that many protestant reformers, such as Zwingli and Calvin, gave the concept of the Real Presence a headlong pitch out the window of the edifice of their theological constructs. It just did not make sense to them since the Eucharist presumed the correlation and coexistence of opposing natures: material and immaterial, temporal and eternal, caused and uncaused. But for Catholics who lived, and died, for this reality, this sacrament expressed what was fundamental about their faith: a universal reality in a particular circumstance.

The struggle for Catholics yesterday, today, and no doubt in the future, has and will be the desire to resolve the tension which exists in attempting to articulate a meaningful universal within the context of a particular setting. Ignatius of Loyola, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, felt this struggle keenly. He knew that God worked through individual souls in individual ways and that the mystery of God's presence occurs, as did the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, within a specific time and place. This concern for the relationship between the action of God on and with an individual soul may be found in the *Spiritual Exercises*:

That both the giver and the receiver of the Spiritual Exercises may be of greater help and benefit to each other, it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on

a neighbors statement than to condemn it. Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If that meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; and if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved. (paragraph 22)

Likewise Ignatius of Loyola considered the hierarchy of the Church as receiving from Christ himself the ministry of preserving the universality of its message and the obligation to sustain that same church from error. The concern for clarifying the correct relationship between the individual and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church may be found in the in the *Spiritual Exercises* as well:

With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy mother the hierarchical Church. (paragraph 353)

Lastly, we should praise all the precepts of the Church, while keeping our mind ready to look for reasons for defending them and not for attacking them in any way. (paragraph 361)

To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it. For we believe that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, his Spouse, there is the one same Spirit who governs and guides us for the salvation of our souls.

(paragraph 365)

A relationship exists within the Spiritual Exercises between the respect for the particular as experienced by the individual and the obligation of the individual to follow the the universal as articulated by the hierarchy. One means by which the Jesuits achieved a balance in this relationship, or at least strived to create it, were their classes in casuistry, especially those held in

**“It is my experience that the middle of the road is a very crowded place.”**

the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Casuistry got a black eye because some perceived it as a *Jesuitical* approach which advanced the means to ignore or slip through Church or civil law. Actually, casuistry fostered the delicate elliptical orbit made by an individual between the two foci of informed conscience and the edicts of Church and/or civil law. The most important aspect of casuistry was the discussion which ensued concerning the fundamental values of these two foci and how both laid legitimate claim to the individual. The gravity which held the whole business together (though it must be admitted that the Jesuits did not explain the laws of gravity) and kept a conscience from flying out to one extreme or the other was the presence of God, in both conscience and in law, and it was that same God who kept in balance free will and grace.

So how do we resolve such pressing issues as whether the University is Catholic or not, whether Lysistrata should have been performed, or whether we should have crucifixes in the classroom or meat on Fridays during lent in the lunchroom? It is my experience that the middle of the intellectual road is a very crowded

place since most people have identified it as the address of their theological and academic positions. Since we all seem to claim the same general space perhaps some suggestions on how to foster the conversation among all the neighbors would be of assistance. These suggestions are shamelessly stolen from the writings of Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and several others of their ilk.

The search for truth concerning Catholicism and its practice must be done, particularly by Catholics, with a sincere love, respect and desire to follow the Holy Spirit as it is expressed in hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The saints were well aware of the frailty of the hierarchy but nevertheless saw in this hierarchy the physical manifestation of Christ’s care for the church. This love and respect for the hierarchy and the role it plays in articulating our common Catholic experience was reiterated by the Society of Jesus in its most recent general congregations.

The search for truth concerning Catholicism and its practice must be done with a sincere respect for individuals and their experiences, men and women who likewise serve as voices for the Holy Spirit. And here we must be attentive to the poor, since our Lord has called them blessed. We must listen to the lonely, the outcast, the addicted, the broken because they are images of God and perhaps closer to the image of our crucified Lord. Sinfulness may have marred our resemblance to the divine but because of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus what was lost has been returned. This search for truth should also involve the insights concerning the Divine which other religious traditions have to offer. This love and respect for the poor and the role they play in articulating our common Catholic experience as well as the necessity to enter into conversation with other faith traditions was reiterated

by the Society of Jesus in its most recent general congregations.

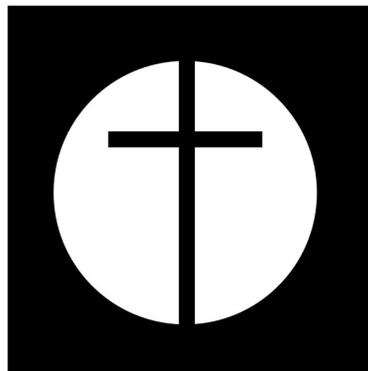
The astute reader will note that I have provided no clear recommendations for resolving conflict when it occurs and when one set of norms pits itself against the other. Law and freedom, commandment and conscience, choice and rule seem to be as opposed as material and immaterial, temporal and eternal, caused and uncaused. Yet we have seen these opposites united in the mystery we call the Eucharist and we identify this mystery as the cornerstone of the Catholic faith.

**“Tensions have characterized the Church concerning the dialog between its universal character and its particular expression.”**

Tensions have characterized the Church concerning the dialog between its universal character and its particular expression. The conversations which have occurred (some quite lively) to resolve these tensions have resulted in the articulations and definitions of Catholicism’s most firmly held beliefs. This conversation usually bears good fruit, even though the growing season may be long, difficult, and result in the presence of a certain amount of fertilizer.

But if conversation bears fruit, lack of conversation will keep food from the table. Ignoring the need for serious conversation about Catholic identity has as its counterpart at a Catholic University the choice of ignoring one’s health. Some institutions need not have this conversation or concern since their identity comes from other sources. But as long as Gonzaga

University claims to be an institution which identifies itself as Catholic and Jesuit, avoidance of a serious conversation about the nature and implementation of our Catholicism which involves all appropriate constituencies would question our fundamental identity which values academic standards and honest and open investigation. The search for articulating our Catholic identity is no different from the search we all undertake to create a deeper appreciation and knowledge of our own disciplines. The desire among most, I presume, is to continue the conversation in an honest, thorough, and searching manner so as to move towards the discovery of universal truths in our particular setting of Gonzaga University which considers itself both Jesuit and Catholic.



# The Abridged History of Catholicism

JULIAN LACASSE

In the beginning,  
He was the savior of all men  
He died for our sins  
He was a miracle worker  
He led a definitively moral life  
He was the Son of God

Then,  
He was an excuse to crusade  
He was a vendetta against Jews and Muslims  
He was the billions in the Vatican Bank  
He was the import of “civilization”  
He was the thirst for power in the religious  
hierarchy

Now,  
He is outdated and chauvinistic  
He is a boring Sunday obligation  
He is multiple cases of homosexual molestation  
He is a car with a bulletproof glass dome  
He is a bad Ke\$ha lyric



# Is the Church Able to Address Modernity?

## “A Dictatorship of Relativism”

Homily *of former* Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,  
*now* Pope Benedict XVI

... We should speak of the “measure of the fullness of Christ” that we are called to attain if we are to be true adults in the faith. We must not remain children in faith, in the condition of minors. And what does it mean to be children in faith? St Paul answers: it means being “tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4: 14). This description is very timely!

How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves - flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth. Every day new sects spring up, and what St Paul says about human deception and the trickery that strives to entice people into error (cf. Eph 4: 14) comes true.

Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be “tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine,” seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.

We, however, have a different goal: the Son of God, the true man. He is the measure of true humanism. An "adult" faith is not a faith that follows the trends of fashion and the latest novelty; a mature adult faith is deeply rooted in friendship with Christ. It is this friendship that opens us up to all that is good and gives us a criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false, and deceit from truth.

We must develop this adult faith; we must guide the flock of Christ to this faith. And it is this faith - only faith - that creates unity and is fulfilled in love.

On this theme, St Paul offers us as a fundamental formula for Christian existence some beautiful words, in contrast to the continual vicissitudes of those who, like children, are tossed about by the waves: make truth in love. Truth and love coincide in Christ. To the extent that we draw close to Christ, in our own lives too, truth and love are blended. Love without truth would be blind; truth without love would be like "a clanging cymbal" (I Cor 13: 1).

Homily of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals, Mass for the Election of the Supreme Pontiff, St. Peter's Basilica, 18 April 2005

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# Thoughts *on the* Gospel According *to* Spielberg

JAMES POWERS

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I like to consider myself a movie geek, although the honest truth is that I am far from having earned such a label. There are tons of classics out there, especially old ones, which I have not yet seen. A special cause of grief to me is the fact that I have yet to see a single Hitchcock film, apart from the last few minutes of *The Birds*. I got pretty close to seeing *Psycho* this one time, but that fell through...long story. Anyway, despite my inadequacies, I really do love movies. Watching them is hands down one of my favorite things to do.

I also like to think of myself as a pretty dedicated Catholic. Again, regardless of my inadequacies, throughout the past few years I really have been coming to love the Catholic faith. But it is a cause for worry sometimes because of those big, scary words that come with it: *moral standards*. Yeek. This bears immediate significance on my enthusiasm for cinema, because I am well aware that a lot of (most?) movies being produced nowadays are varying degrees of lousy - in a moral sense. Sometimes, after watching a string of previews "approved for appropriate audiences", I can just feel the desensitization trickling into my skull, and it's not a good feeling. If nothing else, doesn't the explosions-and-women-in-tight-clothing motif start to seem insultingly unoriginal after a while? Like "you seriously think I'll shell out eight bucks for that?"

Except, funny thing is, I probably will.

And yet there are those moments, rare but not too rare, when I'll be watching a movie and start to feel any combination of the following: 1) my eyes bugging out slightly, 2) a goofy grin spreading across my face, 3)

an urge to make some gleeful, undignified noise or 4) my mouth just sort of hanging open a bit. Something like this happened when a friend introduced me to Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. I guess you could call that an aesthetic experience, but whatever it is, it makes me very reluctant to swear off cinema in the name of decency.

What is more, the Church seems to share this reluctance. She sees film as a medium eminently capable of helping us fulfill Paul's exhortation: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."<sup>1</sup> I think this thought is reflected in various pieces of Catholic teaching that deal with film and other elements of culture, teaching that offers film both a real validation and a stern warning.

Before I go into some specifically Catholic thought on this, I'd like to share a complaint that I've had regarding the whole idea of what movies are—hopefully this complaint is germane enough to the topic to not be just a rant. My beef is basically with the word "entertainment," as in, "Oh, come on, it's just a movie; it's just entertainment." That line of reasoning—the regarding of movies, as well as books, music, etc. as "just entertainment"—really ignores the immense impact that pop culture has on us. "Entertainment" is not something we unthinkingly absorb, just for the sake of killing time, and then move on from without having been in any way affected. Ideally it is a diversion that uplifts and refreshes us, giving us a break from the daily grind. Sometimes it is just a waste of time. Never does it ping off of us without impact.

And so a movie is never "just a movie." However brainless a summer shoot-'em-up may seem, it is telling you (the audience) something; it is feeding you a message.

To use an interdisciplinary buzzword that you're probably getting sick of, it is contributing its own little piece to the "narratives" weaving through our culture. That is what film does: as a storytelling medium it tells a story that reflects the values and ideas of the one telling it, and reflects *upon* those of the society in which it appears. I'm pretty sure everyone already knows this, yet we often seem to think that what we take into our brains through our eyes and our ears can just pass through without leaving any footprints. I know I've thought that often enough, and it's simply foolish.

**“Regarding movies, as well as books, music, etc. as “just entertainment” really ignores the immense impact that pop culture has on us.**

**“Entertainment” is not something we unthinkingly absorb.”**

I see film in its storytelling capacity as ideally being a sort of mentee of the Church. Film concerns itself with telling stories: not in the sense of fabricating fictions, but in the sense of giving us narratives in which we see ourselves, our world and even our God, and thereby come to understand all three more clearly. The Church also concerns herself with telling stories, specifically one Story that she passes on through her teaching and tradition: the Gospel, the story of how people are saved because God becomes one of our number. As a Catholic I believe this Story to be the most important of all, and I think the Church encourages us to make use of other stories as reflections and reminders of this Story.

1 Philippians 4:8, New American Bible.

This is true because art—and therefore film—simply consists of various expressions of the human experience. A movie could ostensibly be about aliens, or toys, or even a couple of desk lamps, but ultimately it is really about people. Catholicism is also very much about people: one of the major

**“The Catholic Church... recognizes that humans, while deeply flawed and sinful, are also deeply good by virtue of our being God’s creation.”**

documents of the Second Vatican Council opens with the powerful statement that the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties” of humanity at large are also those of the Church.<sup>2</sup> In his 1999 “Letter to Artists” Pope John Paul II notes that Jesus, as both God and human, is “the central point of reference” by which we understand the human experience.<sup>3</sup> So...if both art and the Church are focused on people—what they do, how they feel, and how they relate to God—and if Jesus is the focal point and standard against which all that messy humanity is measured and understood, then the Gospel is the focal point and standard against which both art and the Church are measured and understood.

This idea is reinforced in another, less well-known Vatican II document. *Inter Mirifica*, a decree concerning the significance of communications media, holds that these

2 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*. Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965. Section 1, paragraph 1.

3 Pope John Paul II, “Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists.” 1999. Sec. 5, par. 1.

media can and do contribute greatly to the overall welfare of the public provided that they are used in accordance with “the plan of the Creator.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, they meet their potential most when they take the Gospel as their point of reference.

However, this accordance does not mean explicitly Christian messages or themes, but rather the implicit harmony of those themes with the moral code that governs humanity as a dignified creation of God. Nor does this, in turn, mean that movies or any other media must deal exclusively with positive or inspiring situations: the depiction of evil can, when used tastefully, reinforce “the grand dimensions of truth and goodness.”<sup>5</sup> From a Catholic perspective, then, the presence of such things as nudity, violence or profanity in a film by no means prevents it from being a good film. “Decency” does not mean a bleeping out of all the potty talk, but rather an overall reinforcement of the moral code that the Church holds and proclaims.

At the same time, the presentation of evil must be subjected to “moral restraint.”<sup>6</sup> How many of us have images in our heads, put there by Hollywood, that we really would rather not have? The fact remains that although it puts out some real gems, the film industry does not have a well-developed sense of this restraint. For example: I’m not one to pan an entire genre, and you can feel free to disagree with me, but I am pretty convinced that there is very little redemptive value in slasher films as a category. The violence of those films is clearly unrestrained; it could even be that it is the polar opposite of restrained, being in fact the driving force behind those films.

Most other films, however, are generally more ambiguous in the morality of both their depictions of evil and their overall

4 Decree on the Media of Social Communications, *Inter Mirifica*. Pope Paul VI, December 4, 1963. Sec. 1.

5 *Ibid.* sec. 6, 7.

6 *Ibid.* sec. 7

theme, and therefore often cannot be entirely condemned or praised. Steven Greydanus, film critic for the *National Catholic Register*, treats all the movies he reviews from this perspective, acknowledging the admixture of positive and negative elements in most films and the consequent need to view them with an eye for these nuances. He is taking his cue from *Inter Mirifica*, which states that those of us who take in what the media offers should do our best to understand and pass informed judgment upon it.<sup>7</sup> “Like all things human,” he notes, “films and other works of art and culture are subject to limitations, imperfections, and flaws. Some are so flawed that they are unwholesome and should be avoided. But a thing can be basi-

**“We should ask ourselves, ‘What story is this movie telling me, and how does it interact with my own story?’”**

cally wholesome without necessarily being perfect.”<sup>8</sup> This comes in response to the alarmist views of many Christians and even some Catholic Christians, who find the “unwholesome” elements of pop culture to be justification for avoiding its influence as much as possible.

The fact is that the Catholic Church does not view humanity and its culture in such stark terms. She recognizes that humans, while deeply flawed and sinful, are also deeply good by virtue of our being God’s creation. The things we create—our films, books, art, music—feature the same mixture of good and bad, and so to think that

one can uncritically accept *or* reject them is naïve. As John Paul II pointed out, the center and summit of the Christian experience is Jesus, and so it is only fitting that a Christian culture should find its central standard in the Gospel. The Church doesn’t find that our application of that standard is rendered impossible by our living in a so-called “post-Christian” era; if anything, its thoughtful and critical use is even more important.

Regardless of whether or not you are Catholic, you hopefully have some code of ideals that you attempt to live by, however imperfectly. That code is extremely important to apply even to your downtime, even to the entertainment that you take in—and if it is applied, I bet you’ll find yourself with fewer regrets after leaving the River Park Square AMC. We should ask ourselves, “What story is this movie telling me, and how does it interact with my own story?” For Catholics, this question is somewhat simplified: the story to measure all others against is, in a nutshell, that of Jesus.

7        Ibid. 10

8        Greydanus, Steven. “What Are the Decent Films?” <http://www.decentfilms.com/articles/decentfilms.html>.



# Wallace, Where God Lives in Silver

MICHAEL GRAY

Say you found God here,  
stashed in mortar between  
cracked ice on frozen concrete steps  
below a punched-through sign filled  
with wind and falling snow. Or  
in ore chunks and antique tools  
and the old rail depot, its tracks  
consumed in road,  
that summons tourists to roam bordello  
rooms.

Here is silver. Here it bleeds.  
More fish sicken, gills swelled, filling  
the Coeur d'Alene, and burn  
birds' lungs with metal silt.  
You prefer another town,  
some other streets.

Spokane, maybe, where city buses run  
past  
eight, and snowplows crumble new  
flakes. Freight trains echo, rumbling  
by old snow crusts like dying  
embers or dirty streaks of God flung  
like ore in pans. He's found in gritty  
silt, or Geiger runways, inhaled  
by waiting Bombardiers. In Wallace,

St. Ignatius contemplates  
by the basketball hoop, under I-90's  
passing trucks. He might think  
of silver. Mine for chunks. Veins  
of cars and piled cairns of ice still  
hum, holy as spun earth.

# Renouncing Modernity, Embracing the Church

*From The Daily Dish*

ANDREW SULLIVAN

**T**here is no denying that religion, and the Catholic Church in particular, has inspired and fostered many wonderful people. I think of Peter, humble and contrite and transformed after his denial; Mary Magdalen, of whom nothing need be said; the fathers of the Egyptian desert and their almost unbearable kindness and gentleness; Francis of Assisi and his Lady Poverty; Francis de Sales, who found a way to be both a prelate and a saint; and in our own times, Dorothy Day, who practiced a Christianity as radical as Christ's own, while remaining a faithful daughter of the Church. And I say nothing of the countless mute, inglorious saints whom only God knows.

But the Church as an institution is mired in the world to its own great detriment. The worst thing that ever happened to it was Constantine's conversion and its consequent establishment. For the Church itself should have remained a pilgrim. No cathedrals and episcopal palaces. No mitres, croziers, and gorgeous vestments. No princes of the Church. Just plain men and women going out to find and care for lost sheep, the wisest among them showing the way by example and quiet counsel.

It might have gone that way. It could yet. But the need to overawe people and demand obedience from them is powerful and seductive. It is a part of that world that the kingdom of heaven is not of.

.....

*Excerpt from* **Mere Christianity**  
C.S. LEWIS

"The great difficulty is to get modern audiences to realize that you are preaching Christianity solely and simply because you happen to think it true; they always suppose you are preaching it because you like it or think it good for society or something of that sort. Now a clearly maintained distinction between what the Faith actually says and what you would like it to have said or what you understand or what you personally find helpful or think probable, forces your audience to realize that you are tied to your data just as the scientist is tied by the results of the experiments; that you are not just saying what you like. This immediately helps them realize that what is being discussed is a question about objective fact — not gas about ideals and points of view."

# Brevity II

DR. ERIC CUNNINGHAM

The Church is the only thing that can properly address modernity—if only it would give up its destructive infatuation with modern materialism, and return to the ground of Spiritual reality, we'd all be able to address modernity a good deal more creatively.



## Things vs. Values

FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

*Interview*

The church recognizes modernity as a problem, but it's an individual problem. It's age-old in the sense that the problem is always there. At the present time, it's more intense because there's no recourse that a young person has, because you are always surrounded by another distraction. It's much more difficult than years ago. The tendencies are always there. People misbehaved or whatever you want to call it. Even in the "good old days." But it seems it's much more difficult now because of the sex-saturated society in which we live.

There is an obsession with material goods as opposed to spiritual goods. The church has always had to confront that. That's a very old story. But again, to present that is to present the spiritual values as real goals and values in

themselves. I think young people do accept that. I think they are very inclined to realize that. We are such a materialistic society that even young people ask, "when is enough enough?" If we were in a society that didn't have anything, we might be even more obsessed with materials than we are. I think that's not uncommon to see people that come from poor cultures or impoverished societies as much greedier and much more obsessed with possession of things. And those of us that

**"Materialism is an obsession with material things as opposed to spiritual values."**

have too much can at least recognize it as too much. Materialism is an obsession with material things as opposed to spiritual values; young people understand that we have so much that we are now to a point of saying enough is enough. It's a whole movement of shedding stuff and trying to get by with much less - smaller homes, less stuff.

# Concerning the Magisterium, Obedience, & Hierarchy

**C**hrist is himself the source of ministry in the Church. He instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal:

*In order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body. The holders of office, who are invested with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interests of their brethren, so that all who belong to the People of God . . . may attain to salvation.*

*The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. “The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.” This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.*

*The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.” “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.”*

*“The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, as its head.” As such, this college has “supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff.”*

- From *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Why the Ecclesial Ministry?” “The Episcopal College and its Head, the Pope” (nos. 874, 881-883).

# “Teaching Authority”

FR. C. HIGHTOWER

*Interview*

The appeal to the authority is interesting because we have to put ourselves outside the American context. We, as Americans, are English precedent so we look at judgments, right and wrong, even when there's a judgment made, we always go of an earlier judgment because that's the way our legal system works. But most of the world is tribunal, Trinity, Father-Son-Holy Spirit; it doesn't mean there's going to be three interpretations, but there's the possibility of three interpretations so what God has said and how God's word is received by people is certainly very different today than it was 200 hundred years ago, than it was 400 years ago. There are different attitudes, different questions, different cultures, and experiences - both philosophically and theologically. So, it's not an appeal to authority to tell us what to do but the authority of the Magisterium is the teaching authority; not all opinions are correct. This is a process of looking at how God has been involved throughout history, which is what we call Hebrew scripture: how God was made manifest in the person of Christ, which is the New Testament, the gospels and then how God is made manifest through the Holy Spirit, the daily activity of our lives, and the reality, which is the last two thousand years of history. All those have to be played a part of our prayer life before we make decisions. So, the authority is tribunal, it's not singular which is very different for a lot of people.

Liberty does not come into conflict with the vows of allegiance to the Magisterium because the Magisterium simply means

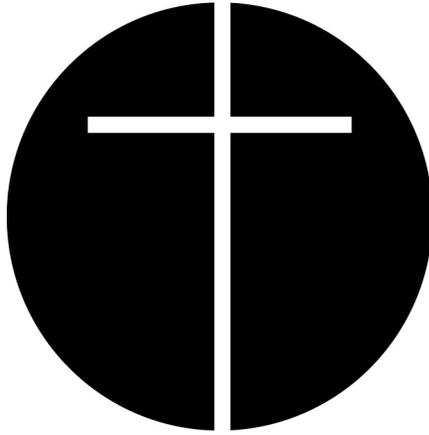
“teaching and authority,” it's not a set of rules. That's the way Americans look at it. What I'm trying to say is that that's not what it is. The Magesterium is a teaching authority. The highest moral good in the Roman Catholic Church is to follow your own conscience. That is what it always has been, and that is what it always will be. The catch-22 to use that kind of teaching is that your conscience has to be well formed. That's what we are trying to do here at Gonzaga, is form your conscience in a way where you can make those decisions openly and honestly grounded in the love of

“The Magisterium means “teaching and authority;” it's not a set of rules...The highest moral good in the Catholic Church is to follow your own conscience.”

God, about what is going to help humanity. Being intellectually competent when you graduate from here is the minimum. You can go become a great accountant, you can go become a great teacher, and become a great engineer at a lot of institutions. But becoming an accountant and making financial decisions with the lens of how it affects the least of your brothers and sisters; making buildings and structures and water purification systems as an engineer with the goal of becoming somewhat wealthy - that's part of it sure, - but also how it's going to help heal, how it's going to help save and protect. How do you educate fairly and honestly, grounded in love, rather than plodding through a nine to five job, without feeling? That's what we are trying to do. We are trying to give people the ability to love, because they know that they have been loved; we are trying to use their ability to do that fairly and honestly.

# On Obedience

SR. MARY EUCHARISTA



Obedience is a frequently misunderstood virtue, probably as much as humility is. Obedience doesn't mean to stop thinking and blindly do. "To obey" comes from the Latin, *oboedire* - to listen, to hear, to pay attention to, to give ear, etc. One maintains dignity by obeying because it implies listening, discerning, sometimes dialoguing with authority, and also giving assent. It is virtuous to obey legitimate authority because it is not always easy and requires thinking, since human beings are not automatons. Can one just do as one is told or follow a law because it is a law? Yes, but it would not always be virtue; sometimes it is just easier. If one does what is right, but asks questions when one is in doubt, this is sometimes more virtuous.

Obedience is a path of growth where the freedom of the person allows for the acceptance of a plan or will different from one's own. A Christian and a religious are both called to be like Christ, an obedient being. Pope Paul VI said in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio*, that we should be drawn to obedience in the same way that Christ was drawn to the folly of the Cross so that we may be fools for Christ, as St. Paul said, so that the foolishness of Christ would make us wise.

Also, women religious, by their vow of obedience, are called to *sentire cum Ecclesia*, to sense with the Church, exhibiting communion with their bishop and the Pope, the center of unity in the Church. Consecrated persons owe confident, intelligent, informed obedience in virtue of the vow itself. One of the more recent documents coming out from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life called, *The Service of Authority and Obedience* says that the "primary mission of the consecrated person" is to be a witness to the freedom of the children of God modeled on Christ "so that we may form our lives on Him, the new and perfectly free man." Obedience frees one from egocentrism and ethnocentrism and involves a plurality of perspectives in the group. Listening on both the part of the superior and the community member promotes community of ideas and positive contribution. We do this in community life where we can listen and be listened to by the superior in dialogue, sharing co-responsibility in the spirit of Gospel living.

# Radical Obedience

KEVIN O'TOOLE

Ask me about Catholicism, and I'll stutter. I'm not doing a Colin Firth impersonation; I'm just floundering. One might suspect that a Catholic, Jesuit college education prepares a student for the rigors of a defense of faith. I'm here to argue that that assumption is largely incorrect. It's not that I haven't tried. I've taken my fair share of religion courses; I've been on University Ministry retreats; I go to Mass at the Student Chapel; I talk to the Jesuits when I can find them.

Sometimes it's strange being a Gonzaga Catholic. I've heard more than one tenured professor proclaim this place to be little more than a private, liberal arts college with a severely misplaced penchant for volunteering and community service. I've heard a faculty member disavow the majority of this campus' Jesuit population as heretical. And then I've listened to others glowingly praise the Religious Studies faculty. I've listened to students profess newfound faith in the Church through what they've learned here. In testimony to that, I recently watched twenty-five peers stand in front of a packed congregation in the Student Chapel and begin the Confirmation process. So which is it? The less-than-helpful "Too Catholic or not Catholic Enough?" seminar, by its very title, suggests a severe disconnect from this university's roots. Goddamn it, Gonzaga, I'm thoroughly confused.

In the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas writes that overcoming our evil passions is possible only through the implementation of a more powerful Good passion. Peter Kreeft has written that the Beauty of a bloody Christ on the Cross is

enough to overcome the lust for the forbidden love of a beautiful woman and that the sobriety of a saint can be the focal point and meditative image for a recovering alcoholic.<sup>1</sup> Well that's just dandy. How can I arrive at where they are? If God is so simple, and if Ignatius created the Society of Jesus' university system distinctly for the purpose of identifying God in the world through rational thought, how is it that I'm a senior here at Gonzaga and pretty much still at faith's square one? Why hasn't Gonzaga organically, by means of its curriculum and Mission Statement, steered me to these Truths about God? Why is my understanding of God in the world and of God in me so rudimentary?

After stuttering, I first rationalized that Gonzaga was at fault for my spiritual shortcomings. I argued in my mind that our school seems to be focusing not on the essence of God (the True and the Good and the Beautiful) but rather on the means to the end that is God. I judgmentally figured that the immense amount of community service students do here was little more than poorly contrived feel-good activities before a weekend of drunken debauchery (that I more often than not lead the charge for). I suspected that the culture at Gonzaga – one of political correctness, liberal relativism, and what Peter Kreeft calls the Tyranny of Tolerance<sup>2</sup> – has recast these means to God as ends in and of themselves. Generalization? Sure, you caught me. Fortunately, after some prayer and discernment, I caught me too. After giving it some more thought, I realized that I had to be wrong.

In *The Last Battle*, the final saga in the Narnia series, C.S. Lewis writes about a young heathen prince who worshiped a fairy tale equivalent of Satan (a nasty vulture sort called Tash, who, naturally, excreted wisps of ash into the air as it flew). At the end of

1 Kreeft, Peter. <http://www.peterkreeft.com/podcasts/index.xml>.

2 Kreeft, Peter. <http://www.peterkreeft.com/podcasts/index.xml>.

time, and in accordance with the Book of Revelation, Aslan (Jesus in lion-form) lines everyone up and sends some to hell and others he lets into an eternal romp through fields of clover and lilac with a continual, always-getting-better soundtrack from “The Lizzy McGuire Movie.”<sup>3</sup> The prince, though he worshipped the nasty Tash, turned out to be an all right sort: he was kind and lived a virtuous life. So, when his ticket was called, Aslan lets him into Heaven simply because, God being Good and True and Beautiful, the devil being none of these, and the young prince adhering to the attributes of God, good acts it turns out, no matter whom done in the name of, are ultimately done in the name of God, whether one knows it or not. What does this long-winded anecdote have to do with anything? Simply that the Kreeft critique (and my originally adopted own) of a relativistic Tyranny of Tolerance isn’t an accurate account of Gonzaga. Just because this school isn’t 100% orthodox doesn’t mean we’re in a relativistic spiral to hell. Getting righteous about a “better” brand of Catholicism won’t make this school or its students any more saintly. If anything, it takes us farther from the Transcendentals and God. Gonzaga isn’t in a heretical tailspin because no matter the amount or intensity of petty faculty squabbles about this faith, the beauty of my predicament is that it’s so widespread [*go check out Brian Lorenz’s piece on page 150*] that the little faith we students have isn’t gobbled up with factional bickering. For some strange reason, it seems to be shared.

It’s obvious that this place isn’t homogeneously religious. We’ve got practicing Catholics, non-practicing Catholics, Jews, Muslims, non-denominational Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Agnostics, Atheists, and more. And that’s what makes a Jesuit school unique. A dialogue is important. Dialogue has to be present. This school is not a Stubenville or a University of Dallas where everyone affirms everyone else’s

beliefs. As much as I love having my back rubbed, there’s no growth in it. No challenge. But affirming everyone in their general okay-ness isn’t what Gonzaga should be about. And it shouldn’t be about polarizing people either. There is a challenge to faith in a place with diversity. It

**“We’re just  
imperfect, finite  
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beautiful mystery of  
an inhuman sacrifice.”**

doesn’t make this school one of relativistic thought. It doesn’t put us in eternal flame. When it comes down to it, regardless of faith or creed, it should be about spiritual struggle, and the building of a relationship with God for (gasp – I’m gonna say it) the salvation of the soul.

That’s what this faith is all about, right? It can’t be a coincidence that most Catholic churches have, as their focal points, the Crucifix. This faith is about the radical sacrifice of one Man who gave everything up for a whole bunch of people who scoffed at his message, spat on him, beat him, laughed at his pain, and ultimately, hammered crude, jagged, metal bars into his body and into the wood of a felled tree He had to carry for an execution He wanted for us. Talk about *chutzpah* [*see page 97*].

A good man once told me that when everything else in this world has turned to dust, when all we know and love has come and gone, when our knowledge of this existence has been swept to wasteland, the Cross will remain. And then it won’t matter what we’d been bickering about. The materialism, narcissism, theory, even the laws, won’t amount to anything.

So I suppose it comes down to this: we’re

3 Heaven, naturally.

just imperfect, finite people trying to figure out a perfect, infinite God and the beautiful mystery of an inhuman sacrifice. And we're practicing, and that's what's important. As an example, the tremendous opposition to the Vagina Monologues and former President Spitzer's decision to ban Planned Parenthood condom distributors from the

**“The beauty of my predicament is that it's so widespread that the little faith we students have isn't gobbled up with factional bickering. For some strange reason, it seems to be shared.”**

grounds were met with huge opposition. But that's okay. What is important is that a dialogue happened and this school stuck to what the Magisterium teaches through Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. Because, when it comes down to it, the structure and the tradition is what sets this faith apart from all others.

The Vatican exists for a reason. That reason is not about power or greed or indoctrination. The Magisterium is the teaching authority of the church; accepting its teachings is a prerequisite for the faith. And that's as radical as anything modern society and its anti-authority mantra totes, maybe even moreso. The growth that Gonzaga fosters is a struggle. And it ought be. But everything here, no matter how slight, is or strives to be a realization of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. And that, by most modern standards, is something profoundly different.

Let me explain: In a world inundated with so much “filler,” it is difficult to find humility and sacrifice attractive. If anything, it is novelty. Oddly enough, these are the very characteristics on which the cornerstones of Christianity are based. Turning the other cheek, loving one's neighbor as oneself, and not casting the first stone really don't seem to jive with what our society has come to value. A recent movie heralds the tagline “Greed is Good.” And many find that it is. We value shrewd business practice, personal achievement, a winner-take-all approach, ruthless pragmatism, and relentless progression so much so that it has become difficult to discern to what we are in fact progressing towards. In a sense, we have begun to lose contact with the essence of our humanity. Perhaps Nietzsche was partly right in proclaiming in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that “God is dead.” I write “partly” because it seems that we have, by no small feat of hubris, seemingly become our own gods.

In our world, observes Cardinal Maria Martini, there is a “spontaneous preference for feeling over the will, for impressions over intelligence, for an arbitrary logic and the search for pleasure over an ascetic and prohibitive morality. This is a world in which sensitivity, emotion, and the present moment come first.”<sup>4</sup> Along these lines, human existence becomes an act without restraints and without a meaningful God: personal empire and creativity are placed before all else.

A popular atheist, Christopher Hitchens, has criticized Christianity, for among other things, being weak. By modern standards, the guy is right. If you look at the crucifix, Jesus wasn't all that buff. And his message, at first glance, doesn't seem so tough either. A poor carpenter with no real chance of progressing socially beyond the lot he'd been born into, Jesus said things that seem fitting for a guy who could probably never win a fist fight: “Blessed are the poor in

<sup>4</sup> Martini, Cardinal Maria. “Teaching Faith in a Postmodern World.”

spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land; Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted; Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill; Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy; Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God; Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God; Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

No wonder it's tough to see God in all things: our society doesn't tolerate that kind of talk. In America we value winners. 'If you're not first, you're last,' 'It's not personal, it's business,' *ad nauseum*. And the difficult thing is, Gonzaga is a part of, and not apart from, this society. Gonzaga's realization of itself as a Catholic university is contingent on its rejection of the modern, and an embrace of a postmodern reality.

In ancient Rome, one of the most congruently modern places with contemporary society in many ways, when a victorious general would return from a campaign, he would parade draped in royal purple with his legions marching behind him. Thousands would turn out, the emperor would salute him, garlands would be thrown at his feet, and a harem placed at his disposal. Not bad, I know. But as he rode in a golden chariot, fleeced in rubies and emeralds, a commoner would stand behind him, holding a crown of olive leaves perpetually above, but never touching his head, repeating the words, "Remember, thou art only a man; thou art only a man."

Christianity does the same thing, on a different level, as the Romans: It reminds us of a deep humility we ought to share. That's why the faith is so radical. It destroys the myth of rugged individualism contemporary society so esteems. And it binds us to one another. "Thou art only a man." Proving God exists is hard; finding God in all things (as the Society of Jesus declares itself set on doing) is a colossal endeavor. Accepting something radically antitheti-

cal to this culture we are all so deeply immersed in is a leap of faith. One, admittedly, I don't think I am all that willing to take.

A Jesuit once shared with me a prayer he wrote. It reads, "The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of danger and risk; a Kingdom of eternal beginnings and eternal becomings; Of open spirit and deep realization; A Kingdom of holy Insecurity." That is what I strive for and what I believe is the only way to begin to discover God in anything: embracing the unknown. Embracing a comfort with holy Insecurity. As the overused but apt adage goes, it's not the destination, but the journey.

That's what makes practicing Catholicism so right in my mind: the fact that it's not always right. It's an imperfect system with its eye on something better, and perfect. I don't know of any other faith that designates its active members as "practicing." The Church recognizes its deficiencies – sometimes after longer intervals than others – and works to amend them. The Magisterium exists not to oppress, but to guide. It's a system that has worked for the last 2,000 years. And it's not one that relies on a fallacious appeal to authority.

St. Peter fled Rome when Nero began killing the Christians. On his way out, Jesus appeared to him walking towards the city. "Quo vadis?" Peter asked Christ. "Where are you going?" "To Rome," Jesus replied. "I'm off to be crucified for my people again." Embarrassed, Peter returned, consoled the remaining Christians in hiding, and continued preaching until he was arrested and crucified upside down on the Vatican Hill. Prayer can be action. Christ is in the world. And the world is full of people. We need to actualize him by interacting with each other and by serving others, as the Jesuits so often remind us, for the Greater Glory of God.

How? I have no clue. The American poet Wendell Berry suggests something novel. His poem reads:

*Love the quick profit, the annual raise,*

vacation with pay.  
 Want more of everything made.  
 Be afraid to know your neighbors and to die.  
 And you will have a window in your head.  
 Not even your future will be a mystery any  
 more.  
 Your mind will be punched in a card and  
 shut  
 away in a little drawer.  
 When they want you to buy something they  
 will call you.  
 When they want you to die for profit they  
 will let you know.  
 So, friends, every day do something that  
 won't compute.  
 Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for  
 nothing.  
 Take all that you have and be poor.  
 Love someone who does not deserve it.  
 Denounce the government and embrace  
 the flag.  
 Hope to live in that free republic for which  
 it stands.  
 Give your approval to all you cannot  
 understand.  
 Praise ignorance,  
 for what man has not encountered he has  
 not destroyed.  
 Ask the questions that have no answers.  
 Invest in the millennium.  
 Plant sequoias.  
 Say that your main crop is the forest that  
 you did not plant,  
 that you will not live to harvest.  
 Say that the leaves are harvested when  
 they have rotted into the mold.  
 Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.  
 Put your faith in the two inches of humus  
 that will build under the trees  
 every thousand years.  
 Listen to the carrion – put your ear close,  
 and hear the faint chattering of the songs  
 that are to come.  
 Expect the end of the world.  
 Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable.  
 Be joyful though you have considered all  
 the facts.  
 So long as women do not go cheap for  
 power,  
 please women more than men.  
 Ask yourself: Will this satisfy a woman  
 satisfied to bear a child?

Will this disturb the sleep of a woman  
 near to giving birth?  
 Go with your love to the fields.  
 Lie easy in the shade. Rest your head in  
 her lap.  
 Swear allegiance to what is nighest your  
 thoughts.  
 As soon as the generals and politicians can  
 predict the motions  
 of your mind, lose it.  
 Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail,  
 the way you didn't go.  
 Be like the fox who makes more tracks than  
 necessary,  
 some in the wrong direction.  
 Practice resurrection.

George MacDonald once remarked, "The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their suffering might be like His." Each and every day my world is flooded with vices physical, mental, and spiritual. I fall prey to them more often than not. This world is, as it has always been I assume, a tough place to grow up in, no matter what chance lot in life you have. I am hopeful though because I see a glimmer of what I find so right and "radical" about Catholicism: humility. I find the suffering of sacrifice in both to be more right than anything else I can imagine. Finding God is tough, but recognizing the True, the Good, and the Beautiful becomes more apparent, I hear, the more one tries. The transcendentals are Real. I can't shake that knowledge. The Good, the True, and the Beautiful are Real. And really liberating. They destroy the notion that we have to make rather than learn (it's confounding through a modern lens, really). They point emphatically away from our selves and to the "Other." That "Other" is God. I have to go look for God in others. I have to do something that won't compute.

But shoot, I'm still stuck at Gonzaga. And my faith and knowledge of the Church are still infantile to be sure. The rhetoric of finding God is simple enough to recite; the implementation takes devotion. So what of faith seeking understanding? Cardinal

Martini suggests a fourfold exercise solution to the former, which, when implemented dutifully, strengthens the latter:

(1) *Lectio divina*. A “divine reading” is the Church’s practice of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and increase the knowledge of His word. Through nourishing oneself with the Gospel, Cardinal Martini maintains that the living word can challenge us, direct us, and give meaning to our existence.

(2) *Self-mastery*. The community of believers needs to put the sacrifice of faith into action with daily offerings of temperance. The blunt opposition to desires is sometimes more joyful than endless indulgences in everything that seems desirable but ends in boredom and satiety. The practice of self-mastery is central to building a relationship with God; the power to implement it comes from a devotion to the teachings of the Gospel, particularly, the moral teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

(3) *Silence*. Incessant text messaging, Facebooking, Tweeting, and an ever-present internet accessibility make information and communication so extensive that solitude has gotten something of a bad rapport. Cardinal Martini presents the rewarding challenge of purging an unhealthy slavery to rumors and endless chattering and music and noise with at least a half-hour of silence daily and at least a half-day each week to think about ourselves, reflect, and pray for an extended period. The rewards, he promises, are an inner peace and tranquility that provide the source of unprecedented life and joy. The requirement of that reward is the self-mastery to focus not on the material, but on the spiritual; not on the self, but on God’s being.

(4) *Humility*. It’s a difficult virtue to make one’s own. Cardinal Martini reminds us not to think that it’s up to us to solve the problems of our times. “Leave room for the Holy Spirit, who works better than we do and more deeply. Do not wish to stifle

the Spirit in others: it is the Spirit who breathes. Rather, be sensitive to its most subtle manifestations, and for that you need silence.”<sup>5</sup>

In this world that we find ourselves in today, the mystery of a seemingly absent God is attractive; faith understood as risk or folly is reasonable; and a fatalistic understanding of human existence is supported by hate and cruelty. Catholicism is a beacon of hope. Its Trinitarian mystery is beyond our comprehension and is the crux on which our existence leans. This imperfect, human institution, and its products, are where we rest our hope of realizing God in the world.

So what does the church offer? What can Gonzaga teach us? Total Rebellion.<sup>6</sup> We can actualize full rebellion, wildly radical, anti-authoritarian rebellion, and still manage to be in communion with Christ. We can reject the grandiose material, the rhetoric of enticing selfishness in politics and entertainment, the fleeting desires and lusts. We can do all this and, like the poet Berry suggests, ‘smile, though we’ve considered all the facts.’ We can “practice resurrection” and defy 1,000 norms and embrace the simplicity of the transcendentals. And we’ll scare the world shitless. I suppose it could even start right here at Gonzaga.

*Kevin is dependently materialistic. As much as he’d love to lead the rebellion, he’s not okay with giving up his 3 different Groupon accounts or sleeping on anything smaller than a queen-sized, pillow-top mattress.*

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5 Martini, Cardinal Maria. “Teaching Faith in a Postmodern World.”

6 Sorry, Kassi Kain.

# Evangelization

## Ex Corde Ecclesiae Apostolic Constitution *of the* Supreme Pontiff JOHN PAUL II *on* Catholic Universities

**T**he primary mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel in such a way that a relationship between faith and life is established in each individual and in the socio-cultural context in which individuals live and act and communicate with one another. Evangelization means “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... It is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and, as it were, upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, humanity’s criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.”

*By its very nature, each Catholic University makes an important contribution to the Church’s work of evangelization. It is a living institutional witness to Christ and his message, so vitally important in cultures marked by secularism, or where Christ and his message are still virtually unknown. Moreover, all the basic academic activities of a Catholic University are connected with and in harmony with the evangelizing mission of the Church: research carried out in the light of the Christian message which puts new human discoveries at the service of individuals and society; education offered in a faith-context that forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgment and conscious of the transcendent dignity of the human person; professional training that incorporates ethical values and a sense of service to individuals and to society; the dialogue with culture that makes the faith better understood, and the theological research that translates the faith into contemporary language. “Precisely because it is more and more conscious of its salvific mission in this world, the Church wants to have these centres closely connected with it; it wants to have them present and operative in spreading the authentic message of Christ”(41).*

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae: Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities*

# A Priestly People

## FR. KEVIN WATERS, S.J.

...I think that evangelization has an enormous function here on the topic of female roles within the Church.

Evangelization has to do with what we are all called to do as a “priestly people.” Before the Second Vatican Council, a “priestly people” was used, with regard to everybody that was baptized, rarely. But it has become an important term today. Making men and women of the Church a “priestly people” empowers and makes responsible everyone for evangelization and the promotion of the Gospel and bringing the Good News of salvation to all people. We are vested with that responsibility; it is not simply the role of an ordained clergy. We have seen this attitude of a “priestly people” in effect for many centuries, particularly with the role women have played in education. In this country, there is no question that the strength of the Catholic Church is founded on the parochial school system where women, religious women, were the educators. They had an equal share of the teaching with the pastors and priests of the parish where the school was situated. In fact, they had an extensive role because they were with their students every day whereas the faithful only saw the priest on Sundays. His instruction was usually included in a sermon, whereas going to the classroom day in and day out and promoting what the Gospel means, and explaining it to the students, was enormously effective and continues to be effective today. That responsibility has historically rested in the hands of the women religious. Most of the Catholic schools in the country are now taught by laity; the priestly people provide a very key function to that ministry.

Regarding the ordained clergy: I think that sometimes there has been an exaggerated

view of what a priest does. The Church has gone through a lot of transitions with regards to that role. At one time the priest was like a king in his parish and everybody cowed down to the pastor. One doesn't have to go around the block very many times to see that that isn't the case anymore. The priest is able to administer the sacraments. Essentially, that is what the priest does. But that's a very limited part of what a priest needs to do. Above all, a priest needs to teach. Jesus says, “Go therefore and teach all nations.” His emphasis is on teaching. It is to console the bereaved and comfort the sick and the dying, all these things. That is the responsibility of a priestly people, not just of the priest. I think that the whole thing has been exaggerated in one way or another of what a priest does or ought to do.

The second question we must answer is how democratic principles apply in this matter. One thing that has happened in the last hundred years has been the emancipation of women, where women have been given equality with men – it was centuries overdue. For example, voting and owning property, both these things women were not able to do in previous centuries. That has evolved immeasurably. Also, since World War II, women working outside the home have become far more common than simply working as mothers or as housewives. In fact, a minority of American women today are solely mothers and housewives. This has provided an enormous equality with women and men in the work place, and as bread earners. We still have problems where the compensation for the same work is not the same in many places and this is indeed unjust. But when we come to the Church, we need to remember that the Church is not a de-

mocracy, and that is something that is very difficult for us to grapple within our society. The Church's structure and basic nature is monarchical. We have a Pope who is a representative of Christ. Christ clearly is the head of the Church, so many of the democratic processes simply do not apply. However, the election of a pope, the choice of a bishop, should have far greater and wider constituency than it currently has. These are issues that most likely will be addressed in the future.

*Fr. Waters' full commentary on women in the priesthood and evangelization contains a short preface not included here. The article in full can be located on page 123, in the "Women and the Church" section of the journal.*

## Concerning Evangelization

FR. MICHAEL COOK, S.J.

*Interview*

**E**vangalization is a tricky term and it's not necessarily limited to Catholics, obviously. The Church has three fundamental dimensions to it that are irreducible: one is proclaiming the Good News - that's evangelization - proclaiming the good news that God raised Jesus from the dead; the second is living the Good News in community - that's forming churches and developing structures in communal life; the third is serving the world and trying to build up the kingdom of God. So, the primary reality in Christian life is the kingdom of God.

Christians are called to serve that kingdom and to bear witness to it. Note that the kingdom of God is much broader ranging than just a place for Christians or Catholics. Every Christian Catholic is called to bear witness to the Gospel and be in service to

the kingdom of God. In the early Church, someone like St. Paul would go into the market place and start publically proclaiming the kingdom. You sometimes see people on a street corner trying to preach the word; we kind of laugh at that. The difficult thing is that what we call "preaching the word" is pretty much restricted to the Church itself. But there are other ways in which we can preach the word of God - namely, by changing social structures that create oppression for the poor. That's the way we bear witness now: not only internally to the Church, but by bearing witness to the Word, by seeking to influence the world in terms of the structure that we have, by changing structures that are oppressive, especially for the poor.

When we use terms like "Catholic evangelization," it is important to keep in mind that anyone who is serious about proclaiming the word of God first has to live it in their own communal life, and then has to work toward realizing the kingdom of God outside of that community. That means working toward social justice for one's fellow man. So really, our preaching is the witness we give in helping others in their need.

## The Unique Perspective of a Catholic Convert

STEPHANI SHRIVER

**I**am so thankful for my Catholic faith that guides me through everything that I do, and I am blessed to have found this faith on the beautiful path of conversion. Because of the way in which Catholicism touched me, I have learned to reject the ever too common occurrence of religious animosity in society today. In addition, I have found

that examining the unique perspective of a Catholic convert can be influential for already-practicing Catholics to consider, so to appreciate their faith in a new way. I have a deep respect for the Church's history, its universal nature, and its strength in opposition to popular culture as a means toward salvation and eternal communion with God. Although I would like to elaborate on the truth of all the famous "turn-offs" that non-Catholics judge too quickly and harshly, I will reflect upon the elements of Catholicism that cracked my defensive and negative attitude.

I was baptized Catholic when I was a baby, but I did not truly embrace or continue my Catholic faith until high school. My mother was raised in a Baptist family from Texas, and my father was raised in a Catholic family from Massachusetts. My father still values his Catholic faith, so my three siblings and I were baptized as Catholics, and followed in my father's footsteps by attending Catholic schools. On Sundays when I grew up, my parents compromised and raised us as non-denominational Christians.

Before I learned about the history of the Catholic Church in a theology class during my sophomore year at a Jesuit high school, I negatively judged Catholicism in the same way that my mother's family did. Sadly, our negative judgments – like most religious animosity – were not supported by an in-depth knowledge of Catholicism. Before I converted during my junior year of high school, I was not open to Catholicism because of some of the most famous turn-offs. Why do Catholics worship Mary? Why do Catholics pray to saints? Why is the Church so strict on birth control? Why are Catho-

lics so strict about going to Mass? What about all the people I see at Mass that I have seen commit grave sins?

Many people see Catholicism as a challenge to modern cultural and social norms, and that is probably why I have seen so many members of my own family, including myself, reject it. But it is in the strict goodness that the Church stands for where so much beauty is to be found. It would be so much easier to act defensively and not hold ourselves accountable for the mistakes we make, but I appreciate the humility that I am faced with each time I go to Mass. The community is a community of sinners in which all are welcome; those who choose to repent at Reconciliation are believers whom are blessed by God's grace and humbled, welcomed fully into communion again, and have the opportunity to follow the truth that the Church presents with even more joy than before.

The history and universal nature of the Church alone is what convinced me to dig deeper into Catholicism. The Church under Pope Benedict XVI is the same institution that Jesus Christ established when he appointed Peter as the first pope. The Catholic Church has stood for two thousand years as the basis of Christianity that still stands today. Even though the Church has had controversial times, it is an institution admittedly comprised of sinners. The community does have sin, but this community is also blessed by the grace of God, which makes it a conduit, in the tradition of Saint Peter, as God's path to His Kingdom on Earth. The Church is full of sinners whom are not perfect, but through God's grace the Church is holy. No matter where you go in the world, if you walk into a

Catholic Church, you will find the same liturgy, the same rites. This universality is so amazing, refreshing, and comforting to me.

At Gonzaga we are taught to respect diversity, and that includes religious diversity. The Catholic Church is inclusive in nature. In Saint Paul's own words, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Converting to Catholicism has transformed me into a person who is much more open to growth. It allowed me to transcend religious animosity and be more open and understanding to opposing beliefs. Even though I believe Catholicism is the full truth, I still respect other religions and try my best to understand

them. If some of my family members took more time to learn about Catholicism, I am sure that they would not be so quick to assume such negative attitudes about the Church. As I have noticed over the years, the unique perspective of the convert can also be beneficial in strengthening the faith of other Catholics. After deep discussions with some of my close friends, I have found that my perspective offers a new viewpoint to people who were raised Catholic their whole lives. If you are Catholic, I challenge you to reflect on some of the main "turn-offs" that non-Catholics have towards the Church, and you will respect your faith in a whole new light.

*Shriver is a senior. She makes smoothies at the fitness center.*

# Just a Peregrino Along the Camino

RYAN KEPLER

Last fall, during my time in Granada, I had the chance to visit Santiago de Compostela in the North of Spain. We had learned about it in my Spanish Culture class and had heard great things about the town and the region as a whole. I was especially excited to visit a place where my Rick Steve's book said that the majority of the rain in Spain falls; I envisioned a lush, green environment. Besides this, I knew it was the place where the Apostle St. James, "Santiago" in Spanish, is said to have been buried. For this reason, pilgrims have been visiting the Cathedral located there for over a thousand years. *Anything that stays in*

*style for a thousand years must have some enduring qualities, I thought, so I assumed I was about to have a great*

**“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’ (Thank you Matthew – and Kevin Garnett.)”**

weekend trip. Not only that, I was going to meet up with a friend who was studying in Madrid.

Like many trips in Europe, this one started sleeping in an airport and flying on Ryan Air. (Just surviving these flights is a miracle that could be the basis for any article on religion.) We landed in the middle of a green field covered in grey fog. This was significant for me as these were two colors not prevalent in the bright sunlight of Granada. After finding our hostel and meeting up with my friend, we went to explore the city and the cathedral. The current cathedral's foundation was built before 1100 with many renovations that reflect the changing architectural styles over the centuries. The cathedral, the local university, the fish market, and the area's natural beauty make it easy to understand why Santiago de Compostela is a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site.

What makes it truly unique and a can't-miss stop on any casual Catholic's trip is the legend of St. James and the corresponding Camino (or Way) de Santiago. After Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, his apostles went out and did what they were told to do: spread the Good News. James ended up in Spain before he went back to Israel and was stoned to death. His followers did not want his body desecrated by Romans, so they put his body in a ship made out of stones and sent it to sea. It was not until eight hundred years later that his final resting place was found. In 811 A.D. a priest followed a constellation of eight stars until he came to a field where he found the grave of St. James. He built a church at the site of the grave, to protect it, and pilgrims have been

travelling to pay homage to St. James there ever since.

The Camino de Santiago, at least the most popular route coming from France, is almost 500 miles long. Yet almost 100,000 people complete the

**“This feeling of accomplishment at reaching the final destination is the reason why people run marathons, climb mountains, or sail around the world - they want to feel alive.”**

two month journey each year. Many do it for varying reasons other than just paying homage to St. James. In fact, many doubt that St. James is even buried under the cathedral. They say that it would be impossible to verify that the bones in the tomb are his; that it would be impossible for a ship made of rocks to sail; that it was highly unlikely that St. James even went to Spain; that it would be impossible for a priest to actually follow stars that led him to a field where an apostle was buried. The impossibility of the legend being true is what makes the route all the more enticing.

While I certainly won't try to refute the impossibility of the legend, I would make one allusion to Matthew 19:26, when Jesus says, “With man this is im-

possible, but with God all things are possible.” (Thank you Matthew – and Kevin Garnett.) I do know that when I walked along the route, I felt like I was a part of something greater than myself. I did not feel as if I was just walking. We walked away from the cathedral and followed the shells in the road

**“We have a chance to wake up every day and embark on a journey... We can make a pilgrimage.”**

and on the buildings. We saw pilgrims coming along the path with months of gear on their backs and months of experience in their faces. We walked through fields and forests that have seen millions of people over hundreds of years pass through. And when we turned back (after eating chocolate, which is my way of marking a halfway point in a hike), we were able to see the town and cathedral come into view through the fog. I was excited to get back to the cathedral, and I had only been walking for a few hours. I am sure that arriving at the Cathedral after months of walking is a feeling hard to match.

This feeling of accomplishment at reaching the final destination is the reason why people run marathons, climb mountains, or sail around the world - they want to feel alive. They want to know that their life has purpose and that, through hard work and determination, they are achieving that purpose. The Camino de Santiago is

full of *peregrinos* (or pilgrims) hoping to reach the end of the route. These pilgrims are not only on a long hike - they are on a journey to find out who they are and why they are. All religions in the world try to answer this question. Everyone wants to know what purpose in life makes them special. For the *peregrinos* they can know that they are special because they have been a part of something special. They have been among the many to take the same walk that was taken hundreds of years ago in order to honor St. James.

The reason St. James is honored by their journey is because he was an apostle, a follower of Jesus. He evangelized for the glory of God and worked to help others around him. And that is why he was special and why he undoubtedly felt alive while living. He knew that he was doing something special and was a part of something special. Luckily for all of us, we can walk along a *camino* just like his. We have a chance to wake up every day and embark on a journey that can make us feel special, but we don't have to go all the way to Northern Spain. We can make a pilgrimage from our houses, or dorms, to our classes. What makes our steps every-day a pilgrimage is us feeling alive as we take them. And we will feel alive if we know that our lives have purpose as part of something greater than ourselves.

# The Sacrament of Penance

**T**he Sacrament of Penance reconciles us with God. “The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.”

...This Sacrament also reconciles us with the Church. Sin should never be understood as a private or personal matter, because it harms our relationship with others and may even break our loving communion with the Church. The Sacrament of Penance repairs this break and has a renewing effect on the vitality of the Church itself.

In this Sacrament, the penitent receives the merciful judgment of God and is engaged on the journey of conversion that leads to future life with God. The Church also recommends that a person go regularly to confession, even if only for venial sins. This is because “the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our consciences, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit.”

-Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1468, 1458

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## The Ministry *of the* Sacrament *of* Penance

from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

**S**ince Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation, bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops’ collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Forgiveness of sins brings reconciliation with God, but also with the Church. Since ancient times the bishop, visible head of a particular Church, has thus rightfully been considered to be the one who principally has the power and ministry of reconciliation: he is the moderator of the penitential discipline. Priests, his collaborators, exercise it to the extent that they have received the commission either from their bishop (or religious superior) or the Pope, according to the law of the Church.

Certain particularly grave sins incur excommunication, the most severe ecclesiastical penalty, which impedes the reception of the sacraments and the exercise of certain ecclesiastical acts, and for which absolution consequently cannot be granted, according to canon law, except by the Pope, the bishop of the place or priests authorized by them. In danger of death any priest, even if deprived of faculties for hearing confessions, can absolve from

every sin and excommunication.

*Priests must encourage the faithful to come to the sacrament of Penance and must make themselves available to celebrate this sacrament each time Christians reasonably ask for it.*

*When he celebrates the sacrament of Penance, the priest is fulfilling the ministry of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, of the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds, of the Father who awaits the prodigal son and welcomes him on his return, and of the just and impartial judge whose judgment is both just and merciful. The priest is the sign and the instrument of God's merciful love for the sinner.*

*The confessor is not the master of God's forgiveness, but its servant. The minister of this sacrament should unite himself to the intention and charity of Christ. He should have a proven knowledge of Christian behavior, experience of human affairs, respect and sensitivity toward the one who has fallen; he must love the truth, be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, and lead the penitent with patience toward healing and full maturity. He must pray and do penance for his penitent, entrusting him to the Lord's mercy.*

*Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, the Church declares that every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives. This secret, which admits of no exceptions, is called the "sacramental seal," because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains "sealed" by the sacrament. (nos. 1461-1467)*

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## Community Reconciliation

FR. MICHAEL COOK, S.J.

### *Interview*

Every sacrament is an expression of the human condition. We come together to share a meal in the Eucharist and we baptize to take care of children in their early years. These sacraments are expressions of our human needs and our human relationships. Regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and as a priest somebody comes to me for a confession, I am not the one who forgives; it's God who forgives and God is always forgiving, so the divine offer of love and forgiveness is always present.

Why does somebody need to go to a priest for confession or express penitence in a symbolic and embodied way for forgiveness? Reconciliation is something we have to do and we have to express it. When we come to Confession we may express to

the priest the sorrow for our sins and the fact that we want to make some kind of penance and reform our lives. But it isn't just the penance and the priest. It's also a question of the relationship to the whole community – all the sacraments are communal, including Penance, even though we do a private confession for the sacrament.

For the record, and on a historical note, private confessions didn't come in until about 600 A.D. when the Irish penitentials came down into France. They developed the oracular mode that we have which is the practice of the penitent going privately to a priest, a penitent priest, which was developed as kind of established position. In the Second Vatican Council there was a proposal to go back to a communal Reconciliation service (There's a ceremony. It's

like any other ceremony: usually there's a penitential rite, usually they sing songs and have time for reflection, and then there's a general absolution.) This is what I believe we should do. We can do a community Reconciliation service today but still, at least according to discipline of the Church, people have to go to confess individually.

In Confession it is important to remember that the priest is not there as a counselor, but that he is there to offer absolution. That's his role – it doesn't necessarily have to happen individually.

Before the Irish penitentials came down into France there was always public penance and it took a long period of time and it was for very serious sins. In some ways, by moving as we did into the tradition of private penance, we lost the whole point of Reconciliation because the point is communal reconciliation and each individual has issues that he or she needs to reconcile with other individuals and ultimately God. I think the whole point of Reconciliation is to bring the community together so when we begin the Mass we always have a penitential rite. That's simply to dispose us to celebrate the Eucharist in harmony with each other. Our inter-human relationships seeking harmony, overcoming division, and overcoming resentments. What I hear in confession typically is anger towards somebody else. The most important thing for the faithful is not only that they go to confession but that they do their best to reconcile with that other individual they've sinned against. Sometimes they can't but the sacrament itself, as all the sacraments are meant to, brings the community together; Reconciliation is one of the most important in that regard.

When the sacrament of penance began in the earliest Church, it was usually for public sinners and they had to declare publically their sorrow and their intent to reform. Then there was a long period of penance, usually several months, maybe

a year, before they were given absolution by the bishop. So it was a public event and usually it was for major sins like murder or adultery. That has changed over the years and there are some advantages to having private priests. But sometimes people want to come to Confession for advice, but they can always come for advice they don't necessarily have to do it through the Confession system.

It gives a chance for people to get advice and whether it's a public or private confession they are both a physical expression of repentance and sorrow for sins. Reconciliation also helps people to reflect on their lives, however, people don't come to confession as much as they used to. Before Vatican II it was always expected that one went to confession before receiving Communion. That never was the rule of the Church but that was the understanding. There are still some people that think that you have to go to confession before Communion but that's not the case. It seems to me that the important issue is that God is always forgiving. God always loves us, God is always forgiving us. The sacramental system is a means to expression. It's a means for somebody to say at least to one other person what is important in their lives and what problems they have. It's very much like the twelve steps in Alcoholics Anonymous. One of their steps is admitting to somebody the gravity of their faults, it is psychologically helpful if you say publically or personally at least to one other person that you are sorry. It brings out the sense of what your repent should be.

The Sacrament of Penance involves four things: (1) An Act of Contrition, a declaration that you are sorry for your sins, (2) confession of your sins, (3) absolution by the priest, and finally (4) the penance itself. You get some kind of penance that expresses repentance so it's really repentance for your sins, confessing them and absolution.

# We Have A Fallen Human Nature

FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

*Interview*



**T**he sex thing [page 126] is something very difficult for us to talk about because we as priests don't have the experience of married people, but we have the experience of the struggle. God knows the newspapers are filled with articles about priests that have failed. So, it's a problem, but what I think is essential is recognizing this demon of sexuality that we all have – the ordained and lay alike. I don't want to negativize it too much; it can only be cast out by prayer and penance, as Jesus himself said. The prayer life of an individual and his relationship with God and his closeness and his familiarity

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with Him is what makes all the difference in the world. And through penance, we are saturated with good things and strengthened with the recognition for the need of self-mastery. That's what the Sacrament of Penance and Lent are about: self-denial.

This is an old fashioned concept that you

can't talk to anybody about anymore. It doesn't make sense in today's world. Just passing a coke machine for instance, I know I can get by without a soda. Just realizing that is a self-sacrifice, I can enclose just a little more of myself: the idea being that an ability to say “no” to fleshly desires, whether that be a coke or anything else, strengthens and brings us closer to God. The ability to say “no” is created by

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what we simply call discipline. I can say, “No, I don't have to have this; I can get along without this very well.” To be able to do that requires discipline and practice just like an athlete; St. Paul used the example of an athlete repeatedly. We must train ourselves to be disciplined. That's what Lent is: a period of training ourselves. It's about saying, “No, I don't need this; I don't have to have it.” And that strengthens you so that when the test does come, you can say “no.”

Remember, we have a fallen human nature. St Paul said, “I know what's good, I love what's good, I preach what's good, but I often times don't do it.” Why? Because we have a broken human nature. Reconciliation brings us closer to God and mends that fall from grace.

# Concerning Confession

## SR. MARY EUCHARISTA

**T**he Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the greatest gifts God could have given us. It was a big deal for Jesus openly to forgive the sins of those who came to Him, and He was really criticized for it. He gave that power to His Apostles and their successors on Easter night. We are only called by the Church to confess our sins once a year, but it is good to go to confession frequently in order to be more aware of what we are doing and to be about the most important thing, to check ourselves on how we love others in our daily lives in order to be able to meet God face to face at death which may come at any time.

An interesting note on the word, “reconciliation” -- amid many other background notes and sources - it has at its base the word *cilia*, plural for *cilium* or “eyelashes” or “eyelids,” re- (again) con- (with), where the penitent comes before the priest to confess sins and receive absolution. What a delightful sacrament, and how many times do we get to receive it? As often as is necessary. Definitely when we commit mortal sin, but also when we have only venial sin to confess. I just went today, and I feel so good! (Yes, sisters are sinners, too!)

# Guilt & Chutzpah

## JOHN VERWEY

**A**nybody can feel guilty, but only a select few have truly embraced the sentiment. One of my roommates a few years ago proudly proclaimed that Jewish mothers had mastered the emotion. A Reformed Jew himself, he stated that his mother had exploited the feeling so perfectly that he could even be made to feel guilty about feeling guilty. Talk about *chutzpah*.

I, however, had to respectfully disagree. Growing up in a Catholic family and attending Catholic school from kindergarten to present day has given me a unique perspective into the phenomenon of guilt. And it is my opinion that no Jewish mother can hold a candle to the properly conditioned Catholic.

If you’ve ever seen people compulsively saying the rosary and sweating as they wait in the pews for Reconciliation, only to

emerge with a looks of utter devastation upon their faces, you get a sense of what Catholic guilt means. As a child, I remember trying to keep track of all the “sins” I had committed, so that come reconciliation I could get them all out and be done with it. Just imagine the mental agony an 8 year old goes through trying to determine whether exclaiming “oh God!” on the playground violated a commandment. “Does wanting my locker-partner’s Gameboy fall under the category of coveting my neighbor’s goods?”

Better yet, think of Catholic guilt as that emotion you feel for an instant when considering an idea that you would never say out loud. It’s kind of like being judged for something before you’ve even thought of it. Like laughing in your head at an inappropriate joke, because you know laughing out loud would be unacceptable.

Now I'm not necessarily talking about guilt in the vein of the "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*," (thank you very much Jonathan Edwards). Rather, I'm thinking of the Sunday School teacher or the Confirmation counselor that truly impressed upon me the weight of the sins I had inherited, the sins I had committed, and the sins I had yet to commit.

A perfect example of this came in the form of my altar-serving instructor. Attending classes every Sunday afternoon in fifth grade, I slowly but surely learned all of the motions and cues associated with appropriately practicing the Mass. My teacher, an ex-police officer and devout Hungarian-Catholic, ensured that each of us genuinely understood every mistake we made was made in front of the eyes of God. We were, after all, in His house. I distinctly remember watching in horror as small drops of wax fell from the candle I held during the scriptural readings, fearing that with each drop, another year in purgatory was added to my lot.

But guilt need not always connote negative emotions. It can also act as a powerful, and I would argue one of the most powerful, motivators. One day, a grade school physical education instructor of mine reminded our class of the line from Leviticus, "Stand in the presence of the aged, show respect for your elders and revere your God." Only at a Catholic grade school would a gym teacher have his copy of the Bible handy during class. Well, let me assure you nothing makes a rowdy group of sixth graders want to stand quietly in a straight line quite like the fear of eternal damnation.

Flash forward to high school and guilt had taken on a new meaning entirely. The diocesan priest assigned to my high school had ministered to the community for over 30 years, knew how to communicate to young kids, and had two dogs named Abraham and Isaac. Every homily started with the congregation asking in unison, "how are Abraham and Isaac?" and was followed

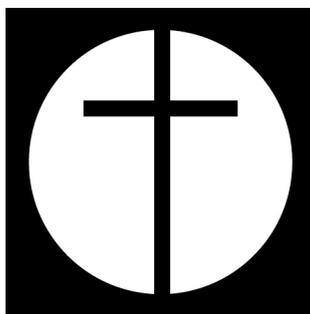
with a token reply, "Ah, God love you for asking, the dogs are great..." The homily continued with a joke, usually something relatively benign (Why can't Anglicans play chess? Because they can't tell a Bishop from a Queen...) and was followed with a reflection on the respective scripture passage for the given week.

The thing that always struck me was the reverence with which the priest treated the Mass and Catholicism in general, compared to the relatively irreverent nature of his demeanor and personality. Here was a man who consistently found joy in his calling and managed to never lose perspective on his congregation. Guilt had no place in his community and, in its place, a sense of humor pervaded the Catholicism he extolled.

Rather than feeling guilty about our perceived "sins," we were encouraged to reflect upon them and challenged to change for the better. Reconciliation was an option, but better yet, our priest promoted volitional forgiveness. Actions, and in particular service, spoke louder than words. There would always be time for a casual novena (...), but why not spend that time at Northwest Harvest or St. Vincent de Paul? And this mentality made all the difference. Any feelings of guilt were alleviated with a light-hearted comment and some therapeutic service to the community.

"There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God." Now Catholic guilt can't quite compare to Jonathan Edwards for fervor, but rest assured it is an experience not to be missed. For anyone who has ever sat in the wrong pew, thoughtlessly chewed their Communion wafer rather than letting it dissolve, clapped in church, or dropped wax on the carpet next to the altar, this is for you. Guilt may not be uniquely Catholic, but we can match any Jewish mother for *chutzpah*.

# Mass & the Eucharist



**T**he Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross, is also a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for the work of creation. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, the whole of creation loved by God is presented to the Father through the death and the Resurrection of Christ. Through Christ, the Church can offer the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for all that God has made good, beautiful, and just in creation and in humanity.

*The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all “thanksgiving.”*

*The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of praise by which the Church sings the glory of God in the name of all creation. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ: he unites the faithful to his person, to his praise, and to his intercession, so that the sacrifice of praise to the Father is offered through Christ and with him, to be accepted in him...*

*Because it is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: “This is my body which is given for you” and “This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood.” In the Eucharist, Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*

*The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit:*

*[Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper “on the night when he was betrayed,” [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse, the Church, a visible*

*sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit.*

*The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner. . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory."*

*The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." "This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."*

*It is by the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood that Christ becomes present in this sacrament. The Church Fathers strongly affirmed the faith of the Church in the efficacy of the Word of Christ and of the action of the Holy Spirit to bring about this conversion. Thus St. John Chrysostom declares:*

*It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God's. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the things offered.*

*And St. Ambrose says about this conversion:*

*Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed.... Could not Christ's word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before? It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature.*

*The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation."*

*-Catechism of the Catholic Church nos. 1113-1376*

# The Eucharist

DR. JOSEPH MUDD

No brief statement can capture the significance of the Eucharist in the life of the church. But in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the Second Vatican Council states plainly that the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows,” and explains, “The renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between them and the Lord draws the faithful and sets them aflame with Christ’s compelling love.” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10).

The Eucharist sets the faithful aflame with Christ’s love because, in the sacramental offering of his body and blood in the mass, Christ discloses the meaning of the cross and invites the church’s participation in that self-offering by giving his body and blood as food and drink through which

“The Eucharist sets the faithful aflame with Christ’s love.”

the faithful are conformed to his incarnate meaning in a sharing of wills, or communion. The church, thus nourished, becomes the presence of Christ in history, proclaiming God’s love until he comes (1 Cor 11:26) and revealing God’s love to sinful humanity by transforming evil into good as it confronts suffering, injustice, and war with a compelling word of love spoken from the Eucharistic heart of the Mystical Body of Christ.

# The Central Sacrament

DR. PAT MCCORMICK

*Interview*

The church describes the Eucharist as the source and the summit of the life of the church and I would describe it as the heartbeat of the church because, in the Eucharist, the body of Christ gathers together to celebrate and to reinforce its identity. Now, one of the things that happens is the community gathers together in the Eucharist to celebrate their identity as the body of Christ. But His identity, which is nurtured by the sharing of the bread and wine, which is the body and blood of Christ, is also intended to be apostolic, which is the community. It is not intended just to stay there in that place but to go out into that world and be, as Jesus would say, ‘light, leaven, salt, and seed in a world waiting to be born’ to transform the world. So that’s why I like to think of it, taking the language of the church, the source and summit language, and talk about the Eucharist of the Mass as the heartbeats, so the blood gathers together and the blood goes out into the world.

Probably the most important theologian of the Eucharist is St. Paul. St. Paul, who writes within two or three decades after the death of Christ, gives us, in particular, the letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians and the Colossians – which are the earliest and richest theology of the body of Christ. Paul speaks about these Eucharistic communities, these tables, the Lord’s tables that are gathered together, and speaks about the body of Christ primarily as the members of the community. In the body of Christ, it’s a community that’s not supposed to be separated along race

class and gender; so Paul tells us in Galatians and Colossians that in Christ ‘there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female.’ Paul is also concerned about the divisions between the rich and the poor, so in Corinthians Paul talks about the abuse of the Eucharist that takes place when some of the rich gather early and eat separately from the poor.

The other place, aside from Paul, the Corinthians, the Galatians and the Colossians, that we really get good information on what the early community thought about the Eucharist is of course in Acts II and IV. In the Second Chapter of Acts and the Fourth Chapter of Acts, Luke describes this as a gathering of a community which shows all that they have in common: those who pray the Psalms together and who break bread together. The “breaking of the bread” is Luke’s phrase for the Eucharist, whereas Paul’s phrase is “the body of Christ.” In Luke we have a community which exemplifies both the vision that Moses and the Book of Deuteronomy have for the Promised Land - a land in which there will be no poor and sinners will be reconciled with one another; A land in which all the outcasts, the widows, the orphans, and the aliens will be taken in. That’s the same vision we get in the gospels with Jesus when he talks about the banquet. The banquet is going to be when the exiled and excluded are gathered in. This is the primary reason of the importance of the Eucharist, aside from calling it the source and summit of our identity as a community.

The church refers to the Eucharist as the central sacrament of reconciliation so it’s true that individual Catholics go to the Sacrament of Penance for reconciliation but as a community we are reconciled to one another primarily through the sacrament of the Eucharist and that reconciliation again is not just between sinners and saints, it’s between rich and poor, between slave and free, between male and female and between Jew and Greek - it’s a universal reconciliation.

# Shopping for Jesus: A Cradle Catholic’s Search for the Perfect Mass

LEXI RICE

As far as an indoctrinated Catholic schoolgirl goes, you’d be hard-pressed in this day and age to find a more exemplary specimen than me. At age seven, I was instructed in the art of saying the Rosary, and at age a-few-minutes-later I was receiving my first impromptu course in apologetics (the difference between veneration and idol worship is a difficult one for young, creative minds to grasp). I wore a white dress to my first communion, and just as Billy Idol predicted, got a party on my confirmation. By the time I reached college, I was a model for a lukewarm, but highly ritualistic, Roman Catholicism, muttering prayers to St. Anthony when I lost something important and fully prepared to defend my backwoods bead-rattling saint-invoking faith against the heretical Jesuits, but notably short on zeal and frequently absent from Sunday Mass. With a big double-spired church in the middle of campus, it was all too easy to take the structures and rites of my default religion for granted.

One of those things I’d long since accepted as given and unchangeable was the Mass. Relatively regular attendance, slightly deaf

priests, and a bizarre ability for memorization meant that by the 5th grade I could, with prompting, whisper the standard Roman rite along with the celebrant, even the bits that were supposed to be inaudible. Homilies were nice and standard, usually exhortations to be more forgiving or to deny ourselves for the sake of others. Essentially the only variation was who led the singing. If the music had been good, if we hadn't sung any songs I loathed, if unnecessary frippery had been kept to a minimum, and most importantly, if we were released just a few minutes early, I could heave a contented sigh, my soul full of Jesus, and say, "That was a good Mass."

In the spring of my freshman year, I reached an epiphany. Awash in hard-won knowledge of basic Latin, and frankly sick of either forcing myself through another predictable and increasingly irritating service, or waving off the whispers of "mortal sin" with which my conscience would inevitably plague me if I skipped, I attended the Gregorian chanted Mass in the Jesuit chapel, thinking that if nothing else, it would be an adventure.

My life changed.

In all my years of quietly keeping the faith, the one thing that had both enchanted and frustrated me was the consistency, the sameness, the catholicity of Catholicism. Through my later adolescence I'd been nagged by spiritual dissatisfaction. I thought I was growing restless within the bounds of my faith; a more accurate interpretation might have been that I was being restricted by the dominant and frequently shallow expression of it. The chanted Mass was *different* – similar enough that I felt at home, but exotic enough that I was forced to reevaluate events almost from a convert's perspective. And as a result, some of the convert's fervor awoke in me. I became a connoisseur of Masses. I grew to crave the smell of incense, the taste of cheap wine. I hunted through old missals

for examples of Latin deponent verbs and trained myself not to wince at the ecclesiastic pronunciations (though if you have the misfortune of standing next to me during a Latin Gloria you'll probably catch me pronouncing 'benedicimus' as "benedikimus.") Even at the more familiar student Masses, I found myself making comparisons, taking notes on the atmosphere, and, for the first time in many moons, actually paying attention to the rite.

I'm going to ask a question, one that surfaced in my mind after the initial heady rush of rediscovering the Eucharist metamorphosed into a quieter appreciation. Doesn't this multiplicity of Mass forms

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strike at one of the fundamental claims of the faith – namely, that this is the one religion broad and true enough to embrace all people, regardless of race, sex, nationality, or social status? I mean, this is the Mass we're talking about – the salvific sacrament itself, the common thread that binds us together in one literal (if not precisely physical) body of faith, offered hourly all over the world, in every country. This is the methodology by which Catholics unite themselves with the Eternal Sacrifice of God Unto God, our avenue to escape from Profane to Sacred Time and Space, the Transubstantiation, the healing (even if only for a little while) of the rift between

Man and Maker. This is the ultimate Catholic expression of unity – and now there's more than one way to do it?

This would seem to be yet another excuse for division. When I first discovered the heterogeneity of Catholicism, I was excited. I felt that distinct thrill of discovery that had long since forsaken my spiritual endeavors. Most of all, I was exultant that I was finally being given choices – not between simple acceptance or rejection of Church teachings, but between options that had not yet been definitively declared

## I felt that distinct thrill of discovery that had long since forsaken my spiritual endeavors.

good or bad, proper or improper. This was new ground. This was where the truth was still being hunted, where it remained untamed and unfathomed by mortal ken. Maybe this was something of an overreaction to something so apparently trivial as whether or not to hold hands during the Our Father, or whether it was better to receive on hands or tongue. Still, it gave me a way to claim my faith, a way of experiencing conversion without having to forsake what I already believed. But at what cost? There are already enough disagreements within the faith, most of them running far deeper and bitterer than the sort of minor deviations my self-directed studies revolve around. Why add to them? Why give any parish permission to perform the Extraordinary (pre-Vatican II) Form? (And yes, you do need permission.)

I remain torn on the issue, but on the whole I tend to fall on the side of allowing, even encouraging, a proliferation of different Masses – within reason. My argument

is twofold. In the first place, it is possible for two Masses to be radically different in terms of ritual and still result in an appropriately consecrated and reverently received Eucharist – which is, after all, the whole point of the endeavor, the centerpiece of that glorious fossilized structure we call the Church, and I'll pay fifty bucks to whoever can show me a priest or Sunday-school student who says different. The unity is there; differing on (or bickering about) externals allows for expressions of faith to continue evolving while not eroding the fundamental mystical unity of the global congregation.

My second reason is more subjective. I need my Masses. I needed the standard form to lay the foundation of understanding, and I needed the Latin form to reveal the mystery. I need the student Masses to break me forcibly out of my self-absorbed shell and oblige me to experience community, and I need High Masses to fulfill my craving for tangible expressions of grace. I need dangerously revisionist, is-this-even-legitimate nontraditional Masses, once in a (very long) while, to keep me humble and remind me that the success of every human endeavor ultimately depends not on adherence to rules but on the mercy of God. And I need Low Masses, stark and startling, to engender an appropriate fear of the Lord. Maybe this says more about the relative sterility of my prayer life or my general imperceptiveness than it does about anything. All I know is, Latin, English, or Spanish, Low or High, tongue or hand, I've found a way to touch, for an hour every week, divinity.

# The Sacrament of Holy Orders

## The Effects of the Sacrament of Holy Orders

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1581-1586*

**T**his sacrament [of Holy Orders] configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.

*As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation this share in Christ's office is granted once for all. The sacrament of Holy Orders, like the other two, confers an indelible spiritual character and cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily.*

*It is true that someone validly ordained can, for grave reasons, be discharged from the obligations and functions linked to ordination, or can be forbidden to exercise them; but he cannot become a layman again in the strict sense, because the character imprinted by ordination is forever. The vocation and mission received on the day of his ordination mark him permanently.*

*Since it is ultimately Christ who acts and effects salvation through the ordained minister, the unworthiness of the latter does not prevent Christ from acting. St. Augustine states this forcefully:*

*"As for the proud minister, he is to be ranked with the devil. Christ's gift is not thereby profaned: what flows through him keeps its purity, and what passes through him remains dear and reaches the fertile earth.... The spiritual power of the sacrament is indeed comparable to light: those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it should pass through defiled beings, it is not itself defiled."*

*The grace of the Holy Spirit proper to this sacrament is configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Pastor, of whom the ordained is made a minister.*

*For the bishop, this is first of all a grace of strength ("the governing spirit": Prayer of Episcopal Consecration in the Latin rite): the grace to guide and defend his Church with strength and prudence as a father and pastor, with gratuitous love for all and a preferen-*

tial love for the poor, the sick, and the needy. This grace impels him to proclaim the Gospel to all, to be the model for his flock, to go before it on the way of sanctification by identifying himself in the Eucharist with Christ the priest and victim, not fearing to give his life for his sheep:

*Father, you know all hearts.  
You have chosen your servant for the office of bishop.  
May he be a shepherd to your holy flock,  
and a high priest blameless in your sight,  
ministering to you night and day;  
may he always gain the blessing of your favor  
and offer the gifts of your holy Church.  
Through the Spirit who gives the grace of high priesthood  
grant him the power  
to forgive sins as you have commanded,  
to assign ministries as you have decreed,  
and to loose from every bond by the authority which you  
gave to your apostles.  
May he be pleasing to you by his gentleness and purity of heart,  
presenting a fragrant offering to you,  
through Jesus Christ, your Son....*

## Concerning a Celibate Priesthood

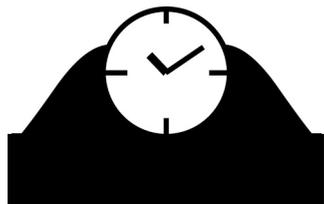
FR. C. HIGHTOWER, S.J.

*Interview*

**A**gain, for Roman Catholicism there are very few married priests. There are married priests. That's a reality. But in the Roman context there are no married priests for a variety of reasons.

It doesn't make a lot of sense for us and our last thousand years of tradition. The reality is that celibacy has been a tradition even to the early church mothers and early church fathers. When it became problematic was when people were not fully able to enter into their vows of celibacy or not fully enter into their vows of

marriage because of the priestly role. That's where it became problematic. Then, in the late middle ages, there were some political and economic considerations and that's why there isn't. Other traditions have it. The orthodox tradition has married clergy, and that seems to work fairly well for them. So, are we going to see married clergy in the future? Who knows?



# Dating God

KEVIN O'BRIEN

**I**t's a question all college seniors hear on almost a daily basis.

"What are you going to do after you graduate from college?"

You hear it from family members, friends, teachers, mentors, colleagues, and employers.

The question is never easy. Even when you have an answer to that question, it is still tough because you never know how everything will work out. After all, we're college students who have been living in the bubble environment that is college for four years, not Miss Cleo or John Edward – though it's probably healthier that we aren't either of those people.

For most of my senior year, I had no answer to that question. I usually skirted around the issue, thinking that it would be answered in due time.

After graduation, I told people who asked about my future that I was going to be a Jesuit priest and that I would be entering the California Novitiate for the Society of Jesus in August. I had worked in the Jesuit Residence at Gonzaga for three years; I had attended a Jesuit high school and college; and I admired many of the Jesuits I knew and wanted to be like them. The transition from college to the Jesuits seemed like a natural fit.

I was a novice for a year and a half. Now, I am no longer a religious, but working at Sacred Heart Nativity School in San Jose. I support graduates of this middle school – both academically and personally – and I teach a religion class to 7<sup>th</sup> graders once per week.

Just when you think that you have it all figured out – that you have your whole life planned – God throws you a curve ball

**“Some people may see my departure from the novitiate as a signal of failure. That’s how it works, right? Well... not exactly.”**

and you're back to square one, trying to figure it all out again.

Some people may see my departure from the novitiate as a signal of failure. That's how it works, right? I thought I was going to be a Jesuit priest when I graduated, and now I'm no longer on that track.

Well...not exactly.

Jesuit/religious life is not so much a pro-

fession. It seems that way on the surface to many people. After all, most people at Gonzaga and places all over the world know Jesuits in some kind of professional setting: Jesuits are educators, parish pastors, champions of social justice, etc.

But the calling to Jesuit life is not a calling to a profession.

If anything, the call to religious life is similar to the call to marriage. You dedicate yourself to vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience to the same extent that a couple would invest themselves in a relationship and, eventually, matrimony.

You don't get married just because it's convenient. You don't commit yourself to a person for a lifetime because you like

**“I am no longer a  
Jesuit novice. God  
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tough pill to  
swallow.”**

only one aspect of that person – Antoine Walker is learning that the hard way if you have seen “Basketball Wives” on VH1. Much like you have to love all the aspects of someone to properly commit to them in marriage, you have to love all the aspects of God and religious life to properly take and live the vows.

Before I entered, I thought entering the novitiate would mean I was committed for life the minute I stepped on the novitiate grounds. That couldn't be further from the case. If anything, Jesuit novice life is like dating. Instead of dating another person, I was dating God. I lived with God, I ate with God, I shared my happi-

ness with God, and I got pissed at God. I gave myself to God and, likewise, God gave a lot of Himself to me.

And it just didn't work out.

There are usually two kinds of breakups in relationships. There is the bitter, I -don't-want-this-to-happen breakup where one person holds a vindictive edge against another person for a long time, and there's the mutual breakup where two people part because it is the best for both people involved due to the circumstances surrounding their situation.

My breakup with God and the Jesuits falls into the latter.

In novitiate, you pray a lot. You have two hours a day for personal prayer, a 30-minute period for community prayer, two 15 minute periods for the Examen, and an hour-long daily Mass. You talk with God a lot during novitiate whether you want to or not because you really don't have a choice.

And during the past year, my talks with God were all the same: you're not happy and you need a change.

Unfortunately, for the most part during that year of prayer, I never had any answers to that question. I didn't have answers because I feared what the next step would be. What would I do? How would people think about my leaving? How will I support myself? Will I be settling and doing something I hate if I leave?

In some ways, they were the same questions I would be asking if I were contemplating breaking up with someone or if I felt somebody was about to break up with me. We all have been there. We put so much time, effort, and emotion into someone that we feel we can't live without that person and the relationship they give us. We fear our life will mean nothing without that relationship and it will all be doom and gloom and we will “never ex-

perience true love” again like some character in a sappy Nicholas Sparks novel.

And yet, we are always surprised in some way. With any breakup comes some light at the end of the tunnel. Sometimes it comes before the breakup, sometimes shortly after or sometimes a little later than we want.

My light at the end of the tunnel came in the form of the work I did at the Red Cloud Indian School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

For three months, I worked as a teacher’s aide in kindergarten and also coached middle school tackle football. I enjoyed teaching phonics to five and six year old native kids and I loved working in a classroom environment. That being said, the real excitement and gratification came out on the football field as I helped 12, 13 and 14-year old boys learn about and improve in football.

We weren’t very good. We went 1-6, had only 17 players and usually only had 11-12 players on game day due to academic issues – unlike the University of Florida we actually had to bench kids who didn’t have passing grades each week.

And yet, I experienced so much consolation on the football field. I saw God as I ran tackling drills, and took subtle delight in players improving from week to week and actually enjoying the game of football. The kids wanted me to come back as coach next year, and deep down, I wanted to tell them I would.

I had found what I wanted to do for a living: I wanted to work in a school: I wanted to teach, and I wanted to coach football, preferably in environments where the kids were at risk to a lot of dangers such as gangs and drugs – which were prevalent with the youth on the “Rez,” as natives called it.

Those sentences would have never been

muttered from my mouth back when I graduated from Gonzaga in May of 2009.

Like I said before, just goes to show you how tough the “What are you going to do when you graduate?” question can be. It’s like asking a baseball team, “What is your record going to be this year?” before Spring Training starts.

I am no longer a Jesuit novice. God and I are no longer dating exclusively, and it’s a bit of a tough pill to swallow. God and the Jesuits gave me so much. I volunteered as a chaplain at a hospital in South Central Los Angeles that mostly served African-American Protestants and Hispanic-American Catholics – and due to my appearance, I was often confused as Hispanic, though my Spanish is terrible at best. I worked as a counselor at a juvenile hall in Sylmar, which first planted the seeds of working with youth. And the summer before I left for Red Cloud, I served as a camp counselor for a summer camp run by the school at which I’m currently employed. The students still remember me from camp and it’s been a thrill to be with them again—though it can be tough at times to explain to them why I’m no longer studying to be a priest.

God gave me so much through the Jesuits. And likewise, I gave him everything I had as a novice. Even though I didn’t take vows, I lived them faithfully. I can definitely look back and not have any regrets on my time as a novice. I am a better person for the time we spent together.

Any breakup is hard. The transition is always rough, rocky and difficult. Even now, there are times when I look back and miss certain moments of the relationship we had during the past year and a half. Sometimes I miss the structure of the day. I miss the bond I had with my novice brothers, though, to be frank, I got along with some better than others, but it’s like that in any community – be

it a residence hall or religious novitiate.

In the grand scheme of things, it all happened for a reason. And, while we are not exclusive anymore, God and I still have a strong bond. The relationship we built has fostered something for the rest of my life that I know will prove to be invaluable in the path ahead of me. Yes, we are, perhaps, no longer Romeo and Juliet from Shakespeare's play, but more Jerry and Elaine from the show "Seinfeld." And, as Mr. Seinfeld will probably tell you, the re-

**“In the grand scheme of things, it all happened for a reason.”**

lationship he had with Ms. Benes was extremely significant in his life – seriously, just imagine that show with just George and Kramer – even if it wasn't one that fit into the mold of an exclusive, romantic rapport.

If I'm Jerry, then God is my Elaine, and I am grateful to have someone so important and impactful in my life. Our relationship didn't turn out as I expected or how I imagined when we first started out, but in the end, it is better that it turned out in contrast to my expectations. Instead of serving someone in an exclusive relationship as a Jesuit, I have someone who knows me in and out and allows me the freedom to be my truest self, which is not as a Jesuit. I have someone that not only allows me to follow my desires to teach and coach, but wants me to be happy doing it. Furthermore, that person finds joy in my own personal bliss.

Isn't that what any true, long-lasting relationship is all about?

## On Discernment of the Priesthood

FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

*Interview*

*Can you comment on the contemplation process for making the Sacrament of Holy Orders, living in the seminary, and those who take the vow and decide to leave the priesthood?*

Sometimes it's a question. Maybe he gets overwhelmed with work so he doesn't have time to pray or maintain a relationship with Almighty God and consequently falls into something where the only solution is to get out of the priesthood. But to talk on the young man entering the seminary, you don't enter the seminary with the idea that if it works it works, you enter the seminary with the idea that you want to become a priest. That's a decision you made knowing that you have a good number of years

**“You enter the seminary with actuality; “this is what I want to do.” So you give it your all.”**

to consider if it is really for you. You can consider, “Maybe God hasn't called me into this kind of life.” I don't think there is anything wrong with that. I don't think you enter the seminary or the religious life with the idea of I want to give it a try.” No, you enter it with actuality; “this is what I want to do.” So you give it your all.

If God hasn't called you to it, that's ok. Remember, the diocesan priest is entering a training program, he takes a promise of celibacy, that is, he promises not to get married, and there are no questions

of vows, strictly speaking. When they enter a religious order, say the Franciscans or Dominicans, eventually, when you finish, you do take the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and you promise to follow the rule of the order, regardless of order. Then once you take your vows, the idea is that you fully intend to stay. Again if something happens or circumstances changes you can ask to be dispensed from those vows. Oftentimes that person should be commended for

being honest enough to recognize the situation and not to pursue what God intends. But that's after prayer and a lot of personal discernment. I hate to use that word because it's thrown around a lot, to determine that this is not the life for him. After a man is a priest it's tragic if he leaves because he should have had time to make up his mind. He might have gotten tempted into something else but that's not the idea to leave once you're ordained as a priest.

# Women & the Church

## Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of JOHN PAUL II *to the Bishops of the* Catholic Church *on* Reserving Priestly Ordination *to* Men Alone

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,*

*1. Priestly ordination, which hands on the office entrusted by Christ to his Apostles of teaching, sanctifying and governing the faithful, has in the Catholic Church from the beginning always been reserved to men alone. This tradition has also been faithfully maintained by the Oriental Churches.*

*When the question of the ordination of women arose in the Anglican Communion, Pope Paul VI, out of fidelity to his office of safeguarding the Apostolic Tradition, and also with a view to removing a new obstacle placed in the way of Christian unity, reminded Anglicans of the position of the Catholic Church: "She holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church."*

*But since the question had also become the subject of debate among theologians and in*

certain Catholic circles, Paul VI directed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to set forth and expound the teaching of the Church on this matter. This was done through the *Declaration Inter Insigniores*, which the Supreme Pontiff approved and ordered to be published.

2. The Declaration recalls and explains the fundamental reasons for this teaching, reasons expounded by Paul VI, and concludes that the Church “does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination.” To these fundamental reasons the document adds other theological reasons which illustrate the appropriateness of the divine provision, and it also shows clearly that Christ’s way of acting did not proceed from sociological or cultural motives peculiar to his time. As Paul VI later explained: “The real reason is that, in giving the Church her fundamental constitution, her theological anthropology-thereafter always followed by the Church’s Tradition- Christ established things in this way.”

In the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, I myself wrote in this regard: “In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised the same freedom with which, in all his behavior, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time.”

In fact the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles attest that this call was made in accordance with God’s eternal plan; Christ chose those whom he willed (cf. Mk 3:13-14; Jn 6:70), and he did so in union with the Father, “through the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:2), after having spent the night in prayer (cf. Lk 6:12). Therefore, in granting admission to the ministerial priesthood, the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord’s way of acting in choosing the twelve men whom he made the foundation of his Church (cf. Rv 21:14). These men did not in fact receive only a function which could thereafter be exercised by any member of the Church; rather they were specifically and intimately associated in the mission of the Incarnate Word himself (cf. Mt 10:1, 7-8; 28:16-20; Mk 3:13-16; 16:14-15). The Apostles did the same when they chose fellow workers who would succeed them in their ministry. Also included in this choice were those who, throughout the time of the Church, would carry on the Apostles’ mission of representing Christ the Lord and Redeemer.

3. Furthermore, the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, received neither the mission proper to the Apostles nor the ministerial priesthood clearly shows that the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity, nor can it be construed as discrimination against them. Rather, it is to be seen as the faithful observance of a plan to be ascribed to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe.

The presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the Church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable. As the *Declaration Inter Insigniores* points out, “the Church desires that Christian women should become fully aware of the greatness of their mission: today their role is of capital importance both for the renewal and humanization of society and for the rediscovery by believers of the true face of the Church.”

The New Testament and the whole history of the Church give ample evidence of the presence in the Church of women, true disciples, witnesses to Christ in the family and in society, as well as in total consecration to the service of God and of the Gospel. “By defending the

*dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has shown honor and gratitude for those women who-faithful to the Gospel-have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God. They are the holy martyrs, virgins and mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to their faith and passed on the Church's faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel."*

*Moreover, it is to the holiness of the faithful that the hierarchical structure of the Church is totally ordered. For this reason, the Declaration Inter Insigniores recalls: "the only better gift, which can and must be desired, is love (cf. 1 Cor 12 and 13). The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ministers but the saints."*

*4. Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force.*

*Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.*

*Invoking an abundance of divine assistance upon you, venerable brothers, and upon all the faithful, I impart my apostolic blessing.*

.....

# Resigning from Catholicism: I'm Tired of Misogyny

ASHLEY RUDERMAN

Even now, I understand Catholicism to be an inescapable aspect of my life, and that happens when your mother received the sacrament of Confirmation from the bishop who would later become Pope John Paul II. This beloved Pope might have been considered a saint by all of Poland the moment white smoke spilt from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel. I was raised with the patriotic understanding that he was the best the Church had ever seen. Above all, I assumed that one cannot criticize the Pope and call oneself Catholic at the same time.

My connection to the Pope, whom-ever he may be at the time, has never stretched beyond the mere coincidence that my mother belonged to the diocese John Paul came from. And yet it has been one statement in particular made by the present Pope, Benedict XVI, that has effectively pushed me toward my rapidly disintegrating Catholic faith.

On July 15, 2010, the Vatican issued a statement that "astonished many Catholics [with] the inclusion of the attempt to ordain women in the list of "more grave delicts," or offenses, which included pe-

dophilia, as well as heresy, apostasy, and schism” (Donadio). You can reference Article 5, Part 1, of the Vatican’s Substantive Norms to further investigate the Church’s

## “My internal conflict rests with the Vatican’s strict incrimination of women who desire ordination.”

red tape. For the sake of brevity, Canon Law 1378 outlines the punishments by which clergy convicted of ordaining women, and the women seeking ordination, are subjected to: one such punishment is excommunication.

What about womanliness presumes women to be unsuited for the position of priest? Why is the woman in pursuit of ordination considered a criminal in the eyes of the Church? What is it about a chromosome that makes her intellectual and spiritual capacity to share the word of God less than that of a man? If the Church understands “men and women to be equal and reliant upon one another,” (Cor 11:11-12), how might the Church justify the privilege of Holy Orders to only one gender? Aren’t men and women equally in communion with God?

Canon Law 1024 states that “A baptized male alone receives sacred ordination validly,” and therefore offers no reason as to why these baptized males alone might choose to be ordained. However, the cry of the common Catholic provides two possibilities to consider: Women as priests would break from Catholic tradition and women cannot physically embody Jesus in the way that male priests can.

Catholics like the idea of the Catholic Church because it is considered “tradi-

tional.” However, if the Church never broke from its original, 2,000 year old structure, we’d still be subjected to the same Church prior to centuries worth of reform that have shaped it to be the Church we know today. The Church constantly picks and chooses what Catholics around the world are to honor as tradition. The celebration of Mass in vernacular languages was a departure from “traditional” Latin, instigated by the Vatican II Council only 50 years ago. If the Vatican II Council could alter how Catholics celebrate Mass, then the gender of the celebrant has the potential to include men and women. The Catholic Church departs from one “tradition” in order to install a new “tradition,” and thereby asserts tradition as a malleable concept. Preserving tradition cannot justify the why women are to be prohibited from ordination.

The Catholic Church alludes to the argument that women cannot become priests due to their inability to physically resemble Jesus, which appears to be a critical component of priesthood. Is it in your pastor’s physical appearance upon which the image of Christ resonates? Or, is it within the priest’s capacity as a spiritual leader that allows this individual to echo the word of God against the walls of a parish? The Church, in striving to preserve the physical embodiment of a man who’s appearance we can only speculate, privileges gender to an alarming, and unnecessary extent. The potential that rests within an individual to dedicate his or her life to priesthood should not rely upon a detail as trivial as gender.

My internal conflict rests with the Vatican’s strict incrimination of women who desire ordination. To say that the ordination of women is *crime* makes a strong statement against the value of a woman. What is it about a woman religious, who has already dedicated her life to the work of God, which makes her so unfit to serve as a priest? An unwillingness to depart from tradition is by no means a

legitimate answer. The fact that she does not physically embody Christ in her appearance is an even more ridiculous, and still illegitimate, rationale. What makes a woman's capacity to share her faith in the setting of priesthood any less than a man's? I keep asking the same questions, and yet the Church cannot provide me with a non-discriminatory answer. No priest, or Jesuit, whom I have consulted has been able to. And yet when I turn to the Vatican, the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church makes statements allowing for the "ordination of women" to be strung next to "pedophilic priests," as equally severe crimes. I'm hanging up

Catholicism until I am valued as a woman of faith who could receive the same Divine calling that any man who is a priest has heard. I want to belong to a Roman Catholic Church that is not misogynistic.

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# INTER INSIGNIORES

## *Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*

*by the* Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith  
October 15, 1976

*... In the life of the Church herself, as history shows us, women have played a decisive role and accomplished tasks of outstanding value. One has only to think of the foundresses of the great religious families, such as Saint Clare and Saint Teresa of Avila. The latter, moreover, and Saint Catherine of Siena, have left writings so rich in spiritual doctrine that Pope Paul VI has included them among the Doctors of the Church. Nor could one forget the great number of women who have consecrated themselves to the Lord for the exercise of charity or for the missions, and the Christian wives who have had a profound influence on their families, particularly for the passing on of the faith to their children.*

*But our age gives rise to increased demands: "Since in our time women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various sectors of the Church's apostolate." This charge of the Second Vatican Council has already set in motion the whole process of change now taking place: these various experiences of course need to come to maturity. But as Pope Paul VI also remarked, a very large number of Christian communities are already benefiting from the apostolic commitment of women. Some of these women are called to take part in councils set up for pastoral reflection, at the diocesan or parish level; and the Apostolic See has brought women into some of its working bodies...*

*... The Catholic Church has never felt that priestly or episcopal ordination can be validly conferred on women. A few heretical sects in the first centuries, especially Gnostic ones, entrusted the exercise of the priestly ministry to women: this innovation was immediately*

*noted and condemned by the Fathers, who considered it as unacceptable in the Church. It is true that in the writings of the Fathers one will find the undeniable influence of prejudices unfavourable to women, but nevertheless, it should be noted that these prejudices had hardly any influence on their pastoral activity, and still less on their spiritual direction. But over and above considerations inspired by the spirit of the times, one finds expressed—especially in the canonical documents of the Antiochian and Egyptian traditions—this essential reason, namely, that by calling only men to the priestly Order and ministry in its true sense, the Church intends to remain faithful to the type of ordained ministry willed by the Lord Jesus Christ and carefully maintained by the Apostles...*

*... Jesus Christ did not call any woman to become part of the Twelve. If he acted in this way, it was not in order to conform to the customs of his time, for his attitude towards women was quite different from that of his milieu, and he deliberately and courageously broke with it...*

*... In his itinerant ministry Jesus was accompanied not only by the Twelve but also by a group of women: “Mary, surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, Susanna, and several others who provided for them out of their own resources” (Lk 8:2-3). Contrary to the Jewish mentality, which did not accord great value to the testimony of women, as Jewish law attests, it was nevertheless women who were the first to have the privilege of seeing the risen Lord, and it was they who were charged by Jesus to take the first paschal message to the Apostles themselves (cf. Mt 28:7-10; Lk 24:9-10; Jn 20:11-18), in order to prepare the latter to become the official witnesses to the Resurrection.*

*It is true that these facts do not make the matter immediately obvious. This is no surprise, for the questions that the Word of God brings before us go beyond the obvious. In order to reach the ultimate meaning of the mission of Jesus and the ultimate meaning of Scripture, a purely historical exegesis of the texts cannot suffice. But it must be recognized that we have here a number of convergent indications that make all the more remarkable the fact that Jesus did not entrust the apostolic charge to women. Even his Mother, who was so closely associated with the mystery of her Son, and whose incomparable role is emphasized by the Gospels of Luke and John, was not invested with the apostolic ministry. This fact was to lead the Fathers to present her as the example of Christ’s will in this domain; as Pope Innocent III repeated later, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, “Although the Blessed Virgin Mary surpassed in dignity and in excellence all the Apostles, nevertheless it was not to her but to them that the Lord entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven”...*

*... It is sometimes said and written in books and periodicals that some women feel that they have a vocation to the priesthood. Such an attraction, however noble and understandable, still does not suffice for a genuine vocation. In fact a vocation cannot be reduced to a mere personal attraction, which can remain purely subjective. Since the priesthood is a particular ministry of which the Church has received the charge and the control, authentication by the Church is indispensable here and is a constitutive part of the vocation: Christ chose “those he wanted” (Mk:13). On the other hand, there is a universal vocation of all the baptized to the exercise of the royal priesthood by offering their lives to God and by giving witness for his praise.*

*Women who express a desire for the ministerial priesthood are doubtless motivated by the desire to serve Christ and the Church. And it is not surprising that, at a time when they are becoming more aware of the discriminations to which they have been subject, they*

*should desire the ministerial priesthood itself. But it must not be forgotten that the priesthood does not form part of the rights of the individual, but stems from the economy of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The priestly office cannot become the goal of social advancement; no merely human progress of society or of the individual can of itself give access to it: it is of another order.*

*It therefore remains for us to meditate more deeply on the nature of the real equality of the baptized which is one of the great affirmations of Christianity: equality is in no way identity, for the Church is a differentiated body, in which each individual has his or her role. The roles are distinct, and must not be confused; they do not favor the superiority of some vis-a-vis the others, nor do they provide an excuse for jealousy; the only better gift, which can and must be desired, is love (cf. 1 Cor 12-13). The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ministers but the saints.*

*The Church desires that Christian women should become fully aware of the greatness of their mission: today their role is of capital importance, both for the renewal and humanization of society and for the rediscovery by believers of the true face of the Church.*

## ..... No One Role .....

DR. JANE RINEHART

*Interview*

*What is the role of women in the Catholic Church today?*

**W**ell, I would say that there isn't any one role. By saying that, I put myself in opposition to people who I think want to define something like "eternal womanhood," and use that as a rationale for particular work that women should do which, by implication, means particular work that women shouldn't do within the church because of a notion of complementary gifts that are often attached to this elevated version of Womanhood. I think it's better for the church, for women, for men – for all of us – if we don't try to stipulate roles, particularly those that are tied to assigned characteristics rather

than achieved characteristics. I was assigned "female" at birth, but I have a bunch of characteristics that are the basis of what I bring to any situation, that I have achieved by my training, by my relationships, by the experiences I have had, my own personal story. So, I'd like to say there is a whole lot of things that women can do, just as there are things that men can do. We ought to be more focused on what gifts an individual brings to this mystical body, to this celebration of the way in which we are both unified and also very much, each of us uniquely, loved by God. So I am not comfortable definitely defining the role of women in the contemporary church.

I think I'm on good ground because as I understand both the New Testa-

ment voice of Jesus and the acts of the earliest Christian communities, both provided tremendous opportunities for women that later shut down as the church became more accommodated to its culture. I don't think we have to accept that, that shutting down. I prefer to think what we should accept is the wide-open-fresh-breezes-blowing approach of Jesus of Nazareth, which is "everyone is welcome and accepted and has work to do within this kingdom of God that I have come to proclaim." I give the church credit for in its earliest years actually standing against a really narrow version of what it meant to be a woman. Simply opening up lifetime celibacy of women and the communities of sisters and the different religious orders did wonders. That is a magnificent achievement for the Catholic Church. All those different charisms, all those different works in the world that were associated with the different works of spirituality and role of community life. Just the recognition they brought – not forcing women to marry and give birth. There are other ways that women can contribute besides through motherhood. I was fortunate enough to know many of those women, to be educated by them. I think that was one way that the church said that women are not confined by this notion that they have to be their father's daughter, their husband's wife, their children's mother. They can also be consecrated virgins. They can be members of communities that cross the oceans and travel under hard conditions to Spokane, Washington and start a hospital. That makes me very uncomfortable with saying there's the role because, how would that encompass the diversity of Hildegard Bingen, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, St. Frances de Chantal, who was a wife and a mother and then entered a religious community. There are many parts that a woman can play in the church. I think the church should rejoice

in its charism of really knowing that from the beginning. All these woman followers of Jesus who really facilitated His short time on earth made it possible for Him to speak and gather all these crowds and move around as he did.

.....

## Some Traditions Need Transformations

FR. TIM CLANCY, S.J.

*Interview*

*What is the role of women in the church today and how can women best actualize their roles?*

The role of women in the church is one of those areas where I am kind of in a family fight. I think women have played an important role in the church but they haven't gotten recognized for how important they are. American Catholicism wouldn't be the same without religious women such as the nuns and sisters. They basically taught generations of Catholics. You can

**“I think women have played an important role in the church but they haven't gotten recognized for how important they are.”**

tell how important their work is when as soon they disappear, Catholic primary schools disappear because you can't afford to pay people what you'd have to pay them to do this. But you didn't have to pay the nuns. So they have provided

this incalculable service. Without them and the priest, but even more without them - because they were teaching at the primary school level and, to a degree, at the secondary level - American Catholicism would never have entered the mainstream as fast as it did. It's just a remarkable story. But then you have this whole raft of contemplative religious orders that some of my favorite mystics are a part of. They're incredibly religious women: mystics from the Middle Ages and also contemporary nuns.

The Catholic hospital system is basically a creation of women religious orders, Providence, here in Spokane, for example. They have done tremendous work, these women dedicating their lives, but they are not given the kind of recognition they deserve. In fact, they are often treated with suspicion by people of authority. There's this investigation of women religious orders in the United States and it's just horse shit. The Vatican has gotten a lot of push back on this. So much so that they've replaced the guy in charge of it.

*What's his name?*

He's an Irish guy. The original guy was Cardinal Rode from Slovenia. He had a hard time with Vatican II and thought we ought to put these women back in convents.

*What's the Magisterium's logic for keeping women out of the priesthood at present?*

There are two basic arguments. One is that Jesus didn't ordain any women as priests, to which the response is Jesus didn't ordain anybody. But there were not any women among the twelve, which is kind of seen as proto-ordination. But on the other hand there were women leaders in the early church, including women leaders who Paul refers to as apostles. Even though they are not on the official list of the gospels. But Paul isn't on the official list of the apostles either. He calls himself an apostle but he

wasn't an appointed an apostle by Jesus, he didn't know Jesus when he was alive. So that first argument is based on saying that women didn't have these offices, but the church didn't have these offices. We are reconstructing the seeds of these offices in the early church and it's just not clear. We don't have very good historical evidence to say that women were subordinate to men in the early church. But that's one of the arguments that Jesus didn't tell us to ordain women. Jesus didn't appoint a woman as an apostle so

**“We don't have very good historical evidence to say that women were subordinate to men in the early church.”**

who are we to change Jesus' practice on this? Of course, Jesus didn't choose any gentiles to be apostles either. So it's a question of how substantive this change will be, you know. So that's one set of arguments the historical biblical argument.

The second argument is more of a metaphysical argument based on this idea of complementarity that men and women have different roles and woman's role is more maternal and the male role is more paternal. We are talking about making them fathers. So the priesthood is a paternal role rather than a maternal role. Now the other argument that has been used for a very long time is that woman are inferior. But that argument you can't use anymore so you're going to get the same conclusion but you got to use a different argument to get you to that conclusion. John Paul II focused on this complementarity argument, that men and women complement one another they shouldn't be doing the same things they should be doing complimentary

things. This doesn't jive very well with contemporary civil life. But there it is. If the Vatican really thought that women should have authority equal men, it's just that they shouldn't be priests, then why aren't women leading congregations at the Vatican? Why aren't women having offices in the Vatican bureaucracy of significance, because they certainly

“Now the other argument that has been used for a very long time is that woman are inferior. But that argument you can't use anymore so you're going to get the same conclusion but you got to use a different argument to get you to that conclusion.”

don't have to be run by priests? Now to be fair, the equal role of women in civil life is less than one hundred years old. It was less than one hundred years ago that women had the right to vote, and in the United States and I think Britain was the only place to make that law prior. The idea that you could still be feminine and have a job outside the home, that's really post 1960s. So it's more a question of the church being a conservative institution and it's not going to be moving at the same pace as the evolution of sensibilities and the general culture. It's going to want to be more conservative, kind of following the rear instead of being on the cutting edge.

# Feminist Deconstructions of Catholic Doctrine

DR. CATE SIEJK

*Interview*

*What are some of the bigger issues that need to be addressed about feminist Christian doctrine?*

**W**ell certainly I think the issue of women's ordination is an issue in the church and is an issue for a lot of Roman Catholic women. If you look at the question historically, it became a much more pressing issue after Vatican II in the 1960s when Roman Catholic women, as part of the Roman Catholic laity, saw themselves as having the opportunity to have more of a leadership role in the church. As the ordination opened up in more mainline Protestant communities, Roman Catholic women really saw it as a potential for them. So along with the ecumenical movement that came out of Vatican II where Catholic women could go to Harvard or go to Princeton, I think it was a much bigger issue during that second wave of feminism in the 1960's. But I think that after a certain period of time and with the reaction that the hierarchy has had towards women's ordination, I think that women are less inclined to care about it. Not only that, but there is more feminist theological writing on the need to reform, or transform, the priesthood as we have it now from a very patriarchal structured institution to something much more collaborative. So feminist theologians, while I think that they still care about women being ordained - I can't speak in absolute certainty on this - there's probably more concern about the transformation of the

institution itself than on a female priesthood.

*What are some of the tenants of the church that are transformable?*

In 1975, Pope Paul VI announced that the Papal Theological Commission and the Pontifical Biblical Commission would study the role of women in ministry. This is after Vatican II. The Vatican then, along with the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and with the approval of Pope Paul VI, issued a declaration entitled, "On the question of the admission of women into the ministerial priesthood." The argument they gave for not ordaining women was a threefold argument.

Number One: That it was a long held church tradition that women not be ordained.

Number Two: The witness of the sacred Bible scripture.

Number Three: The religious symbol, "In Persona Christi," which means women cannot adequately represent the person of Christ.

Each of those has been very soundly critiqued by feminist theologians. The long held church tradition—there's no evidence that women weren't at some point involved in leadership roles, and even leadership roles as someone who would preside over the Eucharist. We know that in the early church because Christians were so unpopular in the Roman Empire, many times Christians or these followers of Jesus would come together in people's homes, and oftentimes it would be a woman's home. Also, there is some indication from artwork that women did preside in these Eucharistic celebrations. But the hierarchy wants to argue that it's never been. We don't know that for sure.

Secondly, the witness of sacred scripture—To say that Jesus had twelve disciples and they were all men is perhaps missing the point, which is that the twelve is

really a number that connects with the Hebrew Scriptures. The importance is not so much that they were men as it is the number. You know, the twelve tribes of Israel, represented by the twelve apostles.

The final issue of religious symbol "In Persona Christi" is a huge difficulty because if you have to look exactly like Jesus in order to represent the Christ then we should only be ordaining Israeli men. The other argument that is added to that is that when we talk about Jesus as the human person, yes, he was a male. But Jesus as the Christ, as Paul says, "In Christ Jesus there is no male, female, Jew or gentile." Christ Jesus the Savior is non-gendered - there doesn't have to be the kind of emphasis on his maleness because it's not important to his saving activity.

So then we have Pope John Paul II, who wrote a piece called, "On Ordination of Women." He claims, along with Paul VI,

**“In persona Christi”  
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men.”**

that the Roman Catholic Church has “no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women.” Then, in November 1995, Cardinal Ratzinger, who is now our present Pope Benedict XVI, wrote a response underscoring that the non-ordination of women is virtually an infallible teaching, although technically, an apos-

toxic letter is not the usual mechanism for an infallible papal pronouncement. So it's just a matter of the hierarchy trying to ratchet up the authority with which this decision has been made. They try to argue for it based upon what is considered

**“I don't think that just adding women to the pot and stirring is the answer. I think what we need is radical transformation.”**

not to be a very strong ground for arguing. Pope John II emphasized that along with not having the authority to ordain women that this is a definitive teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and therefore no longer open to debate. So since that time, as far as the hierarchy is concerned, it has been an issue not even to be discussed amongst theologians or even among the laity. But that hasn't stopped people from doing that.

*As a feminist, how would you respond to a woman religious who professes that she is in fact a feminist but not only recognizes the right of the Magisterium to make decisions for the church but supports its decision to keep women from entering the priesthood?*

There are women that would consider themselves feminists who would agree with what the pope says. Ann Clifford would call them reformist feminist theologians. In other words, they are not interested in great changes in terms of transformation. And they don't necessarily want to see women become priests; they would rather see women have leadership roles in the church perhaps in education, being a professor, being a director

of religious education, that sort of thing. So I think there are women who would, you know, certainly agree with these arguments but they are not necessarily the arguments that I would say are valid.

*Is there anything else you would like to add?*

No, I have already said that I think the issue now for many feminist theologians is not so much the issue of getting ordained as it is working towards the transformation of the institution of priesthood and understanding it and crafting it in ways that are more collaborative and less hierarchical and patriarchal. But I don't think that just adding women to the pot and stirring is the answer. I think what we need is radical transformation.

*What does that look like?*

Radical transformation for me is restructuring the church in terms of having a much more collaborative experience of what the church is. It would not be operating on a hierarchal model but operating on a model that would be more collaborative and not have so much stratification in terms of who's having a voice. I don't think we have to eradicate leadership but I think the people who are in leadership need to be informed by a variety of voices and a variety of people. I think that Roman Catholicism is certainly shifting from the kind of religion it has been. Traditionally, it has been a European white religion. Well, the Roman Catholic Church in Europe and America is really suffering. Where it's growing is in Latin America and in Africa and places that we would consider to be third world countries. So it's becoming a different kind of institution as the numbers of people who are American and European and white begin to decline and the church begins to become represented more globally I think we will begin to see more changes.

# A Tough Habit to Break

SR. MARY EUCHARISTA

**W**omen are the crown of creation and participate in the common priesthood of all the faithful in the Church. They are equal to men in dignity and as persons. Since the Second Vatican Council, women have been called to serve at Mass, to be lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and to be involved in the areas that before only men, and indeed, usually clerics, could minister. Personally, I think it is an awesome privilege, and I get involved wherever I am called!

Regarding the priesthood, the Church does not call women to ordination for several reasons. First, even though Christ broke a lot of cultural norms and tossed aside taboos in Jewish times in favor of women, He never invited them to the ministerial circle of priests. Even Mary, more worthy than any priest, was not called to this work. If Christ didn't invite women to ordination, then the Church cannot supersede this choice or it would be a break in Tradition. The Catholic Church holds Tradition as part of our two-fold rule of Faith alongside Scripture, so this tradition of male priesthood carries on as in ancient times.

Another reason is that the priest is a type of "icon" where, in observing him, the Church sees Christ, who is a man rather than a woman.

Another interesting note is that the priest has often been understood as taking Christ's place as the bridegroom of the Church. This symbolism would be lost on the faithful if the gender were changed.

In addition to this being such a firmly held tradition in the Church (look at *Inter Insigniores*), Venerable Pope John Paul II reiterated this traditional stance in his *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, where he stated that only men could be ordained and that this was to be held firmly by all the Faithful. Seeking God's Will is an important part of pursuing universal holiness. We all are engaged in this. I do

**"Women are the crown of creation and participate in the common priesthood of all the faithful in the Church."**

not see this as unfair or as a patriarchal or political decision, but rather as a different call to ministry for women in the Church. There are a lot of options, and I am glad of that.

. . . . .

## A Priestly People

FR. KEVIN WATERS, S.J.

*Interview*

[Fr. Water's same response - in a different context - can be found in the "Evangelization" dialogue on page 88.]

**U**nderstanding why the Catholic Church maintains a singularly male priesthood comes down to a historical understanding. Pope John Paul II declared that even he did not have the authority to deal with the issue. His declaration has closed off discussion for a male and female priesthood at this time. We know however, that over the centuries the Church evolves in its understand-

ing of many theological matters. This may be the case regarding female ordination. However, at present, we can only deal with the time that we have and the historical past.

I think that evangelization has an enormous function here on the topic of female roles within the Church. Evangelization has to do with what we are all called

**“When we come to the Church, we need to remember that the Church is not a democracy.”**

to do as a “priestly people.” Before the Second Vatican Council, a “priestly people” was used, with regard to everybody that was baptized, rarely. But it has become an important term today. Making men and women of the Church a “priestly people” empowers and makes responsible everyone for evangelization and the promotion of the Gospel and bringing the Good News of salvation to all people. We are vested with that responsibility; it is not simply the role of an ordained clergy. We have seen this attitude of a “priestly people” in effect for many centuries, particularly with the role women have played in education. In this country, there is no question that the strength of the Catholic Church is founded on the parochial school system where women, religious women, were the educators. They had an equal share of the teaching with the pastors and priests of the parish where the school was situated. In fact, they had an extensive role because they were with their students every day whereas the faithful only saw the priest on Sundays. His instruction was usually included in a sermon whereas going to

the classroom day in and day out and promoting what the Gospel means, and explaining it to the students, was enormously effective and continues to be effective today. That responsibility has historically rested in the hands of the women religious. Most of the Catholic schools in the country are now taught by laity; the priestly people provide a very key function to that ministry.

Regarding the ordained clergy: I think that sometimes there has been an exaggerated view of what a priest does. The Church has gone through a lot of transitions with regards to that role. At one time the priest was like a king in his parish and everybody cowed down to the pastor. One doesn’t have to go around the block very many times to see that that isn’t the case anymore. The priest is able to administer the sacraments. Essentially that is what the priest does. But that’s a very limited part of what a priest needs to do. Above all, a priest needs to teach. Jesus says, “Go therefore and teach all nations.” his emphasis is on teaching. It is to console the bereaved and comfort the sick and the dying, all these things. That is the responsibility of a priestly people, not just of the priest. I think that the whole thing has been exaggerated in one way or another of what a priest does or ought to do.

The second question we must answer is how democratic principles apply in this matter. One thing that has happened in the last hundred years has been the emancipation of women, where women have been given equality with men – it was centuries overdue. For example, voting and owning property, both these things women were not able to do in previous centuries. That has evolved immeasurably. Also, since World War II, women working outside the home have become far more common than simply working as mothers or as housewives. In fact, a

minority of American women today are solely mothers and housewives. This has provided an enormous equality with women and men in the work place, and as bread earners. We still have problems where the compensation for the same work is not the same in many places and this is indeed unjust. But when we come to the Church, we need to remember that the Church is not a democracy, and that is something that is very diffi-

cult for us to grapple with in our society. The Church's structure and basic nature is monarchical. We have a Pope who is a representative of Christ. Christ clearly is the head of the Church, so many of the democratic processes simply do not apply. However, the election of a pope, the choice of a bishop, should have far greater and wider constituency than it currently has. These are issues that most likely will be addressed in the future.

.....

# Sex & the Sacrament of Marriage

**E**veryone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

*"In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity."<sup>119</sup> "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God."*

*Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." All human generations proceed from this union.*

*Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. In the Sermon on the Mount, he interprets God's plan strictly: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. The tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality.*

From *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2333-2336

# Concerning Sex and Marriage

## FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

### *Interview*

*What is the purpose of sex and marriage as outlined by the church and why is it as such?*

**T**he whole subject of sex and marriage we find very uncomfortable to deal with because we know that you know we are not married and we don't experience the same problems that other married people experience. But temptations of the flesh - we have them just like anyone else. We are not iron men in that sense. What we do is try to clarify and reason and give instruction to the younger Jesuits and that, yes, we have the tendencies but those tendencies have to be channelized in such a way so that all that ordinarily sexual energy can be retranslated into zeal and excitement for doing what we are doing. The purpose of sex is obviously in our genetic code and something we have to do. So the idea is we have these strong tendencies to make sure that it does happen.

On the other hand, we have chosen not to use those faculties and practice celibacy unless joined in Holy Matrimony. Sex

outside of marriage doesn't make much sense. I don't know of any other ways that babies come except through human sexual activity. Also, I don't know a better institution other than marriage to raise these children under that can responsibly take care of them. So obviously what I am proposing is something that flies in the face of modern sexual attitudes. Where people feel free to have sex outside of marriage and think it's okay and perfectly acceptable is really not the case. Because, as I say, the consequences are that babies come from sex and the best way to raise babies is through marriage. I am not saying it's not difficult, especially now as marriage has been postponed for young people to the thirties because you have to have time to develop your careers and all of that. So that does extend the time of not being married, and people lose patience. I don't know any other answer to that question.

*[Fr. Via speaks elaborates in the "Penance" dialogue on page 96].*

## Examining the Church's Position

DR. PATRICK MCCORMICK

### *Interview*

*What is the church's position on sex and marriage and why does the church hold the position that it does?*

**T**o answer that question on sex and marriage I really need to make a distinction between the official church and the practice of the larger Catholic community because they are not always the same. So the answer to your question is relatively simple and that is that the official church teaches

that the meaning of human sexuality can be found in two dimensions and that is that sexuality is meant to draw two people together in a steadfast communion with one another so it should be characterized by commitment and intimacy and by quality and mutuality. And those are the notions that we think about related to the bond of particular friendship that we call marriage. So the church would argue that because of the nature of sex,

intercourse is the most intimate sign we can give to another person and it should also embody the richest language. So therefore it should only take place in a context of people who are deeply and profoundly friends and the friendship which the church commands is marriage.

The other dimension for the church is that human sexuality, the church argues, has a procreative dimension. It has a unitive dimension and a procreative dimension. The procreative dimension is that sexuality should be open to the generation of life. This is a more problematic or troubling part of the teaching, basically the church's argument here is that the love which unites people in marriage should not be narcissistic in nature, so I should not just be looking for my spouse to please me or for me to please my spouse. Love should have a generative quality it should create some larger service to the greater common good. The church teaches that about families, about villages, that each person within the community has an obligation to the larger common good. So the family should serve the village, the village should serve the state. But the village also serves the village, there's a balance between the two. In the concrete this procreative dimension does not always work out to be the generation of new life. For example my parents are in their eighties and if my mother or father had died in the last decade and one of them had remarried it's not physiologically possible for my mother to have conceived another child, it's just not going to happen. And it's very unlikely that my father would marry a woman of child birthing age. But the church would have blessed any wedding in which they would have entered into. My sisters would not have blessed it but the church would have blessed it. Now why would we say that the marriage of these two people which is physiologically not open to procreation, how could that have a procreative element to it? I think our basic argument would be that they

are not doing anything to interfere with procreative dimension they can't control the procreative dimension and if they could they would have children. I don't actually think that's true, I don't think my mother and father would have children at eighty nor do I think that's a reasonable thing but that would be the general argument. Of course as you can imagine the flashpoint of this issue would be around homosexuality.

The church's position has been this since the Middle Ages, based on an understanding of natural law which some would argue is too restrictive and others would say is fine. But the church's basic argument is that our bodies, my body, your body, your sister's body, your mother's body; they reflect a certain potential or ability, a certain structure of the body. So the penis, the vagina, the uterus, the testicles, they are part of our sexual identity. My father could marry another woman who is passed child bearing age because the argument is that his body reflects a certain complementarily or fit or orientation towards that. What's also true is that that notion of the natural law, which some scholars call too restrictive or too physicalist, because it's based strictly on the body, doesn't take into consideration the whole person. Some critics of official teaching would say that a homosexual person, by orientation, is oriented towards love; is oriented towards physical love in another person and culminates that physical love in an erotic way, in intercourse or in some kind of sexual encounter with a person of the same gender. So for the last forty years, a number of Catholic theologians have been in disagreement and have been in discussion with the official church on this issue.

# A Careful Dissent

KEVIN JOHNSTON

**T**he following contemplation appeared on the blog *Sola Nobilitas Virtus* several months ago, as an examination of where the Church officially stands on the issue of birth control, specifically condom use and the combined oral contraceptive pill (commonly called “the pill”). The author, Kevin Johnston, a student at Gonzaga School of Law, particularly asked that if the piece were to be used, it be used with a disclaimer. First, it is important to note that though the arguments used to support a dissent on the Church’s official stance on birth control may be persuasive to some, any choice to use birth control based on these premises must be accompanied by serious and honest contemplation on behalf of the believer. These views – though still understood as occurring between spouses – may not be lightly used to support any form of sexual promiscuity or justify any sexual desires that a married person may have. As Catholics, we always have a calling toward chastity and focus on a holistic view of one’s spouse. This dissent in its entirety is a very narrow possibility, and one that is very dangerous if not approached contemplatively and prayerfully open to God’s Will. Second, as briefly mentioned, this dissent is narrow, in that it is meant to apply only to married couples. Ideally, it would only apply to those couples who have attempted other Church-sanctioned methods of contraception. Even if this is not the case, couples who decide to formally dissent from this teaching (as opposed to allowing apathy toward possible grave sin to allow them to ignore the Church on the matter) should be very attuned to the materialist vanity that unrestrained sexual behavior can lead toward. If a couple chooses birth control and finds that sex has changed the holistic humanity we are called to see in our spouse, the wisest step would be to discontinue the use of such methods and return to sexuality as it naturally occurs. Finally, this essay cannot be said to encompass every aspect of the morality surrounding birth control use. This essay is not an exhaustive compilation of all arguments or circumstances for birth control use within a Catholic context. Entire volumes have been written by very established Church theologians on the matter, and before making a decision as to one’s ability to dissent on this matter, it would be advisable to consult with a priest or gather additional material. Even if one can honestly dissent in this matter, it is a wise idea to include the choice in confession, to ensure that the spouse is protecting his or her own soul and honoring God. In the words of Flannery O’Connor, “the life you save may be your own” – and your spouse’s as well. It is too important to never forget that the responsibility we each owe our spouse is the responsibility of ensuring that they reach salvation as God intended. Where children are the royal destiny of marriage, salvation is the eternal goal we should always have in mind for that one person to whom we devote our lives. Anything less than seeking salvation for our spouse, and we should be trying harder...

**I** find it hard to put myself behind causes unless I know the reasons that I believe something. This doesn’t seem to be a universal trait; I have many family members and friends who believe things strongly without being able to justify them with words. I simply have never been able to buy into a cause without seeking a logical reason why the cause is defensible. Perhaps the inability to

submit any question of significant force in my life solely to authority is a weakness in me. It is not that I don’t respect authority and give authority proper deference, but it is that when the authority has little foundation for holding a position and demands that its adherents do the same that I find I am not so bound as many seem to be by the offices above me. Where reason is missing or has

holes, I seek other answers. If none are to be found, I submit and defer. Lately, I have been thinking heavily about the issue of birth control in marriage and dissent from the Catholic Church. To me, the official Church teaching on birth control and its foundations being laid in *Humanae Vitae* strike me as missing fully forceful and convincing argument. I simply do not know if I am convinced of the natural law approach on this issue.

In a way, I am hesitant to openly disagree on such a sensitive issue, not because of the allegiance I think I owe the authority of the Church (I think we have a moral duty to disagree with authority where it is not applicable to experience), but rather because I am not sure I am right about how far one can disagree on this issue and I would not want to teach contrary to God's Will. However, I do think I can voice my thoughts of skepticism, where they stem from, and why I have trouble accepting what the official Church teaching holds. Charles Curran is known for dissenting on this issue (poorly in some areas, I might add), and he sums things up well on his website, but I have a few more points to add or develop.

Before I go any further, I need to address two points of practicality. First, when I use the words "birth control," I mean "birth control use within the context of marriage." The use of such things outside of marriage, if possible to credibly dissent on at all within Catholicism, is an entirely different discussion that I am not prepared or even willing to address in this essay. So: "birth control" = "birth control within marriage." Second, simply because a moral belief is impractical in today's world, or extremely difficult, or anything else in practice alone, does not make it incorrect. On a related note, the widespread practice of some behaviors does not mean that the practice is morally correct or grounds enough for dissent from moral authority. In fact, it is perhaps the moral issues that we question least

that need the strongest justifications for dissent on philosophical grounds, as to protect us from the comfort or justification of our sins that we may be engaging in by dissenting. For example: gluttony. America is now the fattest country on earth<sup>1</sup>, and as a moral practice is concerned, overeating ourselves to the point that our metabolic processes cannot keep up is probably the most widespread sin in America. That does not mean that the sin of gluttony ceases to exist. In fact, it means that the pervading practice of

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overeating needs examination in our own lives to a degree higher than we give most things, so we don't grow comfortable in our lives by justifying our behavior as "normal" or "too hard to avoid." Birth control is the same to me. Wide-

1 OECD Health Data, 2010.

spread use does not give moral force in the positive. If a couple is to dissent on this matter, it must be with fully informed conscience and not as a self-justified way of living easily and superficially in the modern world, nor because “everyone else is doing it.”

Foremost, I want it to be clear: “It is totally irresponsible to view human sexuality merely as a source of pleasure” (a

**“I want it to be clear:  
‘It is totally  
irresponsible to view  
human sexuality  
merely as a source of  
pleasure’”**

nod to Father Reinard Beaver for that little line). The Church says (per Vatican II and *Humanae Vitae*<sup>2</sup>), and I agree, that the primary purpose for sex is dual: for the furtherance of love between couples, and the creation of human beings. Pleasure may be incidental to these ends, but it is not the primary purpose of sex, nor should it be placed in front of either of the other two. Doing so has had incredibly destructive social consequence, from single parenthood to prostitution to widespread abortion on demand to untold personal psychological devastation, and on and on. This being said, I do believe the dual purpose does not require both to be present at every instance of sex, for a few reasons.

There has never been a moral teaching that the Church has handed down infallibly. The Church, through the Magisterium, has taught few mores that it holds absolutely, since morality is not a simple equation that can be solved under all circumstances uniformly. Human

<sup>2</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, (1958), para. 12.

experience and circumstance cannot be relegated easily to cut and dry moral absolutes. Killing another human being has always been the most useful and simple example. Killing someone in revenge is wrong. Killing someone who is attempting to kill your wife is not necessarily so. This lack of absolutism in differing circumstances is one of the reasons that the Church has never infallibly taught a moral law. This includes the practice of birth control within marriage. In fact, the teaching on birth control is relatively recent, a development that took place in the latest century. Perhaps one of the reasons the teaching is not infallible is because it is recent, and it has not become an integral part of tradition within the Church – one of the requirements for infallible treatment of a belief (There are ways around that requirement being explicit, but for purposes of practicality, this could be a good reason). Does the lack of infallibility mean that the Church is wrong, simply since it has never infallibly taught birth control is wrong in marriage? No, of course not. What it does mean is that it is not necessarily the case that the disagreement on the issue puts you outside the umbrella of that which is definitively Catholic – especially in light of the natural law and administrative reasons that follow, which I believe conflict with other Church teaching, human experience, the human purpose as given by God, and even common sense.

The above discussion about absolutes segues into the main conflict of Church teaching with the birth control issue: the primacy of conscience in the human intellect. Absolutes are difficult to come by precisely because the Church holds that, as human beings, we have been created by and in the image of the One True God. Our properly formed consciences have a wide deference of right and wrong in situations presented to us, given the variables thrown our way by the chaotic nature of the world to our circumstantially shortsighted brains. This does not mean

that there is not a right or wrong answer in each situation. What it means is that if our consciences are given an honest, informed exposure to as much information as possible in a moral conundrum, the right decision will come to us naturally. Of course, you can have an uninformed conscience on an issue you are seeking to resolve. However, there are resources within the Catechism of the Catholic Church and writings of all manner of Catholic theologians, clergy, and laity that can help one wade through the intricacies of almost any moral issue that could cross your path. I am speaking here of a properly-informed conscience that first seeks moral direction from the Church on an issue and yet feels that the moral answer given will not suffice – not because it makes them uncomfortable or puts them in a bad position with family or friends, but because it does not seem to fully be in accord with the nature and purpose of individual human beings on earth.

Why is our conscience given such high regard? Science cannot explain why we find good better than bad, why we prefer right to wrong, but for some reason we do. We as Catholics believe that God has given us a gift in our consciences that allows us to make decisions that are morally correct when we make them in light of God's plan for us. The decision cannot be made simply because we disagree with the authority of the Church, but must be made honestly as an attempt to resolve a moral conflict in the manner most attenuated to God's Will. It is almost difficult to describe, because the only answer to why we prefer good to bad is "God." However, the Church has always held that there exists a primacy of conscience in morality, which cannot be replaced by simple obedience when a serious issue arises that a person has fully theologically explored and still honestly disagrees. The Church has held this principle to be the most important factor in decision-making, even since it was

developed by Thomas Aquinas. Yet the idea conflicts with the honest disagreement many Catholics have with the official teaching on birth control – shouldn't obedience be primary? Which principle is more important? Is it up to us to decide? To me, informed conscience is the most important line we have to God. Of course, not everyone agrees. But in the pluralist world in which we live, not all people have access to Catholic doctrine, dogma, or teaching. Every person still has access to a conscience, and though we have the ability to corrupt our consciences, there is still a gentle calling in our minds toward the good in every person. In accordance with this assertion that conscience is primary, I believe that honest and informed rejection of the teaching on birth control is acceptable dissent within the Catholic Church.

The natural law is not, and has never been to me, as straightforward as St. Thomas Aquinas and the Vatican (officially) maintain it is when it comes to a few biological questions – particularly concerning birth control. Or perhaps the natural law doesn't necessarily coincide with banning contraception. The Church has always been a lighthouse shining to rid the world of the darkness of materialism when it can and when other, more dangerous heresies are not menacing the world. (I write 'more dangerous heresies than the outright lie of materialism,' because it is those heresies that are almost true that pose more threat to the world than those that are fully false, like materialism. As Father Reinard Beaver has said, "a half-lie is more dangerous than a lie, because like half a brick, it can be thrown twice as far"). Materialism has always maintained that man is no more than a mere beast, one step up from an ape in intellect and therefore reducible to naught but neurons and biological function from the highest of the jungle's fauna. This thought has been a dangerous one, and it has pervaded much atheistic and nihilistic philosophy for as long

as man has been looking at the world and noticing he is similar in many respects to the animal kingdom. Of course, he is similar; our biology is a necessary definition of our being. But it is not a sufficient definition. We are more; creatures of spirit and intellect placed on earth to live in the greatest expanses of love God could create while allowing us free will. In my mind, here it is that the Church meets materialism, and the place where my brain ceases to follow Pope John Paul II's most persistent crusade. The Church, in teaching that sex must be oriented primarily toward procreation (that is, for the main purpose of creating children – a purpose now displaced as dual along with “for the furtherance of love” in official Church teaching after Vatican II), relegates man to a place alongside his animal brethren. The Vatican equates human sex with purely biological sex in requiring that it be open to the possibility of children in every instance. But human sex is not merely biological sex, and half of the dual purpose of sex must not be forgotten: to create and foster love. Human beings, the only phenomenal beings capable of true selfless love, should not be required to practice love that is merely biological in every instance. Yet the Church requires that they do so, else they are sinning. This materialistic requirement does not satisfy the intellect, because I cannot say that sex must take place primarily for procreative consequence. We are called to more than average love, especially in married life. Sex can be a vehicle toward that end, and not even the Church holds that human sex is necessarily always merely a biological act.

The rhythm method and Natural Family Planning (NFP) are evidence of this, as is the Church-acceptable practice of sex during pregnancy or while one partner is sterile. If one may intend to have sex without pregnancy during certain times, how is it that intent in other times is intrinsically evil? The introduction of any sort

of natural manipulation toward avoiding pregnancy (whether purposeful or not) seems to be a very cheap answer from the Magisterium, since intent to avoid pregnancy is present in both circumstances. These methods all separate the full biological fruit of sex from the purpose of furthering love by physical means between a couple. Birth control can hardly be said to be more artificial than some of these answers, since it is the introduction of chemicals into the body that are found there already present. For many, NFP does not work, is stressful, and kills hope of romance in a relationship.<sup>3</sup> The same can be said of the rhythm method. Spontaneity extinguished in romantic love is dangerous and can verge on making clockwork machinations of our sexual expression. It can result in not the fostering of love, but tension between one's biology and spirit, one's self and extension of self in their spouse.<sup>4</sup> We are not robots that should be forced to contain spontaneity of physical needs that further the ends of love. It is not acceptable to me that a practice the Church claims is for ensuring love through sexual expression actually does no such thing when a couple's sex drive doesn't fit a set of very narrow and timed parameters. Close to this line of thought, the Church's policy also fails to speak to human nature and diversity. Sexual need differs in different people. Sure, some people have an easy time practicing NFP or abstaining for long periods. Perhaps they are biologically wired differently, or have attained sexual asceticism through moral rigor. Good for them. On the other hand, to condemn a large portion of the population to bitterness and resentment at their partner for never being able to be spontaneous or passionate because of the biological constraints on sexuality that the Church

3 Robert Blair Kaiser, *The Politics of sex and Religion: A Case History in the Development of Doctrine, 1962-1984* (Kansas City: Leaven Press, 1985).

4 Ibid.

has put on them is not acceptable. The policy clearly does not reside within normal human experience, and perhaps needs to be examined in light of the fact that it was made by a group of old, celibate men who do not have family, spousal, or significant sexual life experience, yet continue to dictate what the bounds of familial life should be. I despise the argument «you don't know what it is like, so you can't say anything about it.» Still, in this case, perhaps the celibacy of the Vatican is a limitation that should not be overlooked as quickly as it is by the conservative laity who offer no resistance to the birth control teaching.

The elements of human nature/experience and biological vs. human sex are my main issues of contention. However, the more I have learned about how the Church came to the conclusions it did on the issue, the more I feel that the official teaching on birth control was derived from questionable foundations. Historically, the case for birth control is further muddled by the Church's precedential record on the issue. In 1963, Pope John XXIII established a council to study birth control and report their findings at Vatican II. The council was established in a very conservative fashion, and Pope John selected men who were known to agree with the previously noted position of «no» on the birth control question. Of the 15 men chosen (bishops and theologians), 9 were against any use of the contraceptive pill. Only 2 leaned toward allowing it, and only slightly so. After sessions of debate, discussion, interviews of lay families, and contemplation, 12 of the council members said the teaching could or should be changed in favor of a more lenient view toward the pill. Where previously 9 men believed birth control to be intrinsically evil, only 3 remained. By this time, Pope Paul VI had taken over. In July 29, 1968, his encyclical on the matter was published, affirming Pius XII's conservative views on the birth control issue as evil and completely disregard-

ing the findings of the council set up to look into the matter. The lack of unanimity on the issue speaks to me of an abuse of papal power that did not account for the experiences of the council or laity in general. For more background of the decision and how the council on birth control was essentially railroaded by the pope after Vatican II, I would recommend

**The introduction of any sort of natural manipulation toward avoiding pregnancy (whether purposeful or not) seems to be a very cheap answer from the Magisterium, since intent to avoid pregnancy is present in both circumstances.**

the book *Why You Can Disagree and Remain a Faithful Catholic*.<sup>5</sup> The process truly is fascinating and seemed to be overruled by simpleminded and stagnant *ad hoc* moralizing by Paul VI with no regard for the results of the birth control councils of Vatican II.

Some have said to me, “yes, but the Church has believed this since the issue was proclaimed in *Humanae Vitae* by Pope Paul VI, and taught consistently so.” This is true. Officially, the Church has held its ground on this issue. Yet, there are two things to note about this. The Church also held its ground for nearly

5 Philip S. Kaufman (The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995).

two thousand years on the issue of slavery (only formally condemning it in 1965, and with a few theologians supporting it with biblical exegesis until as late as 1957) and usury. Both are supported by scripture. A ban on birth control is not. There is no biblical or revelatory reason the teaching on birth control is held by the Church the way it is. No voice in the bible lends its hand to strike down dissent on this matter, nor to ensure us that it is an issue paralleled by others tradition has decisively formed. The sole basis for its justification lies in the natural law. I don't find those reasons strong enough to believe it when other reasons suggest it is not even necessarily the natural law we are looking at, but the biological boundaries of humanity. Simply because the Church has held a position does not mean that it is correct – even if it was held from the time of Christ. A teaching developed in the 50s is not persuasively “tradition” as to scare off dissent.

Second to the point of “time and tradition does not create certainty” is that there has been significant dissent on this issue, by the laity and clergy, and even by the bishops. Concerning the first, least important rejection - that of the laity not accepting the teaching - as I said before, widespread practice of a sin does not make it any less sinful. However, if there is an issue with the reception of the teaching and the teaching is not received by the laity in significant part, it cannot be said to have binding force on the laity. A 1980 study determined that 76% of lay Catholic women used artificial birth control (you can be certain the number is much higher now). Teaching is not a one-sided activity. For a teaching to exist there needs to be a learner. When a teaching is not received (especially if it is supposed to be based on the light of reason founded in the natural law), there is a failure by the teachers to either be teaching what is correct, or present the material correctly. Something is missing in the teaching of birth control, and it can

hardly be said to have been received by the laity. What then, about priests who dissent? Only 29% of the clergy believed in 1980 that use of contraceptives within marriage is immoral, according to the results of the same study. The Jesuits developed a method of informing Catholics in the confessional of their moral options that surround birth control called Probabilism, which is now the accepted form of moral exploration the clergy are advised to give laity. Probabilism essentially provides that a lay Catholic may choose a moral course of action and belief that is acceptable to a minority of Church-sanctioned theologians. According to Probabilism, birth control is an acceptable position for Catholics to hold. There is no consensus among Conferences of Bishops worldwide on the issue of birth control. Over 600 U.S. theologians and 20 European theologians signed dissenting statements directly after the publication of *Humanae Vitae*.<sup>6</sup> As of 1979, 60% of priests in the U.S. did not believe use of contraception within marriage is wrong.<sup>7</sup> Only 13% refused to absolve presently-practicing Catholics.<sup>8</sup> 87% of all American Catholics favored use of artificial birth control within marriage.<sup>9</sup> Another study determined that 26 countries' Councils of Bishops wrote either dissenting or hesitant statements on the teaching (in numbers of bishops, this represents only 17% affirming the teaching).<sup>10</sup>

As Catholics, we believe the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church and has been doing so throughout the ages. Not only do we believe that the Holy Spirit sustains the Church as an Institution despite significant setbacks, we also maintain that the

6 Joseph Andrew Selling, *The Reaction to Humanae Vitae: A Study in Special and Fundamental Theology* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979).

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

Holy Spirit preserves the Will of God on earth through the Magisterium and papacy. Here, we enter an interesting question: What then, do we make of areas in which the Pope disagrees with the Magisterium, or the Magisterium is closely split on an issue? I am certain it does not mean that the Holy Spirit has abandoned the Church or that one side of the answer is not more correct on the issue. Still, it does beg the question of how binding such a teaching should be on the laity. To look at the belief of Catholic laity (the ones who truly wish to abide by Church teaching and don't abandon it on the issue of birth control due to apathy), however, one could come to the conclusion that God Himself had delivered the birth control teaching on tablets rivaling the authority of Moses'. Given the split in the Magisterial body – historically and today – how can this absolutism be? Rhetorically, it is something that speaks much deeper than the birth control issue, and each of us Catholics should pause and reflect on the implications of such intellectual divides. To me, birth control sounds like a teaching not received, and one that needs much more justification before being accepted as the necessary answer.

In response to a few comments and conversations that have spawned from this entry, a few clarifications or rebuttals need be discussed to give a sound philosophical objection to the dissent. Of course, I cannot address every objection to my musings here, nor do I believe that I speak for the biological dangers of birth control use or pregnancy. No solution is perfect, nor have I claimed mine are. One recent objection is the most potent yet: “[the reason birth control is immoral is because] it may act as an abortifacient . . . The reality is this: heavy doses of progesterone (a key ingredient in the pill) makes the lining of the uterus hostile to a fertilized egg. It can . . . result in a miscarriage. Miscarriage by induced means has another title: abortion.” This is true. Even so, I don't think, that it destroys the ar-

gument that birth control is acceptable, for a few reasons. First, is the conditional nature of ova implantation itself. Within the first 6 weeks of pregnancy, there is a 40% chance that a fertilized ovum will not attach to the uterine wall. The pill does increase the viscosity of uterine mucous, making a fertilized ovum less likely to implant than that 60%. A pertinent question or two, then: how much less? Could a food do the same? A drink? A drug? A chemical? There simply is no way to know exactly with the current level of scientific technology. One might argue, “better safe than sorry,” and, “intent is what matters in the first place.” Let's examine an analogous situation. Does the driving of your car with children in the backseat, despite the chance that it *may* kill them in a car wreck, make your driving immoral? No, it doesn't. It is true that a person would take all necessary precautions to avoid the death of their children in a car accident. Still, by how much? When you buy a car, you examine elements like safety ratings, gas mileage, space, aesthetics, features, and resale value. Suppose you choose a car based on gas mileage and resale value. Perhaps this has resulted in a 5-15% greater likelihood that passengers in the back of the car will be killed in an accident. Does your choosing such features render your decision to drive the car immoral because your children may be killed? Perhaps, but only very, very slightly. Suppose you are in an accident and your child in the backseat dies. Did the child die because of that extra 5% chance you added, or did she die because there was risk in driving your car in the first place? Risk assessment is always sketchy business, and one can always be wrong about causes. Even so, given the fact that miscarriage results in 40% of fertilized embryos, the addition of a few more percentage points by the use of the pill is not entirely indicative of intent to kill an embryo, precisely because so many other factors are at work. It is not trading some potential immoral-

ity for no purpose. Furthering of love is the purpose, and just as we may choose to add risk to the chances of dying in an accident for a few extra miles of gas, adding a *chance* of miscarriage is not enough to constitute full culpability in a prayerful and faithful Christian. A commenter much wiser than I offered an alternative viewpoint to the abortifacient objection. Suppose the following: “A couple decides that they want to have children, and begin attempting pregnancy. After a year of trying, the woman is unable to become pregnant. The couple sees a doctor, who diagnoses the woman with a condition that involves infertility due to a much thinner than normal endometrium. The doctor says that it is very unlikely that the couple will be able to achieve pregnancy because the fertilized egg simply cannot attach to the uterine lining. Essentially, the idea is that the couple has an equal chance of achieving pregnancy as a fertile couple on the pill . . . Is it permissible for this couple to continue to have sexual intercourse, despite the fact that the woman’s womb is essentially a natural ‘abortifacient’?” A rigorously strong-headed Catholic would probably answer no; it is not acceptable that the couple continues to have sex. Again though, this does not speak to human experience or God’s intent from the beginning of time that man and wife be one body. As the anonymous commenter added, “you are essentially forcing celibacy on the infertile couple. The infertile couple may want to continue attempting pregnancy, despite the fact that it would be an exceedingly rare occurrence. Are they really practicing a small-scale embryonic genocide because of their hope against all odds that a pregnancy might occur at some point? Keep in mind that their good intentions (pregnancy and hope for such) should not justify the fact that they are likely dooming every embryo that results from their attempts.” If the answer is yes, that the couple may continue to have sex despite the very low chances of pregnan-

cy and small chance of miscarriage, the only reason that could possibly be justified for this exception is intent. However, as we already covered, the Church finds intent to have sex without intending conception acceptable in NFP and the old rhythm method, and during pregnancy and sterility. This inconsistency cannot be reconciled easily, and Protestant Churches have only done so by holding that life is not created until implantation (as opposed to conception). Though I do not think the Catholic Church needs to go that far (nor should it, since to some of us Catholics the Church staying “cool” means sticking to tradition as opposed to the willy-nilly granting of cultural concessions), this situation still needs philosophical resolution that the current framework cannot comfortably provide.

I cannot address every argument, nor make the strongest case for artificial birth control based on circumstances here. By now though, it should be clear that grounds do exist by which the faithful can dissent from the Church’s official teaching on birth control. Catholics either need a much better explanation than we have been given on the issue, or else the opportunity for dissent will remain. I simply cannot give the current explanation much credence. My views may change, of course. However, my research on this issue has been extensive and at this time I still cannot slake my conscience’s moral thirst by accepting the Official Church Teaching.

*Kevin Johnston is a third year at Gonzaga School of Law. He has 10 other cousins currently at Gonzaga. His blog on libertarian politics, conservative social commentary, and Catholic culture can be viewed at [www.solanobilitasvirtus.blogspot.com](http://www.solanobilitasvirtus.blogspot.com).*

# On Female Liberation

DR. JANE RINEHART

## *Interview*

*You were talking about the role of women from a secular feminist position on the church's position on contraception. How does feminism and the church's position hamper a woman's right to independence?*

I think it's important to recognize that feminists within all the religious traditions that I am best informed about often have a positive interpretation of traditional teachings and practices in their religions. You can find Jewish feminists celebrating the Mikveh, which is the ritual bath for orthodox Jewish women at the end of their period of menstruation. That is a cleansing and a welcoming back into the marriage embrace with their husbands. Some feminists might argue that rite has a lot of elements that seem really antifeminist. But there are feminists who say the Mikveh is a woman-only place. It is about women being beautiful and experiencing their bodies with one another, and all the variety. There are nineteen year olds there and there are forty year olds who have birthed six or seven children. You get to see the range of female embodiment and how its experiences are written on the body. My point is that feminists can also make an argument for the official papal teaching on contraception and natural family planning and against the arguments for artificial terms of contraception. I know self-identified feminists who practice that. Such feminists think it is more respectful of their bodies, of their relationship with their spouses, and that it heightens some aspects of human life that otherwise might

be taken for granted. These women don't feel at all limited by the church's teachings. I know they don't see feminism as a limiting factor; feminism doesn't require a rejection of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* encyclical.

I have students who think that if you are a feminist you must be pro-abortion. And that is not true at all. There are very committed feminists who are committed to pro-life and who have written about that position. These women have joined forces with Christian evangelicals. They have a fervently strong commitment to Christianity and to supporting life. Feminism is being thoughtful about gender, and sex, and sexuality. Yes, the bottom line of feminism is about recognizing that there are inequalities that are unjust and based on sex and gender. Feminists seek to undo those injustices to create the world in a more just way. I think that leaves a lot of room for what you are going to focus on and what you are going to say is really essential for achieving that goal. There are so many different kinds of feminists. There is a place at the table for all different types of ideas. I don't think you have to be in any one camp on contraception or any of the hot button issues on contraception to call yourself a feminist.

## Concerning Contraception & Abortion

DR. DOUGLAS KRIES

Since its earliest centuries, Christians have understood that all human desire ultimately culminates in the desire for God; thus even the initial groaning of sexual longing finds its true meaning and purpose in an overpowering eroticism for the divine. At the same

time, Christians have always recognized that human desires are often deflected from their purpose so that human beings attempt to satisfy their longings for the infinite Creator with some lower created goods and that, as a result, sexual pleasure can become an end in itself that is harmful to the soul.

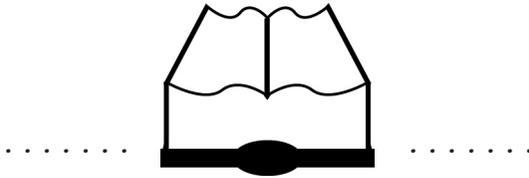
Given these realities, in its first centuries the Church developed its sexual discipline for the baptized, teaching that the proper and basic stance toward sexual acts is chastity, by which it meant that those who are married should be faithful to each other until death and that those who are not married should be celibate. The married were to use their sexual powers for the establishment of families; that is, they were to transmit human life and to form or educate their children in the Christian faith. To be sure, wayward sexual desire has proven to be so stubborn that, in every age of the Church's history, even baptized Christians have often failed to live up to the Church's discipline. Married couples have sometimes not been faithful to each other; and the unmarried have sometimes not lived in continence or celibacy.

With the advent of modern means of contraception and abortion, the failure of baptized Christians to live chastely seems to have increased dramatically in frequency, especially among the unmarried. If public polling is to be trusted, non-marital sexual intercourse is now widespread. This is especially the case in the developed nations of the West, where sexual desires are artificially magnified by advertising, television, pornography, immodest styles of dress, and so forth. The Church's teaching on chastity has little support in these secular societies in which the baptized live, and the baptized, in turn, seem to conform themselves routinely to the customs of the countries within which they live rather than to the teaching of the Church.

An encyclical of Pope Paul VI titled *Humanae Vitae* attempted to explain that the modern world's desire to pursue sexual pleasure without the concomitant value of procreation was inconsistent with the baptized person's love of the Creator. Although its basic teaching was consistent with what the Church had always taught, the specific arguments the encyclical employed against contraception were perhaps not the best ones that could have been brought to bear, as they perhaps did not sufficiently place the matter within the whole context of the purpose of human desire. In any case, it would seem that the encyclical has been largely ignored by both the married and the unmarried. There are baptized Catholics who have developed what is referred to as "natural family planning" methods of regulating their procreative powers. They often say that they find this to be a valuable form of Christian discipline, but the percentage of the baptized who participate in these practices is thought to be small.

In those nations where doctrines of natural or human rights are widespread, such as the modern liberal regimes of the West, it has become common Catholic practice to object to abortion. Since it is hard to deny but that a fetus conceived by two human beings is itself human, if human beings in general possess a right to life, then the unborn clearly possess such a right to life as well. Because this teaching appeals to natural or human rights, the Church has argued repeatedly that abortion is not merely a practice contrary to the discipline of the Church, but a practice contrary to the foundations of even secular societies. Indeed, although opposition to abortion has been characteristic of the Christian church since the earliest times, opposition to abortion has become today one of the principal and most visible of the moral teachings of the Church.

# Homosexuality & the Church



**H**omosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms throughout the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on sacred Scripture, which present homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity [Gen. 19:1-29, Rom. 1:24-27, 1 Cor. 6:10, 1Tim. 1:10], tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered [Persona Humana 8]. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

From *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos., 2357-2359

# The Church & Homosexuality: A Brief Exposé

DR. PATRICK MCCORMICK

*Interview*

*What is the church's stance towards someone who is homosexual? How ought a homosexual live their life according to church teachings?*

**A**gain here I want to make a distinction among three communities. When I talk about the church I want to talk about both the hierarchy and what official teachings are. Then I want to talk about what the community of theologians are saying about this. Then I want to say what many people in the broader Catholic Church are saying. But to answer the one that I think people are most interested first. Catholic teaching on homosexuality would be this: Catholic teaching would argue that homosexual orientation is in and of itself not sinful. It does not represent a choice to turn away from a natural sexual orientation towards the opposite person. It's not known by the scientists or by the Catholic community what the cause or causes of gender orientation are. It's not known why there would be a small or significant portion of the population that would seem to have a homosexual orientation. What is clear, at the present time at least, is that the church teaches that this is an un-chosen orientation and therefore not in and of itself sinful. That would be different from what St. Paul believed. St. Paul lived in a world where people did not know or think that there was such a thing as an abiding or permanent homosexual orientation. So when St. Paul talks about homosexual activity, he's presuming that the person he is speaking to is a straight person who is choosing to act against his nature.

Now we would have experiences in our own society of men who are isolated from women, you know people on troop ships or people that are in the military or in restricted prisons. They still want to have sex but there are no women with which it is possible to have sex so some cluster of them have sex with other men. Now this sex, whether its rape or consensual, takes place between or among men that we would call straight and when they return from the troop ship or they get out of prison they come back to a world that is populated half with women and they don't have sex with other men. And that's what Paul thought it was. Paul thought it was a choice. Paul also lived

**“Catholic teaching would argue that homosexual orientation is in and of itself not sinful.”**

in a world, a Greek world, where adult Greek males, well educated males, had sexual relations with adolescent Greek males. Mentors and tutors often had sexual relations with their students. This was not considered homosexual, it was considered to be a prerogative that the tutor had, that the tutor could do this. Paul found this practice to be completely unacceptable. And the church today finds teachers having sex with their students to be completely unacceptable, but in Paul's world he wouldn't have seen

someone having a homosexual orientation. It's only in the twentieth century that modern society has said that there was an abiding and permanent orientation. So Catholic teaching would say that since it's not a chosen orientation it's not sinful. At the same time the Catholic teaching argues that the structure of the sexual act should be ordered to procreation and should be between males and females. So the Catholic teaching would say that every homosexual act is intrinsically disordered. By its nature it's pointed in the wrong direction. So while the person is not wrong for having their orientation they would be wrong to do it. So the official church urges or requires that any homosexual Catholic live a life of celibacy, that they practice chastity their entire lives.

Now for the last thirty or forty years, a growing group of theologians have raised dissenting and disagreeing voices about this. They have said, as a rule, a number of things. First of all they have said that if a person were in fact oriented for life in an un-chosen way towards homosexuality, then procreation has been precluded from them and they have no choices. And a person, they would argue, continues to have a right to express love and affection and to find the support and nurturing that comes from an intimate sexual relationship like marriage. And if these sexual relationships are characterized by freedom and mutuality and commitment to the other then in a perfect world they should be allowed to do this. The argument here is much like the argument that would be offered about left handed people. For a long period of time it was believed that right handedness was the natural way of things and it was believed that the small cluster of left handed people were brain damaged or sinister, which means evil, comes from Latin *sinistra*, meaning "left." The left handed person was considered to be wrong or flawed. Although it didn't happen to me, I have friends that are five and ten years older

than me that were forced as small children to write with their right hand. Today we view that largely as a superstition and children who are left handed today are allowed to write with their left hand. These theologians would argue that if a child is by their character or by their nature homosexual and if they have no other choice, then in fact they have been made this way by God and they should be allowed to live out their sexual life. But that wouldn't be the teaching of the

**“The official church  
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official church. So you have the teaching of the official church and you have the teaching of a growing number of theologians. In practice at the present time, a very large number of Roman Catholics today - and this largely has to do with the fact that they have a cousin who's gay or they have daughter who's gay or they have a son who's gay - largely Roman Catholics in the United States have embraced a stance of tolerance or acceptance towards homosexuals in which many or most of the Catholics I know if they have a son or a daughter who's gay, if their out of the closet, you know, they might have preferred that they were straight and they might be sad about it, but in general they tend to be supportive of that person finding some nurturing and support. But again, the church would continue to argue that these acts are outside of marriage and therefore not acceptable and they violate the nature of sexuality.

# On Homosexuality

## FR. C. HIGHTOWER

### *Interview*

*What is the church position on gay rights and gay marriage and why?*

**T**he only official position of the American Catholic Church on gay rights and gay marriage is the 1986 pastoral letter by the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference called "Always Our Children," and it is a very pastoral letter for gays and lesbians and, in particular, for their parents and pastoral priests and nuns that work in their parishes and things like that. The document discusses how God's nature is unaffected and unconditional and through the beauty of creation, all people - gay or straight - are created in the divine image. So that you know, when people say the church is against homosexuals, that's not actually correct. The church is against gay marriage and gay intercourse, that is correct. That has a lot more to do with sex outside of marriage and what is considered marriage and things like that. Those are different theological questions. It doesn't have the same kind of point. But the only official document we have in the Roman Catholic Church in America is actually very supportive of the beauty of creation and how people are created. I think people get very confused about all those kinds of things. There are different levels of weight when you talk about a pastoral letter or decree or document or an encyclical letter from the pope. Those all have different standards and different levels (The only one we have collectively has been very supportive and positive). It would be very nice if people would look at that before they started making judgments and things like that. The other thing is that we have had individual priests and individual nuns and individual Catholics that have made statements

that are not helpful. That is true. But they are only speaking as individuals, they are not speaking with the authority of the church; they don't have that role. Even a bishop can only speak insofar as their diocese is concerned - it's not a worldwide thing. Again, that's where we as Americans get kind of confused.

*Is the church inconsistent, because with heterosexual marriages it's dual purpose is to procreate and exhibit love, but the church allows a couple that cannot procreate to get married. Can you comment on this apparent inconsistency?*

Again, that would be something that has probably come about more lately because of our knowledge of biology, chemistry, and the sciences. It wasn't an issue earlier on because they didn't know reproductive biology as well. So that is certainly an issue. Is the church inconsistent in that? I think the church is very consistent when it talks about what love is and what intimacy is and what the non-genital expression of intimacy and what the genital expression of intimacy are. I think the Theology of the Body, if you really pay attention to what theologians are saying, is actually pretty strong. The reality is that we unfortunately misuse it and that's what the church is talking about. Again, this is an area where we have a system of governance that is worldwide that sometimes doesn't make sense in the global context. Part of it also is what was going on when those guidelines and the theology were being developed what was being combated. How homosexuality was viewed in ancient Greece and Palestine, etc.. [See page 140 for Dr. McCormick's discussion on that very topic] You know there's a historical context that has to be looked at too.

# The Purpose of a Jesuit University

## *Characteristics of Jesuit Higher Education:*

*“Ignatian spirituality, the foundation of all Jesuit apostolic endeavors, views men and women as created in love and created to reflect the wisdom and goodness of God. The advent of Christ and the continued presence of Christ’s Spirit enhance that created dignity. Men and women are enfolded in God’s care and compassion, offered companionship as the brothers and sisters of Christ, and empowered by the Spirit to complete the work of Christ on earth. Jesuits believe that their colleagues from other religious and ethical traditions share this dedication to human dignity and work for its implementation.”*

From the United States Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Conference Board

.....

## *Excerpts from* **Ex Corde Ecclesiae**

**A** Catholic University’s privileged task is “to unite existentially by intellectual effort two orders of reality that too frequently tend to be placed in opposition as though they were antithetical: the search for truth, and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth.”

... A Catholic University, as Catholic, informs and carries out its research, teaching, and all other activities with Catholic ideals, principles and attitudes. It is linked with the Church either by a formal, constitutive and statutory bond or by reason of an institutional commitment made by those responsible for it.

Every Catholic University is to make known its Catholic identity, either in a mission statement or in some other appropriate public document, unless authorized otherwise by the competent ecclesiastical Authority. The University, particularly through its structure and its regulations, is to provide means which will guarantee the expression and the preservation of this identity in a manner consistent with.

Catholic teaching and discipline are to influence all university activities, while the freedom

*of conscience of each person is to be fully respected. Any official action or commitment of the University is to be in accord with its Catholic identity.*

*... The responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the Catholic identity of the University rests primarily with the University itself. While this responsibility is entrusted principally to university authorities (including, when the positions exist, the Chancellor and/or a Board of Trustees or equivalent body), it is shared in varying degrees by all members of the university community, and therefore calls for the recruitment of adequate university personnel, especially teachers and administrators, who are both willing and able to promote that identity. The identity of a Catholic University is essentially linked to the quality of its teachers and to respect for Catholic doctrine. It is the responsibility of the competent Authority to watch over these two fundamental needs in accordance with what is indicated in Canon Law.*

*All teachers and all administrators, at the time of their appointment, are to be informed about the Catholic identity of the Institution and its implications, and about their responsibility to promote, or at least to respect, that identity.*

*In ways appropriate to the different academic disciplines, all Catholic teachers are to be faithful to, and all other teachers are to respect, Catholic doctrine and morals in their research and teaching. In particular, Catholic theologians, aware that they fulfill a mandate received from the Church, are to be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church as the authentic interpreter of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.*

*... The education of students is to combine academic and professional development with formation in moral and religious principles and the social teachings of the Church; the program of studies for each of the various professions is to include an appropriate ethical formation in that profession. Courses in Catholic doctrine are to be made available to all students.*

*Ex Corde Ecclesiae: Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities*

# The Purpose of Jesuit Education

## FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

### *Interview*

*What is the purpose of Jesuit education?*

**I**n order to answer the purpose of a Jesuit education, you have to go back to the time of St. Ignatius when he established the first schools. You have to realize he was in the 1500s, and the Renaissance as we understand it, humanism and all that was a part of the whole educational scene. The kind of schools he wanted were the ones that were personal and would defend the faith, but do

it in a way that had the clarity, precision, and rationality that would be characteristic of the way Aristotle would think, but express it in the way Cicero would. That is to say that eloquence is part of his educational ideal. But obviously the first thing was the defense of the faith.

He was first and foremost a man of the church, dedicated to the service of the church and holding loyalty to the teaching authority of the Magisterium. Obvi-

ously, what he was talking about principally was education of the clergy. The first college he established was the “College Romano” in Rome. The building still stands. Though, now it’s a public school, and not a private school. The Gregorian University would be the successor of the College Romano. The idea was that the

Gregorian would become an international seminary, and today it has students from all over the world. The idea was to teach the faith, the rational exposition of the faith, by condensing intelligent and rhetorically significant and effective communication of the faith.

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# The Jesuit Mission

FR. C. HIGHTOWER

## *Interview*

*What ought a Jesuit school strive for?*

**O**ne of the things we try to do at a Jesuit school is we try to aid people where they’re at. In a Jesuit school, in our own internal documents for the Society of Jesus, the language “to help”, “to aid”, “to comfort”, is used over and over. In our original documents, the formula of the institute is to comfort and to aid the soul. So, that’s kind of what we do. And that means that we are willing to take risks within the church to have people enter into that dialogue.

We believe we are a renaissance religious foreigner in the heart of the late middle ages. That’s how we developed. So, we are very humanistic in that way. The faith that does justice is an intellectual faith. God doesn’t ask for blind obedience. God asks us to use the beauty of creation and free will to follow and obey. So, the Jesuits try to bridge that gap between Christ and culture. That means people in culture don’t like us at times because of how we do things. And people at church don’t like us because we are bridging that gap between Christ and culture. But that’s exactly what we try to do at a Jesuit school [read more on *modernity on pages 69-76*]. That’s what we try to do at a school based on historical and intellectual approach to how interpretation and

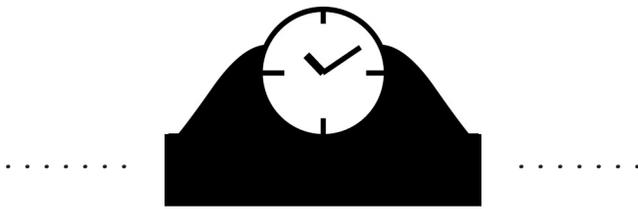
how thinking works.

We presume people that come to Gonzaga have entered into that context - all of the critiques of being Catholic and not

**“The faith that does justice is an intellectual faith. God doesn’t ask for blind obedience. God asks us to use the beauty of creation and free will to follow and obey... Jesuits try to bridge that gap between Christ and culture.”**

being Catholic and all that. If people really took a fair and well-balanced look at other religious institutions they would see that free will is alive and healthy here. I think that’s a good thing. It makes us healthier. We want to stretch the fibers of the envelope, but we are not interested in shredding the envelope and throwing it away; people that are interested in that lose the point.

# Where does Gonzaga Stand as a Catholic, Jesuit Institution?



## Gonzaga University Mission Statement

**G**onzaga University belongs to a long and distinguished tradition of humanistic, Catholic, and Jesuit education. We, the trustees and regents, faculty, administration and staff of Gonzaga, are committed to preserving and developing that tradition and communicating it to our students and alumni.

*As humanistic, we recognize the essential role of human creativity, intelligence, and initiative in the construction of society and culture.*

*As Catholic, we affirm the heritage which has developed through two thousand years of Christian living, theological reflection, and authentic interpretation.*

*As Jesuit, we are inspired by the vision of Christ at work in the world, transforming it by His love, and calling men and women to work with Him in loving service of the human community.*

*All these elements of our tradition come together within the sphere of free intellectual*

*inquiry characteristic of a university. At Gonzaga, this inquiry is primarily focused on Western culture, within which our tradition has developed.*

*We also believe that a knowledge of traditions and cultures different from our own draws us closer to the human family of which we are a part and makes us more aware of both the possibilities and limitations of our own heritage. Therefore, in addition to our primary emphasis on Western culture, we seek to provide for our students some opportunity to become familiar with a variety of human cultures.*

*In the light of our own tradition and the variety of human societies, we seek to understand the world we live in. It is a world of great technological progress, scientific complexity and competing ideologies. It offers great possibilities for cooperation and interdependence, but at the same time presents us with the fact of widespread poverty, hunger, injustice, and the prospect of degeneration and destruction. We seek to provide for our students some understanding of contemporary civilization; and we invite them to reflect with us on the problems and possibilities of a scientific age, the ideological differences that separate the peoples of the world, and the rights and responsibilities that come from commitment to a free society. In this way we hope to prepare our students for an enlightened dedication to the Christian ideals of justice and peace.*

*Our students cannot assimilate the tradition of which Gonzaga is a part nor the variety of human culture, nor can they understand the problems of the world, without the development and discipline of their imagination, intelligence, and moral judgment. Consequently, we are committed at Gonzaga to developing these faculties. And since what is assimilated needs to be communicated if it is to make a difference, we also seek to develop in our students the skills of effective writing and speaking.*

*We believe that our students, while they are developing general knowledge and skills during their years at Gonzaga, should also attain more specialized competence in at least one discipline or profession.*

*We hope that the integration of liberal humanistic learning and skills with a specialized competence will enable our graduates to enter creatively, intelligently, and with deep moral conviction into a variety of endeavors, and provide leadership in the arts, the professions, business, and public service.*

*Through its academic and student life programs, the Gonzaga community encourages its students to develop certain personal qualities: self-knowledge, self-acceptance, a restless curiosity, a desire for truth, a mature concern for others, and a thirst for justice.*

*Many of our students will find the basis for these qualities in a dynamic Christian faith. Gonzaga tries to provide opportunities for these students to express their faith in a deepening life of prayer, participation in liturgical worship and fidelity to the teachings of the Gospel. Other students will proceed from a non-Christian religious background or from secular philosophic and moral principles.*

*We hope that all our graduates will live creative, productive, and moral lives, seeking to fulfill their own aspirations and at the same time, actively supporting the aspirations of others by a generous sharing of their gifts.*

# The Non-Catholic Student's Guide to Gonzaga

MICHAELA JONES

When I first arrived at Gonzaga, a naïve and innocent freshman, I was terrified that I was getting myself into some kind of rosary-praying cult. I'm a product of thirteen years of public schooling and have had limited contact with the Catholic Church growing up. I wondered, *what would a university which proclaims itself to be a Jesuit, Catholic, and humanistic institution be like?* Furthermore, to quote the alumni Luke Barats and Joseph Bereta: "Jesu-what?" Now that I am a seasoned sophomore who's been around the religion class block a couple times, I realize just how ridiculous my fears were. Still, I recognize that many students may feel how I once did – that a Catholic education is intimidating. Allow me to share my experience of Gonzaga's Catholic tradition.

First things first, when you step on campus, you'll stop by Saint Ignatius' reflecting pool in front of College Hall and ponder the inscription there; this is the beginning of your journey. On your way toward DeSmet, there stands among the birch trees a statue affectionately dubbed "Aluminum Jesus" – AJ, for short. Although my mother takes a step away from me every time I call him that - sure I will be struck by divine lightning for blasphemy - to me, AJ is a reminder that here, God can be close if you wish him to be. AJ's benevolent smile above the Sacred Heart is a beautiful reassurance every day. When I pass him on my way to Crosby I know that things will be okay

and that someone is looking out for me during my time here.

As the sun sets, step inside St. Al's Cathedral to admire the stained glass windows which tell the stories of Christianity. Among the opulence, sit in one of the wooden pews and reflect in the peaceful quiet and spirituality that permeates the air. Regardless of your religious beliefs, this is a place that seems to whisper, "Just find yourself; be at home here." Once you've had your fill of reflecting, step back outside and look up. There are two lighted crosses from the steeples that look over all of Spokane, lights in the darkness. Although some here call the crosses tacky, they can also be seen as echoes of the spirit of the sanctuary. At Gonzaga, you can find the light you want to spread to the world and bask in the lights of others who care, too.

My next recommendation is to make sure you go to at least one Student Chapel Mass. Not only does it create a great sensation of community as you sit among your classmates, but the priests are wonderful. They really "get" the student life and I have never left a Mass feeling unfulfilled or unchallenged by the homily. Even if you are unfamiliar with the rituals of Mass and sacrament of the Eucharist, you won't be alone. Catholics, Protestants, agnostics, and 'unlabelables' alike fill the pews in the weekly hour of camaraderie and fellowship. You'll catch on quickly; don't worry. If you are ever struck with the whim to wake up on a Sunday morning, I also highly suggest celebrating a morning Mass at Saint Al's when one of the Jesuits is presiding. Seeing the priests who are also professors at the pulpit adds another facet to the classroom environment. Suddenly that gruff or slightly wacky teacher is more approachable and real.

Really, whether behind a pulpit or in front of a blackboard, the Jesuits are some of

the most genuine people you can ever hope to meet. Get to know them; say hello when you pass them on the sidewalk. If you have questions, ask! How many college students can say that they go to a school where their professors not only know their names, but actually care so much as to carry on extracurricular discussions about anything from theatre to current political events to religion, or simply pray with you on the lawn? Take advantage of it, and your education will benefit.

Perhaps the biggest personal revelation concerning faith occurred in my first mandatory religion course. Raised, as I mentioned, in public schools where socially sensitive education mandates rhetoric like, “X% of this-and-that country are Roman Catholic, Y% are Protestant, and Z% are Jewish, Hindu, Eastern Orthodox, or other,” learning about Catholicism outside of vague history class references wasn’t possible. Religion was merely a recitation of statistics and endless matchups between culture and faith. So, during my public school education, tenets of Catholicism made little sense to me. *Transubstantiation? Saints? Isn’t that, like... polytheistic, or something?* In my classes at Gonzaga, however, I realized that the nature of God is not something that can be constrained by denomination. Spurred by classroom topics, I have spent hours debating God, doctrine, and tradition differences with professors, priests, and peers alike, and have come to a deeper understanding because of these talks. And after years of asking about the saints, I finally got an answer that made sense to me- no, they do not constitute a pantheon.

Whether you were raised Catholic or not, my experience with religion classes at Gonzaga has been one of recognition and cultural awareness, of equity and exploration of what you personally believe

and why. ‘Catholic,’ after all, comes from the Latin for “universal.” Here at Gonzaga, a Jesuit, Catholic, and humanistic institution, it doesn’t matter whether you know the Hail Mary or not, whether you believe the Eucharist is transubstantiated or symbolic, whether you believe God even exists or not. Here, on this campus, Catholicism is an endeavor- a journey- into oneself and culture where we might figure out who we are, what we believe, who is here to share our burdens with us, and how we’re going to change this universal existence with our visions, and, together, bring peace to our corner of the world.

## The Ignatian Model

### FR. ANTHONY VIA, S.J.

#### *Interview*

*Do you think Gonzaga is living up to the expectations that St. Ignatius set out for his educational system?*

Obviously, times have changed, Gonzaga is not the school it once was, nor in the future will it be what we know it as now. That’s the thing with a university such as ours: it’s constantly evolving. The trick is to say consistent on some major points. Insofar as we possibly can we are trying as a school to live up to the expectations of St. Ignatius and the Society of Jesus. The humanistic values in our Mission Statement are very much a part of the whole educational experience. They were a major focal point of Ignatius’ work. The goal for a graduate of this Jesuit school is an ability to think clearly, critically, and effectively communicate the truths. Ignatius’ educational structure had a particular focus on the church and defense of church doctrine and devotion. Ignatius taught a dedication to the defense of our faith that Gonzaga is currently struggling to actualize.

# I'm No Expert

BRIAN LORENZ

This article was originally going to be about how Gonzaga needs to be more Catholic for the sake of its entire community. But this article is not about that at all. It is about how I am scared to write about religion.

I actually started doing some research for that article on Gonzaga's Catholic identity. I thought it would be interesting coming from a Protestant. But then I came across the article, "Too Jesuit, Or Not Enough Jesuit," in *The Witness* about nearly the same thing. Satisfied that the message was conveyed, I stopped thinking about the article and went back to surfing online fishing message boards.

Unfortunately, the editor of *Charter* is one of my good friends. Accordingly, he came to me and asked me to write for it. (Don't all editors of great publications have to resort to begging their buddies to write for them?) So I was forced to continue on.

In all honesty, though Matthew Kiernan had written that piece in *The Witness*, I stopped writing about Catholicism and Gonzaga because I was afraid to write about it. See, I have this idea that whatever I say about religion does not do religion justice.

There are a lot of smart people out there. While I will receive a degree from this fine establishment of learning in the spring, I still don't consider myself the "intellectual" type. And while I really enjoy theological discussions with my roommates, the conversations tend to end up with many subjective feelings about religion and our experiences with religion. Though this conversation can be beneficial and comforting, the little read-

ing I have done, mostly in my philosophy classes, has shown me that theological conversation can be a lot more than subjective debates on opinions. There is an objective truth and through enough reasoning and some help from God, we can understand that truth.

This is my dilemma. I believe in an objective truth. I know that Christianity and reason correspond with one another. I know that religion can and should be more than a person's opinions. But, I do not necessarily know how to defend those ideas well. I do not have the confidence in my philosophical abilities to objectively rationalize my answers as well as I know the answers warrant. I am not well read enough to quote St. Aquinas, C.S. Lewis, or Peter Kreeft in my discussions about religion. In effect, I often am stuck in situations like the one presented to me by *Charter*. I know the conversation can go to a very high level, but I don't have the knowledge to take it there, so the conversation dies prematurely.

. . . . .

One person read the above ramblings and told me to grow a pair. Does he have a point? Probably. I should be confident enough in my beliefs to defend them. But should a person defend them if he or she doesn't necessarily know what they are talking about? I am not sure if religious peoples' "feelings" and opinions are doing any justice to religion in the post-modern world.

Now please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that we should all stop discussing our faith until we have a doctoral level understanding about Aquinas

or how faith and science correspond. I want people to think about their faith, no matter where they are spiritually or intellectually because it often strengthens the discussor's faith. The key is to *think*. What I do not want is misinformed discussions based on what an individual's opinion is on what "feels" right

for them without really thinking through the consequences of that feeling. If the conversation relies on what you feel God and religion is like without any consideration to thought and reason, you have validated every post-modern thinker's opinion on religion: that it is non-rational and thus, useless.

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# Gonzaga's Catholicism

DR. JANE RINEHART

*Interview*

*What is Gonzaga's brand of Catholicism? What are we lacking?*

I don't think we have enough opportunities at Gonzaga to publicly acknowledge the terrible trouble Catholicism is in. We need to really humbly and carefully begin to explore our own pain around that. Why we are in this position, and what it would take from each of us to move us in a different direction. I am old enough to have all of these friends with whom I have shared big chunks of the Catholic experience: the *Spiritual Exercises* in everyday life, Christian Life Community, parish life, as a Catholic school parent - every one of them has left the church. Tons of people have just said, "That's it, I am not going to identify with this faith anymore." I would like us to talk about that. I am sure many of our students have parents who are struggling with whether or not they identify with the church. I would like us to have conversational opportunities about a lot of this, including the most deeply personal aspects of it, where people felt hurt by one another. As one of my friends said to me, "This is the crowning experience of my entire life, to be Catholic, and now it's just ashes." That would be, I think, useful for young people to hear as well. We tried in the

fall. I think the people who are in charge of fostering conversation, they sponsored a conversation called "Too Catholic, or not Catholic Enough?" and some of my students, the ones I knew who were there - I had not urged them to go but I saw them there - they came to me later and told me that it was a really negative experience for them. One of them is not Catholic. One of them is Catholic by birth and upbringing but not sure about her faith. It just wasn't the kind of conversation that would encourage either one of them to think. I told some people that the "Too Catholic" conversation sent the wrong message. I didn't like the frame. I thought it gave too much legitimacy to "not Catholic enough" judgmentalism. And "too Catholic" is negative in nature as well.

I read *The Witness* whenever it comes out. Sometimes it just takes me back to my childhood. Sometimes, to me, it is so 1950s, in the imagery of the wording that's used, very reminiscent to me of the church that I grew up in. At the same time, I have a little question that starts in my mind about how affective it is. We need to rethink some of these things about how we view Catholicism on this campus. There's an exclusivity among some Catholics on this campus

that, along with a general apathy in faith life, is the real shame of Gonzaga. I would never, ever want to say to someone, “you don’t belong in my church.” It is not my church in that sense. The church welcomes everybody; that inclusivity is what it means to be catholic, in the “universal” sense. Figuring out a way to stay connected should be part of the work of a Catholic university, instead of isolating people. We are not making the effort to ask the important questions (e.g., What does Catholicism on this campus look like as a whole? How can we find a way to feel positive about that whole in the midst of the differences?). This questioning, this organic catholic dialogue, is how we ought to be building a Catholic community.

*How can Gonzaga tangibly better itself as a Catholic university?*

Well I would think sponsoring a variety of activities under that heading (“a Catholic university”) would be a start. And by “variety” I mean also some activities that let possible participants know we have more questions than answers. We don’t see this Catholic thing as a ‘come and let us initiate or enlighten you into some closed universe of thought and membership.’ We need to be inclusive. I think the facts on the ground suggest that more students come here already disillusioned or indifferent to Catholicism. At the opposite end, some of this school’s students with the strongest faiths don’t form their faiths here; they come from strong Catholic families. We need to bridge this divide. We need to be tailoring events to the many students who don’t come from faith-filled backgrounds while simultaneously enriching the faith lives of those already interfacing with the church community.

*I have heard from a couple of interviews the sentiment that Gonzaga is no longer a real Catholic university and that it is more or less a liberal arts*

*institution that has a misplaced fondness for social justice. Can you comment on that?*

That is another part of doing a better job representing Gonzaga as Catholic. It seems that we could do a better job showing how that social justice is deeply Catholic. Social justice is rooted in documents written by Catholic theologians, ethicists, Jesuits in their congregations – it’s in their official documents. We don’t talk a whole lot here about social teachings. I think it’s possible for people to think that this social justice thing is flying out there on its own, and not connected to Pope Louis XIII and all the wonderful encyclicals and the letters of the American bishops on nuclear war, on the economy. But the need for social justice ought to be in line with contemporary statements by Pope Benedict XVI, which are very strong criticisms of contemporary forms of capitalism and our need to serve those oppressed by greed and corruption. Are we talking about that here at Gonzaga? I don’t think so. I get frustrated when the whole Catholic ethical conversation seems to turn routinely on abortion rather than on - I’m not saying that we shouldn’t be talking about abortion - but that we should be talking about lots and lots of things. I think we might seem more Catholic in that dedication to social justice if it covered a whole lot of questions and issues and showed that the act was for a greater purpose. But then, of course, it would be confrontational with certain established habits here.

I object to people who think we are not Catholic enough because we are not telling people what they absolutely must believe. For example, a student once told me, “The Church has never changed its mind. It’s a repository of eternal truth.” I responded, “Look, we have had official church teachings on slavery for example; on the responsibility of the Jews for the death of Jesus; On the morality of collecting interests on loans. We changed our

minds.” I think some of the people who say we are not Catholic enough, what they believe is Catholic is wrong. It is not an accurate version of what it means to be Catholic. If we had more classes on Catholic novelists, on exemplary Catholic women in history, wow, I’d take them. That is another part of what I think we could be doing more of here. I once had a conversation with a faculty member, he and I are very like each other in lots of ways, but he was saying, “How about it - I think between the two of us we could figure out a way to finagle a faculty appointment here of somebody who is an expert on Dorothy Day who bridges radical feminism and really orthodox Catholicism”. I said, “Let’s go for it. What can we do to put together a proposal that would link Catholic Studies, Women’s, and Gender Studies?” I’d like to see much more of that kind of stuff. I would love to promote more awareness here of the radical social teaching associated with Catholicism. We can be doing this kind of stuff and having conversations with the distinct goal of showing where we meet rather than where we divide.

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## A “Good” Catholic?

MOLLY MCMONAGLE

The other day in religion my teacher asked the class to define faith. This resulted in a broad spectrum of answers. I decided it would be ample time to look up from my drawing and say, “believing in the connectedness of everyone!” This response of course required me to give an explanation. To me, faith is the connectivity of life; it’s the idea that everyone has an individual purpose is good, and by utilizing their potential, everyone has the power to better themselves, society, and the world. My teacher looked at me and said, “So you are on your way to becoming a good Catholic?” I looked at him laughed and said, “Yeah,

we’ll see about that.” But it got me thinking – what does it mean to be a “good” Catholic?

I have attended Catholic school my entire life. Religion became something mandatory in my youth. I stopped going to church in high school both as a rebellion and because I felt a blatant disconnect between what I had learned, its impact in my life, and God. Jesuit education always posed a paradox in my life. I want to serve others, I believe in social justice, and I love to reflect. Yet, I’ve always felt a disconnect between the Church, reality, and me. I would be the last to tell you that Catholicism is at the basis of my faith in humanity, let alone that it is a guiding source in my life. I find it hard to believe in a system that does not recognize everyone as equal. To me, the one apparent truth from the Bible is to love, respect, and value yourself, others and the rest of the earth. I feel odd at times when I am at Mass. I look around and see everyone saying these words that I do not understand. No, that is a lie. I understand them, but they almost scare me. How can I sing songs to a singular being? What does that mean? I believe in the community aspect of Mass, I just find it hard to not question the structure and doctrine. Can I call myself a good Catholic while I admit that I’m not really sure what’s out there?

More importantly, what does it mean to be a Catholic in the global context? What does it mean to be an individual, a liberal, a woman, a young adult, maybe even a hippie, or a feminist, and still be Catholic? Is it my duty to become an active member of the Church? To be a disciple? But how can I actively fight for what I believe is right in a church that does not actively support choices that my friends and I make every day?

I think it is important to be men and women for others, but the important thing to learn from college and life is that we *become* men and women for others.

It is not simply enough to go through the actions of living life. It is not simply enough to say words at Mass. It is not simply enough to volunteer or really do anything if it is not grounded in actual experience and feeling connected to life - in relishing the present moment and truly existing.

Being alive is awesome. I love it. Feeling that there is something out there that connects everyone is a bewildering idea, but life always comes full circle. Our actions have to be without judgment, loving and accepting. They hold no value if they are simply motions that you think you should be making. Having faith in myself, my friends, family, others and the greater world gives value and meaning to my life. There are no criteria for being a "good" Catholic. Honestly, I wouldn't consider myself to be one. I'm not really sure what life has in store for me, but having faith in living a full, authentic life gives me reasons to smile each day.

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## Gonzaga & Social Justice

FR. C. HIGHTOWER, S.J.

*Interview*

*How do you respond to the criticism that Gonzaga focuses too much on social justice and that social justice has become an end in itself rather than for a higher purpose? [See page 157]*

Again, what is the last line that a priest says at Mass? "Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord." It's the dismissal. Religion is not something that happens on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning or Sunday night, in the case of Gonzaga's liturgies. It is something that is lived twenty-four seven. Your deeds and your actions speak

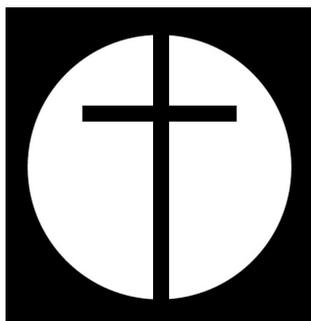
louder than your words. To steal a line from St. Francis, "preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary use words."

"Social justice" is more or less just a catch phrase. The very first papal encyclical on social justice was in the 1890s, so it's rather new language, but it's language that responds to this project we call "modernity" which has brought us horrific wars, disillusionment, questions around ethical biological experiments, and things like that. These have not been healthy to who we are as individuals, created in love and by love.

I think it's important to do the social justice part. Is it everything? No, but we have

**"What is the last line that a priest says at Mass? "Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord." It's the dismissal. Religion is not something that happens on Sunday mornings, it is something that is lived twenty-four seven."**

model of a God that came to live among us as a person, Jesus the Nazarene, who did social justice. That's all there is to it. He reached to the woman at the well, reached out to the man with the withered hand, reached out to the centurion, the occupier, to heal his daughter. He reached out to Peter's mother-in-law to make her fully whole again. If you want to call that "bad", then we will live with that. But most of the time the critique of social justice is used as a defense, it's not used as a way to corrupt.



# Gonzaga's on the Right Track

..... FR. TIM CLANCY, S.J. ....

*Interview*

*Is Gonzaga fulfilling its mission?*

**Y**es, I think we're in good shape. We are one of the Jesuit universities that is most deliberate about our Catholic and Jesuit identity. It varies from department to department in terms of the importance of the mission in the hiring decision. In my department it's crucial, in math not so crucial; it's partly a function of the proximity of a department's role to mission questions. For philosophy and religious studies departments in Catholic schools, the Jesuit mission is always critical.

*The criticism of Gonzaga is that it's becoming little more than a liberal arts college and failing to adhere to its Jesuit principles [page 157, 163]. Has social justice become an end within itself?*

Yeah, I think that is overwrought, there are more people wanting to make retreats than there are retreat opportunities on this campus. The Masses, both on weekends and daily, are well populated. So if you're just talking about religious practice, religious practice has historically been very, very strong at Gonzaga. The criticism when I was here was that you get this sort of "hot house" atmosphere and when you go back to your home parish you are going to be disap-

pointed. So there was this concern that we are raising people's expectations too high. So no matter what you do there is going to be a way to criticize it. But I think for those that want to be involved in the practice of their faith there is ample opportunity for both doing it and growing in it and maturing in it. We have the strongest religious studies requirement of any Jesuit university in the country; we have the strongest philosophy requirement of any Jesuit university in the country; so combine the two and we have by far the strongest philosophy and religious studies requirement. As far as reflecting on the meaning of life, reflecting on the role of faith in life, on the role of faith in society, we are all over that. It's true that people who aren't religious can still identify with the social justice side of the mission, but that doesn't mean that the pursuit of justice is an opposition to faith. If you love God and you don't love your neighbor, you're a hypocrite. St. John said that in the gospel. Jesus says that love of God and love of neighbor are two sides of the same coin: two ways of formulating the first law. This concern of over-emphasizing always gives me the impression that we would be better if we didn't emphasize social justice, and that wouldn't be the gospel. It's not like you can pursue faith without giving a damn about other

people, and particularly about those on the margins. That just doesn't work. Certainly, in terms of being Jesuit we have a preferential option for the poor, that's in our Constitution. It's in our congregational documents for the last fifty years. "Preferential option for the poor" means something. It means we reach out to the poor, and "poverty" can come in a lot of

**“We have the strongest religious studies requirement of any Jesuit university in the country; we have the strongest philosophy requirement of any Jesuit university in the country.”**

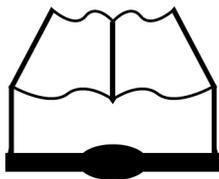
different ways. You can't not do that and say you're a good Catholic. I'm not apologizing for the social justice efforts of the Gonzaga community - we need to be very strong in that. I would agree with the criticism that that isn't sufficient to have a Jesuit and a Catholic identity; it's necessary but it's not sufficient. You also have to have the faith side, and how the faith animates that social justice, just as the social justice grounds your faith in the real world with real people. This friend of mine gave me a plaque at my high school graduation that I found really eerie. It was a *Peanuts* cartoon with Charlie Brown, saying "I love mankind, its people I can't stand." You can't say, 'I love God, it's his creation I can't stand.' Naturally, I'm a little impatient with that criticism, but the truth in that criticism is that there are people who aren't religious who can try to emphasize that the social justice element is what's really important about the Mission Statement, but that's just be-

cause they don't want to feel like second class citizens, they want to identify with the mission of Gonzaga.

I think you don't need to be religious to be a faculty member of Gonzaga but you do need to appreciate the value of faith and you can't be going around knocking down students' faiths and people with questions about faith that arise through classes; I think you have an obligation to address that with them. You can't just say 'that's none of my business' the way you would at a state school. Gonzaga should be about cultivating the faith lives of our students whether we ourselves are religious or not, because this place is a religious institution. It's a university, but it's a Catholic university. We have to keep that dialogue, those two poles, in tension. I think we do a good job, I think that because we are a liberal arts college it's easier to do that. If we were a big research university you wouldn't have the possibility of care for the whole person - which is where the cultivation of a person's faith life comes in. I would be too worried about getting my next article out to spend much time with students. The Jesuit Catholic mission relates directly to the importance that Gonzaga has faculty attending to students as a whole, as people, and not just as students. President Thayne McCulloh is very articulate about the Catholic and Jesuit mission of this place. Five years ago, we were in a culture war about the mission of the university. The people you hear criticizing the university's dedication to its mission are people who lost that war, the people who really wanted to make Gonzaga into, in my view, a sectarian university, where you have strong boundaries between Catholics and everyone else. But they lost that fight. They were saying that if you didn't understand Catholicism the way they understand it, that you must be just a secular humanist.

# Who Are We & Where Are We Going?: The Ruminations *of a* Bewildered Witness

DR. ERIC CUNNINGHAM



## *Introduction*

“The function of the university” wrote Thomas Merton, “is to help men and women save their souls, and in so doing, to save their society: from what? From the hell of meaninglessness, of obsession, of complex artifice, of systematic lying, of criminal evasions and neglects, of self-destructive futilities.”<sup>1</sup> When Merton, a Trappist monk, penned these thoughts in 1965, he was not referring specifically to Catholic universities, but to universities in general. I highlighted this passage from *Love and Living* back in 1989, and I’ve returned to it several times over the years. Every time I read it, I try to imagine how a state university official in 1965 might have reacted to the idea that universities exist to “save souls.” Then I imagine how a Catholic university official in 2011 would react to the same thought. I can’t help but think that the secular administrator and the Catholic administrator would both find it prudent to avoid any mention of “souls” and “salvation” in their mission statements. Phrases like “excellence,” “global citizenship,” “civic responsibility,” and “social justice,” work much better, being lofty enough to inspire, yet vague enough not to ruffle the feathers of potential customers who may not care one way or another if salvation is included in the costs of tuition.

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1 Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1979), 4.

Having spent a good portion of my life in universities, it seems to me that the most obvious function of all universities, secular, and Catholic, is to generate enough revenue to remain in operation and, hopefully, grow. What the students do with their souls while they’re in college is pretty much up to them. If they *were* interested in saving their souls, though, it would be awfully nice if they could find a university that would help them do that.

## *The changing face of Jesuit Catholic identity*

During my seven-and-a-half years as a faculty member at Gonzaga, I have participated in numerous campus conversations on Catholic mission and identity, and I have always taken what I think is a strong and outspokenly pro-Church position. I believe that in an era in which Jesuits are few, lay faculty have to be able to articulate the Church’s position accurately, especially on the various matters in which faith and reason would seem to be in conflict. Unfortunately, in taking a pro-Church position, I have often found myself at odds with 1) Catholic colleagues who don’t share “my opinion” of what Catholic means, 2) non-Catholic colleagues who are generally indifferent to the question, and find all of the “mission” talk something of an irritation, and 3) the occasional student who doesn’t appreciate—to quote one anonymous respondent on a recent instructor evaluation—“having religion shoved down my

throat.” As frustrating as it’s been to try to defend a mainstream Catholic worldview at Gonzaga, particularly when my opponents have so often been Jesuit priests, my career as a reluctant culture warrior has provided me with great opportunities for personal growth. I have learned the meaning of William Blake’s assertion that “a fool who persists in his folly will become wise.” The wisdom I have attained is the full awareness of the folly of feverishly trying to shore up Catholic culture at a campus that will probably soon either abandon, or be forced by circumstances to drop its Catholic identity.

This is a provocative statement, but I make it with great seriousness, and in the sincere hope that someday, somehow, it will prove to have been wrong. I also make it as a lifelong practicing Catholic, who was not educated in Jesuit universities, and didn’t know quite what to expect from day-to-day association with the fabled Society of Jesus. What little I knew of Jesuit education prior to coming to Gonzaga was conveyed to me by my father, who graduated from Holy Cross College in 1956, and by my uncle, who attended both Holy Cross and Boston College, and later taught at LeMoyne College. After many years as an English professor, he was appointed Dean of Arts and Sciences, and then Academic Vice President at Creighton University. My introduction to the Jesuit tradition was both informal and highly anecdotal.

I have vivid childhood memories of listening to my dad talk about his college days at Holy Cross. If I had to make any judgments about the nature of a Jesuit education based on these stories, it would have to be that the “Ignatian experience” was a long ordeal involving eccentric old Jesuit professors, no-nonsense dorm prefects, and early morning masses at daily chapel. I get the sense from my dad that entering the navy after Holy Cross was something of a relief.

My Uncle Bill’s evaluation was more posi-

tive. As a lay administrator during the 1980s and 90s, he took part in one of the most important transitions in the history of Jesuit education, *i.e.*, the turning over of leadership of the educational apostolate to the laity. People like my uncle, devout, scholarly, and committed to the Catholic Church, were exemplary companions in this project, and he, for one, made sure that the ideals and values of the Jesuit educational tradition were protected and preserved, even as the number of Jesuits teaching in the classrooms went into steep decline. Of course, he was fortunate enough to have *learned* the traditions, and he knew what he was preserving. When I was hired at Gonzaga, I wasn’t entirely sure.

#### *Looking for the ideal*

As a cultural alien from the very secular University of Oregon, I felt it was my duty to learn as much as I could about the formal structures of Jesuit Catholic education. I studied the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, read the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus, the *Autobiography* of St. Ignatius, and several works on Jesuit education and history by Fr. George Ganss, S.J. I read biographies of great Jesuit scholars such as Robert Bellarmine and Matteo Ricci, and I studied closely the letters written by St. Francis Xavier during his Asian mission. I slogged through the *Ratio Studiorum*, and I read histories of Gonzaga University and the Northwest missions written by our own late Fr. Schoenberg. I digested the Society’s defining statements on social justice and education, promulgated by Fathers General Arrupe and Kolvenbach, and I studied the proceedings of the 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregations. In addition to this pointedly Jesuit reading, I also familiarized myself with papal documents dealing with the intellectual life (*Fides et Ratio*) and Catholic higher education (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*), as well the important address to Catholic Educators in the United States given by Pope Benedict XVI

in 2008.

Aside from gaining valuable insights into the way the Church defines the purpose of the intellectual life and its standards for higher education, I discovered in these works a great wealth of logic, clarity, fidelity, and a persistent emphasis on sanctity and salvation. It was hard for me to understand how Gonzaga could be satisfied with its obscure and wordy mission statement when the Jesuit tradition included such strong, clear statements as these:

*Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created.* (from *The Spiritual Exercise of St. Ignatius*, para. 23)

*"...[T]he end of the Society and of its studies is to aid our fellowmen to the knowledge and love of God and to the salvation of their souls..."* (from *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, para. 307)

*It is the principal ministry of the Society of Jesus to educate youth in every branch of knowledge that is in keeping with its Institute. The aim of our educational program is to lead men to the knowledge and love of our Creator and Redeemer* (from the *Ratio Studiorum*, 1599, para. 1)

I've always thought it unfortunate that these and other solid statements of purpose are largely ignored in most Gonzaga discussions. It's especially unfortunate now as we find ourselves thinking about revising the Core Curriculum and trying to figure out the best way to articulate our Catholic identity. Except for those recent documents that specifically outline the Jesuit commitment to social justice, I can't recall a single time that any foundational text related to our Catholic mission was mentioned in any faculty gathering. Since 2003, I have attended Ignatian Colleague dinners, "conversations on Conversations," and mission development

seminars. I was given the rare privilege to be chosen as a delegate to the first-of-its-kind Society of Jesus Lay Congregation. I've been to core revision workshops, outcomes and assessments committee meetings, and fifteen faculty conferences. I'm still waiting for somebody to say something meaningful about our Catholic identity that goes beyond the obvious good of "social justice."

*What exactly do we mean by social justice?*

**I**n his letter to the Romans, St. Paul provides a good working definition of justice. It is to "render to a thing that which it is due (Romans 13:7)." Implied in the Christian concept of justice is rendering to God that which God is due. Accordingly, if we are not first rendering to God just dues of love, thanks, praise, and fidelity, then any other category of justice we hope to satisfy is arguably groundless—from the standpoint of Christianity, that is. From the standpoint of secular modernity, where all justice is negotiated in the political arena, there is no "absolute" from which all subordinate justices spring. The Enlightenment thinkers invoked "laws of nature," but those laws have been re-configured over the years to suit changing cultural preferences. Now it appears that all definitions of social justice, whether religiously grounded or not, exhibit the quality of a modern secular worldview.

Whenever I hear somebody speak of how much we value social justice, I can't help but think of the once-popular bumper sticker that said "I BRAKE FOR ANIMALS." The only response I can make is "well, who *doesn't*?" The whole justice "thing" often strikes me as an elaborate rhetorical strategy calculated to make sure the "good and smart" people who favor "justice" and "diversity" can win every argument against the bad and stupid people who just want to oppress, discriminate, and stifle free speech—without ever having to prove a point. It's a strategy that does much to suppress dialogue because

anyone who takes issue with the “socially just” position is assumed to be morally or mentally deficient. This leaves them little space to raise important questions about mission definition. When questions are not raised, alternatives are not considered. Thus, all attempts to bring middle-of-the-road Catholic positions into the discussion are overwhelmed by the propagation of slogans, none of which are ever clearly defined. Phrases such as “men and women for others,” “action in the world,” “preferential option for the

**“The larger question this all boils down to is this: Is Gonzaga still a Jesuit, Catholic university, or have we already become a secular liberal arts college with only a fond memory of Catholic origins and some lingering Catholic practices?”**

poor,” “finding God in all things,” etc., all of which signify praiseworthy Jesuit ideals, are also easy prey for a kind of Nietzschean “trans-valuation.” Interpreted in the light of Catholic tradition and scripture—to say nothing of the context of their original sources—these things have profound and concrete meaning. Unmoored from tradition and scripture, and they can mean almost anything, and can be used just as easily to discredit Catholicism as to uphold it.

The “good-bad” dichotomy in which we tend to frame social justice is incomplete, and it easily lends itself to a privileging of

material over spiritual values. One could argue that the alternative to social justice is not social *injustice*, but rather *divine* justice. If our mission were to teach people to prize holiness and salvation over political satisfaction, we would find them pursuing social justice as a matter of course. Social justice would move fairly quickly from being the elusive end of a political strategy to the first fruits of a transcendental aspiration to render all things to God through Christ—as the Jesuit motto goes, *Omnia Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (All to the Greater Glory of God). Unfortunately, anybody who tries to frame the question of justice in spiritual terms draws accusations of irrelevancy or insensitivity from the ideologically invested stewards of social justice. The *real* problem, we are admonished, is material misfortune, and an unbalanced distribution of wealth—“God has *plenty* of glory—it’s the poor and suffering who need our help.” It goes without saying that we must opt for the poor, but the service we render to our less fortunate brothers and sisters is a species of, and not a replacement for, the love we owe to God.

*Re-defining Catholic*

The politicization of our conversations on mission can become tedious for people whose ecclesiology is broad enough to accept both “liberal” social justice and “conservative” tradition. Why can’t we adhere to the guidelines of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and carry out the progressive Jesuit vision of social justice at the same time? Since the Church herself is capable of embracing the dichotomy, Gonzaga could at least try. The answer to this question, while partially dependent on how much one university can reasonably accomplish with limited resources, is even more determined by decisions that have been made over the years in the making of campus culture. Not all of these decisions have been made by practicing Catholics. At almost any Catholic university, there are people of good con-

science who simply don't agree with core Catholic teachings. These people see the Church's opposition to birth control, gay marriage, and women's ordination—to name only three things—as manifestly unjust, and they would like their institutions to replace outdated philosophies with something that better reflects the multiplicity of contemporary lifestyles and worldviews. This is a perfectly reasonable wish from the standpoint of modern civil society, but it requires a re-definition of Catholicism that excludes several currently non-negotiable elements of the faith; among these are the authority of the pope, an exclusively male priesthood, and a “preferential option” for heterosexual marriage. The frustration that many non-Catholics feel toward the Church's strange obstinacy is invariably reinforced by disgruntled and disappointed Catholics in their midst, who often have an entirely different set of gripes with the Church, but share the pain of alienation. In such a climate, tradition easily becomes vilified as the chief obstacle to freedom, and it becomes increasingly difficult for the traditional position to get a fair hearing, because in “fairness,” tradition is the problem.

Has this been the real goal of the Jesuit, Catholic educational mission for the last forty years?—to say that true Catholicism is *not* the old religion of the hierarchy, but is, rather, a new narrative of social justice that the progressive wing of the Society of Jesus, in its intolerance for intolerance, would propose as an improvement over tradition? Are we, to paraphrase the rousing post-Vatican II hymn, trying to “sing a New Church into being,” right here at GU? If so, and without passing any judgments for or against this project, I wonder if it is even possible. It would seem to me that implementing any vision of Jesuit Catholicism at Gonzaga will be very difficult, given the rapidly declining number of Jesuits available to sustain it.

*Disappearing Jesuits*

At present Gonzaga has only two full-time Jesuit professors under the age of sixty, and the American Society of Jesus is not replenishing itself with new vocations. This deficit has been looming since the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), and has, in a sense, been prepared for. As any Jesuit will tell you, it has long been the goal of the Oregon province, and the Society as a whole, to transfer an increasing share of the administration of its various apostolates to the laity. While this is a good and probably necessary expedient, it begs at least two questions, 1) which members of the laity are going to be given the task of administering the apostolates?, and 2) how are they going to do it?

As a concerned lay companion in a vital Jesuit ministry, I think it would be helpful to see the establishment of a real lay formation program, so that those of us who have come to love the Jesuit Catholic tradition, in all its dimensions, can learn how we can best serve in the apostolic work, providing of course, that it continues.

*Are we Catholic or not?*

The larger question this all boils down to is this: Is Gonzaga still a Jesuit, Catholic university, or have we already become a secular liberal arts college with only a fond memory of Catholic origins and some lingering Catholic practices? If our unique Jesuit, humanistic, and Catholic identity is nothing substantially more than Christian flavored version of Enlightenment-style social justice, should we even be calling ourselves Catholic? A Gonzaga education costs a great deal of money—if we are not doing our very best to provide our students with the authentic Catholic education, as well as the Catholic culture that they have every right to expect, it might be better if we didn't call ourselves Catholic. I am certainly not suggesting that we do this—I'm only trying to raise what I think are some serious questions, based on my ob-

servations of the last several years.

### Three Options

As to what should be done, it seems to me that there are three broad options available to us, any of which would be dramatically altered by a change in economic realities.

*Option One: Status Quo:* We keep doing what we're doing, and make no adjustments to the trajectory of our Catholic identity. We continue to grow, and as we do, the Catholic concentration of our faculty and student body gets smaller. We remain officially unbothered by the fact that we are not in compliance with papal guidelines on faculty composition and curriculum. We continue to get hammered in the conservative Catholic press, and we continue not to worry too much about it. Life is good, but if we do nothing, our Catholic identity would almost surely go extinct. Not only would there soon be no Jesuits teaching anything, there would also be entire departments without any Catholic representation at all. We end up as a good private school that happens to have a Jesuit heritage.

*Option Two: Gonzaga the Catholic Faith Center:* We decide to make a serious return to our Catholic roots. We pick a year, say 2025 or 2030—by which we pledge to be in compliance with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, and we immediately implement new hiring policies, new Student Life policies, and new University Ministry structure to attain that goal.

*Option Three: A University for "the New Millennium:"* A convergence of economic and demographic factors in the next year or two

make it clear that the handwriting is on the wall, and it's time to reinvent Gonzaga according to a bold new paradigm. The initial shock is that the administration announces that with the decrease in the number of Jesuits, Catholic character is no longer a defining issue for our school. At the same time, the runaway national debt and a depressed economy adversely affect our enrollments, signaling the onset of prolonged fiscal "challenges." We radically increase online programs, and make major cuts in the Arts and Sciences.

These scenarios are pure speculation, and I claim no abilities as a forecaster. I do think that the future of Gonzaga, whatever it holds, is completely linked to the choices we make on the question of our Catholic identity, and some serious choices need to be made soon. Identity is literally and figuratively our core concern, and until we grapple with it, it makes little sense to talk about curriculum reviews, outcomes and assessments plans, or the implementation of vision statements.

### Conclusion

In the end, Gonzaga can be whatever it wants to be, and I hope we are able to choose our path before circumstances choose it for us. The world has never had a greater need for a strong, faithful Church, and the Church has never had a greater need for strong, faithful universities. I don't envy our administrators, and I know they are doing their best to deal with challenges that academic institutions have never faced before. I pray that they will do all they can to preserve our Catholic identity—not only to honor our founders and their vision, but to give glory to God—and, of course to help save some souls along the way.

# Is Gonzaga Living Up *to its* Jesuit Expectations?

## DR. DOUGLAS KRIES

If one studies Jesuit education as it existed during the lifetime of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, what one sees immediately is a project vastly different from what one sees at Gonzaga University today – so different, in fact, that one wonders whether Aloysius would not be profoundly disappointed with his namesake.

The goal of classical Jesuit education was to bring students to God through the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church. The curricular means to be employed to that end were especially the study of philosophy and—for the advanced—theology. Indeed, the study of the entire Catholic intellectual tradition was the aim, but since most of this was written in Latin and Greek, the study of such languages was emphasized, especially for the beginning students. The Jesuits of Aloysius's time, moreover, thought that what happened to the student outside of the classroom was also of vital importance. The student's soul was to be formed through liturgy, the sacraments, and private devotional reading and prayer. Moral formation was as important as intellectual formation, if not more so.

At an American university such as Gonzaga University today, the common curriculum based on appropriating the Catholic intellectual tradition has been largely replaced with a curriculum that emphasizes majors in narrow disciplines, many of which are intended as preparation for careers. The traditional Jesuit curriculum has thus been reduced to the “core,” but this is merely a faint echo of what was originally intended. The Gonzaga core, moreover, is taught by faculty who, though often accomplished in their own right, usually have almost no knowledge of the tradition of Jesuit education. And it is taught to students who generally think of the core as a set of distribution requirements to be completed quickly so that one can get on to the real business of university study. For neither party is the handing on of the Catholic intellectual tradition thought to be the task at hand.

Even less does GU life outside the classroom match the expectations of classical Jesuit education. To be sure, GU is concerned that its students develop the virtue of generosity, as can be witnessed in its emphasis upon volunteering. Beyond that, however, the University pretty much turns a blind eye to the moral development of its students, adopting a sort of moral relativism under the banners of “diversity” and now “inclusivity.” It is best to pass over these embarrassing matters quickly, so let us simply note in passing that the University is remarkably inattentive to the development of the virtues of chastity and temperance. And while there is a liturgical life available at GU, most students do not participate.

In the end, it is only possible to say that Gonzaga University meets Jesuit expectations if those expectations are defined down, almost to the point of non-existence. We see continually, therefore, the attempt being made to reduce the rich tradition of Jesuit education to social justice alone—as though justice could exist on its own without the philosophical and theological underpinnings that a more ample and robust Jesuit education would provide.

In order to avoid judging ourselves too harshly, it should be added that often the classical Jesuit colleges did not live up to their own expectations, either. And indeed, while Gonzaga University isn't much of a *Jesuit* university, it does have many fine faculty members who are well-trained in a different sort of university culture. Especially not to be overlooked are academic programs that do an excellent job attaining their own ends; one thinks, for example, of GU's very fine school of engineering. Finally, it should also be added that, if one knows how to do it, it is still possible for the rare GU student to attain an education that Aloysius would approve of. Consequently, while it is false-advertising for GU to claim that it is a Jesuit university, it is not unreasonable to say that Spokane still harbors a sub-culture or counter-culture of Jesuit education.

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