

# FELLOWSHIP OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS QUARTERLY

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**PRESIDENT'S LETTER**.....by Dr. Bernard Dobranski

## ARTICLES

**Taking Our Bodies Seriously: Holy Communion  
in the Eucharist and Marriage**..... Peter J. Ryan, S.J.

**How to Discern the Elements  
of Your Personal Vocation** ..... Peter J. Ryan, S.J.

**Where and What Is Catholicism?** .....James V. Schall, S.J.

**On the "Information of Others"** .....James V. Schall, S.J.

**Three Virgin-Martyr Plays in the Light of English-Catholic  
Martyrology, 1577 to 1681** ..... Anne Barbeau Gardiner

**Catholic International Relations Theory:  
The Development of a Core Theory** ..... Andrew Essig

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## BOOK REVIEWS

***Ten Dates Every Catholic Should Know: The Divine Surprises and  
Chastisements that Shaped the Church and Changed the World***  
by Diane Mozcar.....D. Q. McNerny

***Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past***  
by Suellen Hoy.....D. Q. McNerny

***Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the  
Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920***  
by Maureen Fitzgerald.....D.Q.McNerny

***After Asceticism: Sex, Prayer, and Deviant Priests***  
by The Linacre Institute.....Leonard A. Kennedy, C.S.B.

***Imperfection and Defeat: the Role of Aesthetic Imagination  
in Human Society***  
by Virgil Nemoianu ..... Jude P. Dougherty

***Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy***  
by Antonia Lolordo ..... Jude P. Dougherty

***The Unchanging Heart of the Priesthood***  
by Thomas Acklin, O.S.B..... Patrick Doering

***The Fulfillment of All Desire: A Guidebook for the Journey to God  
Based on the Wisdom of the Saints***  
by Ralph Martin ..... Janet E. Smith

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## CONTENTS

PRESIDENT'S LETTER .....	2
ARTICLES	
Taking Our Bodies Seriously.....	4
How to Discern the Elements of Your Personal Vocation.....	11
Where and What Is Catholicism?.....	18
On the "Information of Others".....	24
Three Virgin-Martyr Plays .....	25
Catholic International Relations Theory.....	30
BOOK REVIEWS	
<i>Ten Dates Every Catholic Should Know</i> .....	37
<i>Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past</i> .....	39
<i>Habits of Compassion</i> .....	42
<i>After Asceticism: Sex, Prayer, and Deviant Priests</i> .....	45
<i>Imperfection and Defeat</i> .....	47
<i>Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of     Early Modern Philosophy</i> .....	48
<i>The Unchanging Heart of the Priesthood</i> .....	48
<i>The Fulfillment of All Desire</i> .....	51
BOOK RECEIVED .....	52
WASHINGTON D.C. ANNUAL MEETING.....	53
BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	54
EX CATHEDRA .....	55

**Reminder:** Membership dues will be mailed out the first of the year and are based on a calendar (not academic) year.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by Bernard Dobranski  
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Recently the Vatican issued two statements of fundamental importance to Catholic belief: the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Sacramentum Caritatis" of Pope Benedict XVI (February 22, 2007), which deals with the celebration and real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the notification by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) of Jesuit Father Jon Sobrino, a leading proponent of Liberation Theology, that some of his writings relating to the divinity of Christ are "not in conformity with the doctrine of the Church." Though separate, the documents' theological content is vitally interconnected and a reminder to us that the "Truths" of the faith, as handed down through the apostles are of a piece. For faith to be reasonable, as Pope Benedict continually reminds us it must be, it has to be integrally consistent and accepted in its entirety.

For the most part I will pass over any detailed discussion of Liberation Theology. Its attempt to use Jesus as a social revolutionary with Marxist proclivities has long ago been condemned by CDF's former prefect, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. It also falls short, according to Ratzinger, by focusing on this world as the primary purpose of the Gospel's message and disregarding the ultimate reason for Christ's Paschal Mystery—our eternal salvation. But, even more dangerous is Sobrino's misleading presentation of the identity of Jesus the Christ, which was clearly defined in the four Christological Councils of the Church: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Caledon (451). While Sobrino does not actually deny the divin-

ity of Christ, he flirts with the heresy of Modernism which assumes a historical approach to Scripture and doctrine which limits them to time—conditioned formulations—making their statements relative. For instance, he says that all the New Testament does is “make clear that Jesus was intimately bound up with God...and contains...the seed of what will produce a confession of the divinity of Christ in the strict sense.” He also says that “at the outset Jesus was not spoken of as God, nor divinity a term applied to him.” Basically he says these designations are of latter Church developments without direct New Testament continuity. In response to this, Cardinal Levada cites specific scriptural texts and early Church documents that affirm the Church’s belief in Christ’s divinity from the very beginning. In another instance, Sobrino seems dubious or confused as to the defined truth of the “hypostatic union” which occurred with Mary’s “fiat” that permitted the union of the two natures—God and man—in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, the Gospel of John and the Council of Ephesus clearly affirm this truth. So much so that the Council of Ephesus gave Mary the title “Mother of God.” Sobrino, on the other hand, says that “the Son took on the reality of Jesus - indicating a separation of the natures. The point that Sobrino seems to make is that Jesus was just a divinely inspired man—quite similar to other prophets past and present. This is Unitarianism at its best!

These corrections by Cardinal Levada are important not only because they identify error but also because they point out a fundamental need for catechesis on the Creed. For many, the rote repetition of the Creed’s words at Sunday Mass and Solemnities have lost their meaning. I therefore recommend that scholars, Catholic school teachers, catechists and pastors explain the Creed. Part I of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be found most helpful in this regard.

The second document, “Sacramentum Caritatis” is so dependent on the above—affirmed truths with-

out which our belief in the real presence of Christ through transubstantiation would fall. In this Exhortation, all of the traditional beliefs of the Church regarding the Eucharist are affirmed along with the purpose of the Eucharistic celebration and pious practices which enhance our appreciation of the mystery.

Catholic doctrine has always taught that Jesus is present under the species of bread and wine, “body, blood, soul and divinity.” Hence, the belief of Christ’s divinity and humanity in one hypostasis—“*Verbum caro factum Est*” (The Word became flesh)—is intrinsic to the Eucharistic celebrations, the Church’s main act of worship and source of all grace. Indeed, it is the Eucharist that allows us to grow in holiness and become one with Christ. Ascetical theology reminds us of the divinizing effect that Holy Communion has on the recipient by uniting us here on earth to the Blessed Trinity and how it uniquely prepares us for entrance in to the Kingdom of Heaven. Without this understanding, our Holy Communions would be no more than memorials with little immediate and certainly doubtful eschatological efficacy. Indeed, St. Thomas Aquinas summed up the Eucharistic mystery so well in his hymnal reflection on the Eucharist “*O Sacrum Convivium:*”

O Sacred banquet, in which Christ  
Is received, the memory of His Passion is  
Renewed, the mind is filled with grace,  
And a pledge of future glory given to us.

I recommend that our members read both of these documents. Their contents will be beneficial for us as we contemplate these great mysteries of our faith. I further encourage that they be disseminated and discussed among those who are entrusted to our care. They should also be used to evangelize those who do not know the true gift of God in Jesus and his special presence among us in the Eucharist.

May the peace of the risen Christ fill you this Easter season. ✠

# Taking Our Bodies Seriously: *Holy Communion in the Eucharist and Marriage*

by Peter F. Ryan, S.J.  
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**T**he Eucharist has often been described as a foretaste of heaven; and the kingdom of heaven has often been described as a wedding feast. Holy Communion in the Eucharist and Marriage is *ultimately* found in the kingdom. So, to come to grips with our topic, it is important to consider the kingdom.

People are easily tempted to consider talk about a heavenly marriage feast as just that: talk. They take it only as a kind of metaphor and not as a serious description of what heaven is. Marriage, after all, involves bodily communion, whereas we can tend to regard heaven as a purely spiritual reality. Even many faithful Catholics, including saints and scholars who clearly affirm the central Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body, conceive of heaven as essentially spiritual. As a result, it becomes difficult to see what difference the body makes.

## Beatific vision and bodily resurrection

**S**t. Thomas Aquinas, for example, equates heavenly fulfillment with the beatific vision, which he says will satisfy all our desires (see *Summa theologiae* 1-2, q. 3, a. 8). But there's a problem. Some very holy people go immediately to heaven when they die; they are given the beatific vision right away, even, it seems, before they experience bodily resurrection. If all their desires are satisfied before they exist in heaven as bodily persons, then what difference can the body make to our heavenly happiness?

St. Thomas tries to resolve this problem by saying that although the body is not essential for perfect beatitude, it adds well-being to perfect beatitude (see

*Summa theologiae* 1-2, q. 4, a. 5). But one is left wondering how, if the beatific vision really does fulfill us perfectly, the body could add any well-being at all to our heavenly fulfillment. The problem vanishes when one no longer equates that fulfillment with the beatific vision, but instead sees that heavenly fulfillment is found in all of the various elements of the kingdom: the vision of God, to be sure, but also bodily resurrection and all that it enables us to enjoy, the new heavens and the new earth, the communion of friends, and the whole range of humanly fulfilling goods.

This understanding of heavenly fulfillment finds support in the New Testament, which emphasizes resurrection much more than the vision of God. Of course, Scripture does promise that vision: Jesus himself says that the pure of heart are blessed because they shall see God (see Mt. 5:8), and St. John says that those who now are children of God shall in heaven see him as he is (see 1 Jn 3:2). But Jesus also clearly affirms "that the dead are raised" (Lk 37) and teaches that the meek are blessed because they shall inherit the earth (see Mt 5:5). And St. Paul speaks at length of the resurrection of the body, explaining that even though we do not understand how God can raise us up, we should not doubt the reality of resurrection or downplay its significance (see 1 Cor 15). "The dead will be raised imperishable," he proclaims; "this mortal nature must put on immortality," and death will be "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:52-54).

## Eucharist anticipates bodily resurrection

**J**esus teaches that our heavenly life depends upon our being united with him in the Eucharist. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel we read: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and

drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:53–55). Later in the same Gospel Jesus urges us to abide in him if we expect to have life: “If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers”; but “he who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5–6). As he tells Martha, even though such a person die, “yet shall he live” (Jn 11:25).

Paul develops the same theme. He says that when we receive the Eucharist we participate in the body of Christ; we are one body because we have received of this one bread (see 1 Cor 16–17). *The Didache*, that is, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, a document of the early Church, famously expands on this idea in a prayer: “As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom” (*Didache*, 9, 4). In other words, when we receive the Eucharist—the one bread formed of grain brought together and consecrated—we are incorporated into the one body of Christ. This prepares us to enter into his heavenly kingdom and share his resurrection life.

In short, the New Testament and the Church from earliest times teach that the dead are raised bodily, that the blessed in heaven are united with one another through their real bodily unity with Jesus, and that this unity is anticipated in and made possible through the Eucharist. Scripture speaks of this unity as a marriage. Despite significant differences between marriage as we know it in this world and the heavenly marriage feast, we can deepen our understanding of our bodily union with one another in Jesus by reflecting on marriage.

## Unity, not absorption

**M**arriage is a one-flesh unity in which the couple become so united that they are in a very real sense one person—a communal person. Yet their real unity does not mean that they mutually absorb each other and lose their own identity. Rather, their own identity becomes fully realized in this relationship. It enhances the individuality of each because in

the complementarity of man and woman, each supplies what the other lacks so that they can become one. This is obviously true in their bodily reality: it is only because they are different in complementary ways that they are able to be united. The same is true for other dimensions of the relationship: by contributing his or her unique and complementary gifts, each becomes more of what he or she can be. The more the *union* is actualized, the more *husband and wife* are actualized *in* the union as their unique, individual selves.

Consider any good marriage: as the man and woman become more one, they use more of their own individual gifts to enhance the relationship, and in doing so they are more fulfilled, both individually and as a couple. The same is true of the bodily unity of heaven—our union with each other as members of Jesus’ body that the Eucharist anticipates. That union does not take away the individuality of those who are a part of it; rather, the union enhances their individuality.

We see, then, that unity and difference are not contraries in marriage or in the resurrection life of the kingdom, and in this we have a reflection of the Trinity. The divine persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are both the one God and distinct realities. Common sense would suggest that persons are *either* one *or* distinct, but the doctrine of the Trinity tells us otherwise: the divine persons are *both* one *and* distinct. And the more they are *one*, the more *distinct* they are. Since the divine persons enjoy perfect union with each other, there is an *absolute* distinction between them. So also with marriage and with the one-flesh union of the members of the body of Christ! Those who enjoy these forms of bodily union do not become a homogeneous mass. Their individual identity is not lost but enhanced. Their union with each other in Christ does not mean that they are absorbed into him and cease being what they are.

The teaching that human fulfillment involves a communion of persons whose individual identities are retained and enhanced distinguishes Christianity from other religions. On the one hand, Buddhism teaches that nirvana, which is regarded as uniquely worthy of pursuit, can be found only when the self ceases to exist as an individual self by being entirely absorbed into God, or the Absolute. On the other hand, Islam denies any possibility of personal union with God, whom it

regards as utterly other and without the unity of distinct persons within himself. But Christianity teaches that unity between God and man is real, and that one aspect of that unity is our bodily unity with Christ, who is one of the divine persons.

Again, the corporeal unity of those who experience bodily resurrection is real, but the distinctness of persons remains. And conversely, the distinctness does not detract from the unity. The blessed rise in their own individual bodies, but the distinctness of their bodies does not detract from personal bodily community, for it is precisely their distinct bodies that *are* united. We do not understand *how* resurrected bodily persons are united, but we do know that marriage is a sacrament of this union. Church teaching makes this clear (see the Council of Trent, DS 1799-1800). The union at issue is not simply the unity of Christ with the Church but the unity in him of everybody in the Church with one another other; this is what Paul refers to in speaking of the one bread and one body.

This real corporeal unity is built up by the Eucharist. In his encyclical “Ecclesia de Eucharistia” Pope John Paul II explains that the Eucharist “builds the Church” (26) and is “a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (cf. Jn 15:11); it is in some way the anticipation of heaven,” “the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world,” a pledge arising “from the fact that the flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is his body in its glorious state after the resurrection” (18).

## Bodily communion in heaven

**T**he marriage feast that the Eucharist is building up somehow includes the unity that chaste married couples experience together in their marital intimacy. For nothing that is good and holy in this world simply ceases to exist. Rather, it is transformed and included forever in the heavenly kingdom. However, someone might object: Didn’t Jesus teach that there is no marriage in heaven? Let’s consider the passage in which he addresses the issue: Luke 20:27-36.

The Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, try to trip Jesus up by having him imagine a man, one of seven brothers, who dies leaving a wife. One by

one, the brothers marry the wife and then die, and last of all, she dies. The Sadducees ask Jesus, “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.” Jesus responds that in this age people “marry and are given in marriage,” but those who rise from the dead do not. He explains: “they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

When Jesus says they are like the angels, he obviously does not mean they are not bodily, for that would contradict the whole point of his response, which is to affirm that there is indeed a resurrection. Rather, he is saying that those who have risen to glory never die. Since life never ends, there is no need for reproduction and for bodily unity based on it. In this life we have reproduction, which comes about through the bodily unity of two people. (Of course, the unity of married couples who cannot have children remains good because it really is bodily unity: they come together in a reproductive-type act even if they cannot actually conceive children.) But in the everlasting life of heaven, when there is no need for reproduction, the mode of bodily communion is different. It is no longer based on sexual differentiation and no longer limited to two people; those limitations drop away. But bodily communion itself does not drop away; instead, it will involve everybody in one great marriage.

The principle of unity in the heavenly marriage is not genital, which has to do with reproduction. If we imagine that the principle of bodily unity in heaven is genital, we will mistakenly imagine heaven as a great orgy. Heaven involves bodily communion that somehow is brought about in a different way. Although we cannot understand precisely how, we can say that the bodily union of heaven will involve the very *being* of the person; it will not be limited to one function but will involve every aspect of the bodily person. We will be united with Jesus and one another with respect to our whole bodily personhood for our whole life. And yet, as with marriage as we now know it, this union will not mean getting absorbed into each other or losing our individual identity. Rather, as the union is intensified, so also is our individuality.

Since one-flesh union in the kingdom is not

based specifically on sexual complementarity, we may find ourselves wondering whether it will be pleasant. The answer is that without a doubt it will be! Whenever we participate in something fundamentally and humanly good, we experience it on all the levels of our being, for we are integrated unities of body and soul. It is hard to imagine a greater human good than the one-flesh union of heaven. So, we can expect the bodily unity of resurrection life to be pleasurable, in fact, to be a deeper and more satisfying pleasure than anything we can ever expect in this life. Still, our focus in heaven surely will not be on the pleasure itself but on the goodness of the unity. The experience, I expect, will be much better described as one of overflowing joy.

## The sacrifice of accepting death

Up to now I have been speaking about Eucharist as sacrament, as bodily unity with Jesus and in him with each other. But we also must consider the Eucharist as sacrifice. In fact, it is only through his sacrifice that this bodily unity with Jesus and each other becomes possible. Jesus is the great high priest who offers sacrifice. But what is the sacrifice he offers? He is obedient to the Father all the way to his death. However, Jesus' sacrifice is not his death itself but rather the way he lived his life—which, of course, includes his free *acceptance* of death. Notice that Jesus does not intend his death; he freely accepts it. The second Eucharistic Prayer makes that clear: "Before he was given up to death, a death he freely accepted, he took bread and gave you thanks." So, again, Jesus' sacrifice was not precisely his death but the way he lived his life. He fulfilled his mission despite the fact that it meant freely accepting his death.

For our participation in the Eucharist to be efficacious, we must cooperate with Jesus. He is the high priest offering sacrifice, and only his role is necessary for there to *be* a sacrifice. But if we are to profit from it, we must somehow participate. We, too, must offer sacrifice. How can we do this if he is the only high priest? Through the priesthood bestowed on us and on every Christian at baptism! Although Jesus is the only high priest and the only principal offerer, we participate by offering ourselves along with Jesus'

offering of himself. When we do that, we naturally *intend* that Jesus offer himself. That's the way formal cooperation works.

A negative example can make this clear. If you intend to rob a bank along with some principal agent who is the only one necessary to get the job done, then you intend that he do the robbing. This is formal cooperation. Your cooperation would make no sense apart from the action of the principal agent. The same is true with positive actions, and with the most positive, most wonderful action imaginable: the Mass. Only Jesus is the principal agent; he is the only true mediator. But anyone—not only ministerial priests but all Christians through their baptismal priesthood—also offer the sacrifice if they offer themselves along with Jesus, for then they intend that he offer himself. As with Jesus, our offering is not our death itself, even though, like Jesus, we must *accept* our death. Our offering is rather the sacrificial way we live our lives.

The Eucharist builds up the heavenly marriage feast, but that feast can only be reached through a radical transformation of our condition. For, in this world our concrete condition includes death and many other serious problems that are ultimately attributable to sin. This does not mean that a particular person's problems are attributable to his own sins or, for example, to the sins of his parents, as Jesus makes clear (see Jn 9:2-3). Rather, it means that the problems in our fallen world exist because the world is in fact fallen! It has been disrupted by original sin and set on a path to death. The problems of this fallen world must be overcome if we are ever to reach a true and lasting fulfillment—and this requires radical transformation. It means getting out of this passing, sinful, divided, unsatisfactory world and being transformed into the kingdom. And, of course, the *terminus a quo*, the state from which we get into that kingdom, is this world. We need to get out of here, which we do by dying.

However, in itself dying is not good. Death itself is not the sacrifice we offer, for death is bad. In itself, death just means losing the life we have here. If there were no sin there would be no death; but given that there *is* sin, it is necessary to get out of this world if we are ever to find true and lasting fulfillment. This requires losing what we have here; it requires

death. So, we can say that death is bad from our point of view but from the perspective of the kingdom, which Jesus freely offers to all who remain faithful until death, death means being born into eternal life. We cannot rise into incorruptible and truly fulfilling life and the fullness of bodily union without first dying. Paul expresses the point when he says “my desire is to depart and be with Christ” (Phil 1:23).

In fact, if we really think about the alternative to dying, it would be living on and on in this fallen world endlessly. In that case, despite the fact that death is bad, we would all get to the point of being completely fed up with this world of woe; we would, I think, find ourselves wanting to commit suicide and not be able to do so. That is perhaps what hell is like. This makes it even clearer that although death in itself is bad, God is very merciful in allowing it. He lets us live in this fallen world so that we can cooperate with Jesus by offering our life as a sacrifice along with his. In doing so, we shape our character into something beautiful that will last forever. In short, God gives us the challenges of this life so that in being all we can be here and remaining faithful all the way up to death, we will be all we can be in the kingdom.

## Finding goods again in heaven

**I** think this is what Paul is getting at when he says, “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rm 12:1-2). Paul is telling us that if we live generous, sacrificial lives in cooperation with grace and with Jesus’ sacrifice, we become transformed from within. This prepares us to enter the kingdom where we will find, as Vatican II tells us, all that was good in this world, but transformed and freed from all defects and inappropriate limitations. You have heard the expression “You can’t take it with you.” The Council is teaching, in effect, that we don’t need to take it with us, because we will find that “all the good fruit of our nature and effort” (*Gaudium et spes* 39) awaits us when we are given bodily resurrection and enter the new heaven and the new earth.

Those who understand this are less tempted to seek this-worldly happiness and also less inclined to regret that they “can’t take it with them.” They realize that all of the good they know and do in this world awaits them in the kingdom. This calls to mind the story of a rich man who was near death. He was grieved because he had worked very hard for his money and heard that he could not take it with him. So he began to pray that he might be able to take some of his wealth with him. An angel hears his plea and appears to him, saying, “I’m sorry, but you can’t take your wealth with you.” The man implores the angel to speak to God to see if He might bend the rules. The angel reappears and informs the man that God has decided to allow him to take one suitcase with him. Overjoyed, the man gathers his largest suitcase and fills it with pure gold bricks and places it beside his bed. Soon afterward the man dies and shows up at the gates of heaven to greet St. Peter. Seeing the suitcase, St. Peter says, “Hold on, you can’t bring that in here!” The man explains to St. Peter that he has permission and asks him to verify his story with the Lord. Sure enough, St. Peter checks and comes back saying, “I’m amazed, but you’re right. You are allowed one carry-on bag, but I’m supposed to check its contents before letting it through.” St. Peter opens the suitcase to inspect the items that the man found too precious to leave behind and exclaims, “You brought pavement?!!!” Of course, the good that awaits us in heaven is much more than streets of gold!

## Marital commitment

**M**arriage as we know it here, when it is lived out as it should be, involves many of the elements I have been discussing. In marriage we find what corresponds to faith, baptism, and Eucharist. There is, first of all, the willingness to be married. One places one’s faith in the other and gives up one’s individual agenda enough to be really married. The undertaking is lifelong, and it is a serious and massive commitment of oneself. It is a real covenant, although limited to just two people. This human unity grounds the whole of married life. It grounds the carrying out of the marital commitment. That commitment involves knowing what you are entering into and being will-



ing to do whatever it takes to live a good life together. Marriage is not a matter of making a contract and of each party fulfilling contractual obligations. Properly living out marriage requires husband and wife to do all they have to do to make the marriage work. It means writing a blank check; those who are not willing to do that are not taking marriage with the seriousness that it deserves. Those preparing to marry need to see that they cannot say “I’ve had it,” when things don’t work out.

St. Paul understands this, which is why in Ephesians 5 he says to women who tend to get fed up and go their own way: “Wives, be obedient to your husbands as to the Lord in everything.” And to husbands who are fed up and no longer cherish their wives but keep them only to satisfy themselves, Paul says you must love your wives as you love yourself and be willing to lay down your life for them. If you’re not willing to do this, you are not a decent husband!

This is what marital consent is about: it is a commitment to this kind of cooperation. It is an unconditional commitment in which one gives and does whatever it takes to make the marriage work, no matter how great the sacrifice. It includes women giving up their independence and men giving up their dominance. This makes sense, for if men love their wives enough to lay down their lives for them, women don’t mind submitting; and if women are willing to cooperate and not maintain their own agendas, then men are able to see that they have something worth laying down their lives for. For then a husband experiences the truth that his wife really is part of him, and he is motivated to love his wife as his own body.

Marriage, then, is indissoluble and requires absolute commitment. It is a *sacrament* of the New Covenant and therefore tied into the resurrection life that Jesus promises those who remain faithful. And marriage is a *sacrifice* tied in with Jesus’ own sacrifice, which is irretrievable. Jesus offers his life and never takes it back no matter what. Only marriage in which the commitment is unconditional and unbreakable can serve as a sacrament of the New Covenant. Trial marriage will not work because marriage is tied in with the marriage feast of heaven, and heaven cannot be conceived of as an experiment that one can try out for a while to see how one gets

along in the resurrection community!

In short, the Eucharist and marriage are both sacrament and sacrifice. Both involve bodily union and both require free self-offering. Marriage involves consent, which is a parallel of baptism: vows are essential to both. So also, in both baptism and marriage, consent leads to consummation. Baptismal vows are consummated in the one-flesh union of the Eucharist. Marital consent is consummated in the one-flesh union of marital intercourse.

## How then should we live?

**W**hat do these reflections on the significance—the holy communion—of the Eucharist and marriage tell us about how we should live? We are called to “present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rm 5:2), which means our lives really are supposed to be good, Christian lives. But, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor 6:13–20, “The body is not meant for fornication but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.” He explains:

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’ But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The problem with sex outside of marriage is that it is not really communion. This requires explanation.

People who engage in illicit sex do not take their bodies seriously; they fail to appreciate the meaning and value of their bodies. Rather, they treat their bodies as instruments; they make *use* of them. Whether they use them to bring about the experience of pleasure or to express their feelings, they *use* their bodies. When we do this, we make our bodies instruments that we use over against *us*. We begin to see the self as the thinking, feeling, and desiring sub-

ject, and the body as subpersonal and not integral to ourselves. When we think this way we cannot understand Paul's exhortation to offer our *bodies* as a living sacrifice, for Paul means we should offer *ourselves*.

When we think of ourselves as somehow distinct from our bodies and treat our bodies as mere instruments, we experience alienation from our true selves. Then sexual intimacy becomes incapable of bringing about a true union of persons. No matter how physically close they may get, people who treat their bodies as objects cannot bring about such a union. If I use my body as an instrument, then so far as my subjective experience is concerned, I am I and the other is the other, and when our *bodies* are joined, *we* are not really united.

I have been told that marital intercourse is wonderful not just because of the pleasure the couple enjoy but because they experience themselves as really being one. Personally one! That must be an exhilarating experience! People who have premarital sex do not experience that. They cannot. Participation in the marital good necessarily involves a complete personal coming together, which is simply impossible without the consent and commitment that premarital and masturbatory sex inevitably lack. In fact, such illicit sexual activity incapacitates those who engage in it because they inevitably treat their bodies as objects. As a result, they become alienated from themselves and less capable of giving themselves as integrated selves in authentic personal communion.

Sex outside of marriage, then, cannot be equated with making love. A couple makes love by doing whatever is required to be a well-functioning, happy communion. True lovemaking requires true cooperation and the willingness to make any sacrifice, including even accepting death for the beloved. Death completes and perfects the communion, and makes it a part of the heavenly kingdom. In that kingdom, the good of marriage, like all human goods, lasts, and only the limitations fall away. It would be strange indeed if laying down one's life for the sake of the communion of marriage simply put an end to that communion! The truth is that the death of good married people ensures that the good of their marital communion becomes a part of the heavenly communion.

It is worth noting that treating and experiencing the body as an instrument has other significant nega-

tive consequences. Most significantly, it has a negative effect on Christian faith, particularly on those aspects of faith that bear on the body. A person who is involved in pornography and illicit sex tends to find it very difficult, for example, to accept the reality of the Eucharist as the bodily presence of Jesus, and to accept that we really are called to a bodily resurrection. Christian teachings that bear on bodily reality become very hard to accept; they seem merely metaphorical and not real.

Why is that? The answer, I think, is that Christianity recognizes that the body really is personal and not just an instrument and object. For Christianity, the body has permanent and unqualified value as part of the kingdom that is going to last forever. By contrast, those who approve of sex outside of marriage tend to take for granted the modern view that bodily life is not personal but only instrumental. That view is also taken for granted by advocates of physician assisted suicide: they assume that when the body can no longer enable a person to enjoy other goods, it has outlived its usefulness. This modern view is like the view of the ancient Greeks. When Paul speaks to the men of Athens about the resurrection, they smugly respond that they will hear him speak about this some other time (see Acts 17:32). For, they assumed that at death the body was happily disposed of, and that getting rid of it frees us up. That view simply destroys Christian faith, which centers on the Incarnation, Resurrection, and the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

If there is a moral to this story, it is this: It is in no one's interest to settle for fragmentary happiness in this world through halfway measures such as sex outside of marriage. Such sex not only cannot be marital, but it undermines marital intimacy. Non-marital sexual relationships diminish our ability to appreciate bodily realities and ultimately prevent us from reaching the kingdom. Those not called to celibacy do well if they strive to enter into true marriages and faithfully live them out despite the cost. And all of us, celibate and non-celibate, do well if, despite the real death to self this involves, we live the chastity proper to our state in life with a view to participating in the heavenly marriage feast anticipated in the Eucharist. Only by living in this world with our hearts set on the heavenly kingdom can we look forward to the holy communion of bodily resurrection and joy beyond imagining. ✠

# How to Discern the Elements of Your Personal Vocation

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**P**ersonal vocation is God's call to each person to live the unique life of good deeds that God has prepared for him or her. Personal vocation cannot be reduced to vocation as one's state in life, but rather includes it and is relevant for every free choice one makes. This article is about how to discern the elements of one's personal vocation. However, before we discuss that directly, we must carefully consider certain matters that are logically prior to the process of discernment—points to bear in mind that help put one in a position to discern properly.

## I. Points to Bear in Mind when Preparing to Discern

**O**ne must recognize first of all that discernment is possible only among morally acceptable options. To discern is to discover which one, among the various options God might want one to choose, he actually does want one to choose. One should begin by eliminating all of the options that God could not possibly want. The most obvious options to eliminate are those that involve doing what is intrinsically wrong, but one also should eliminate options that are good in themselves but that one cannot choose without failing to meet one's responsibilities. This point is of special significance because, as we shall see later, in discerning, one takes stock of one's affective response to various possibilities: emotion plays its part, and it can do so properly only if reason has already played its part by eliminating the immoral, or unreasonable, options.

## Sincere discernment infallibly succeeds

One also must be convinced that it is possible to discern one's personal vocation. Obviously, no rational person sets out to do what he is convinced is impossible; so, if we wish to encourage people to discern their personal vocations, we need to make it clear that discernment is possible. But is it? We know God is not indifferent about whether our choices are morally good or bad; he wants us to choose what is morally good. Is he indifferent about which of the morally good options we choose? If he is, then discernment is impossible. We obviously cannot discover which option, within the range of morally good options, God prefers us to choose if he has no preference.

However, God is not indifferent about which morally good option we choose, as Scripture makes clear. The rich young man who approached Jesus and asked what he should do to gain everlasting life was not considering whether to do moral good or evil, for he kept all the commandments. Jesus nevertheless told him what to do if he wished to be perfect. This passage (see Mt 19:16–22) makes clear what reason itself tells us: we are not called simply to avoid evil and do *something* good, but to do the greatest good we can. For the rich young man, this meant following Jesus' exhortation: "sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mt 19:21). Everyone is not called in the same way, but we are all called to discover and do the good God has in mind for us. St. Paul explains: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2). In short, God does want us to discern his will for us, which means discerning which of the morally good options is best for us. Since it makes no sense to say God wants us to do the impossible, the conclusion is obvious: discernment really is possible.

Indeed, a sincere and determined effort to discern will infallibly succeed. To think otherwise is to assume that God has a plan for us that we may not

be able to discover no matter how hard we try and how willing we are to cooperate. That assumption is clearly wrong. It hardly makes sense to imagine God thinking: “I have a plan that is custom-made for John (or Mary’s) life, but I will not let him (or her) discover that plan.” Bearing in mind the truth that a sincere and determined effort to discern God’s will cannot fail has great practical value, for it can prevent us from becoming discouraged and giving up on discernment.

### Motivation is Crucial

A third point to bear in mind before discerning is this: one must be *motivated* to discern one’s personal vocation. Someone might agree that discernment is possible but decide not to do it. He or she may reason: I have already eliminated all the morally bad options. So, what’s wrong with choosing whichever of the morally good ones I want? Why should I bother discerning?

There are at least three reasons to discern one’s personal vocation. The first reason—which is least helpful as a motivation—is this: We are morally obliged to do so. If God has a preference, am I not obliged to try to discover what it is? After all, his preference is for whatever is best for me, all things considered. Even though I am only considering morally good options, I surely should try to find out which one of them is best. Why is this reason the least helpful as a motivation? Since we are considering only morally good options, any failure to discover and choose the best one would not be the matter of a mortal sin. Of course, we should strive at all costs to avoid *any* sin, but it will not help much to say: “I’m going to discern in order to avoid venial sin.” For, when people focus on avoiding sin rather than on doing good, it does not occur to them to discern. They think rather in terms of avoiding obvious grave sins so they can then do whatever they please without endangering their salvation.

The reasons for discerning that really motivate people to do so are that it is in their own interest to discern, and that doing so pleases God. The only people who tend to be concerned with discerning God’s will are those who are in a personal relationship with him. Such people do not relate to him legalistically, trying to do the least they can without breaking laws; rather, they realize that God knows them better than they know themselves and loves them more

than they love themselves. So, they realize that it is in their own best interest to discern. They know that their surest path to happiness is to discover what God is inviting them to do with their lives and to accept that invitation. They know that by living out their personal vocations, they will do the most good they can, and in so doing will find fulfillment both here and hereafter. Moreover, since they are living in a relationship of love with God, they naturally want to please him. This, too, motivates them to discern and choose whatever he prefers. In short, their focus is not so much on avoiding sin as on finding true fulfillment and pleasing God. Of course, in seeking their true happiness and striving to please God, they do in fact avoid even venial sin.

These motivations help people overcome the difficulties associated with discerning. I said earlier that discernment is possible, but I did not say that it is easy. People can be tempted to give up on discerning when it becomes difficult. For example, they can be tempted to make a decision based on unruly desires before they have finished discerning. When difficulties arise, it is important to recall why one set out to discern God’s will in the first place. People engaged in discernment need to remember that God loves them more than they love themselves and has a plan for their happiness. Reminding ourselves of God’s loving plan helps us see that remaining true to the process and results of discernment is in our own interest and is the best way we can love God in return.

### Discernment Requires Detachment

This leads us to a fourth point we must bear in mind before discerning, namely, that being properly motivated to discern one’s personal vocation presupposes that one is completely detached from any agenda of one’s own. Detachment is both necessary and difficult: necessary, because having one’s own agenda inevitably blocks discernment and acceptance of God’s plan; difficult, because it requires death to self and radical trust in God. However, the difficulty is eased when one sees that to discern one’s personal vocation is to open a gift from God, the gift of the best possible plan for one’s life. When we recognize that this plan is much better than any we could come up with on our own, we see how self-defeating it is to have our own agenda.

As just noted, having one’s own agenda blocks both *discernment* of God’s gift of the best plan and *acceptance* of

that plan. We shall consider those points in turn.

We cannot honestly discern if from the outset we preclude morally good options or assume that God must want what we want. It is not up to us to take options off the table or insist on certain things before discernment begins. Those who are free to become priests or religious should not assume that God could not possibly be calling them to those ways of life, and also should not assume that he *must* be calling them to those particular paths of holiness. Likewise, people who are free to marry should not assume that God could not possibly be calling them to marry, nor should they assume that marriage *must* be God's plan for their lives. This point also holds true for the many smaller elements of our personal vocation. Our attitude should be this: I want only what God wants, and I'm simply trying to discover what that is. Unless we have this attitude, we are not seeking the gift God wants to give but rather are insisting on getting whatever we happen to want. Obviously, we are not obliged to *feel* equally happy about all the options from the outset, but we should be willing to accept whatever honest discernment yields. Of course, it helps to realize that God eventually gives the cooperative person a desire for whatever plan God has in mind.

### Discern only what to *try*

Here a fifth point emerges that we must bear in mind before discerning: with respect to future possibilities, we cannot discern whether we should *do* something, but only whether we should *try* to do it. The idea may sound strange at first, but it makes perfect sense, as the following example shows. A young man—call him George—should understand himself to be discerning not whether he is called to marry Susan, but only whether he is called to try to do so. For, as noted earlier, God never asks us to do the impossible; and if Susan says no, then it is clearly impossible for George to marry her, which means that God is clearly not calling him to do so. Even if Susan is unreasonable or heartless in saying no, her refusal still makes it clear that God is not calling George to marry her. However, this does not mean that George's discernment was wrong. As long as he believes that God is calling him only to try to marry Susan, then he should not assume he made a mistake if she refuses. But he was mistaken if he concluded definitively from his discernment that God was calling him actually to marry Susan. The same point obviously holds

true if George discerns that he should try to enter a seminary to study for a certain diocese. As long as George realizes that he is called only to try to do this, then he need not assume he made a mistake if he is not accepted.

These observations make it clear that some vocational paths require the consent of more than one person. Failing to bear that in mind can lead to a great deal of bitterness and disillusionment. George might be tempted to think, "Susan (or the bishop) is preventing me from fulfilling my vocation!" He might even be tempted to turn away from God, thinking either that God deceived him or that, despite his best efforts, his discernment was mistaken. These problems can be avoided by realizing that God calls us only to try. Unfortunately, many fail to realize this, and they set themselves up for serious problems.

This point holds true not only when discernment requires someone else's consent, but whenever we discern. After all, we do not know the future, and we could die at any moment. The real possibility that we could die before we carry something out or that other things could intervene and make something impossible should warn us not to conclude that we are definitely called to do something in the future, but only that we are called to try to do it. Often enough, all God wants is the effort; and if we make the effort, we produce the results he desires. If George does his best to discern, then he can rightly conclude that for some reason, God wants him to put the question to Susan or the vocations director. Doing that much is part of God's plan, and he will use George's cooperation in the lives of those involved, even if the answer is no or George dies later that day.

If we remain detached from our own agenda, we do not set ourselves up to be disillusioned and will not be tempted to conclude that God is deceptive or capricious. We must be absolutely committed to carry out whatever we discern, be detached from everything else, and not assume that we have discerned more than God has disclosed to us. It is not easy to be committed to God's unfolding will and detached from our own; one reason it is so difficult may be that we want our lives to make sense within the context of this world. When we spend time discerning and our efforts to do what we have discerned fail, our lives seem not to make sense. If, after discerning, George asks Susan to marry him or the diocese to accept him as a seminarian and he receives a negative response, his effort seems futile. His sense of futility

will be even greater if Susan or the diocese says yes initially and no later on, or if circumstances intervene so that George cannot marry Susan or be ordained for the diocese after all.

Of course, being detached from our own will does not mean that it is inappropriate for us to grieve when we fail to achieve the good God calls us to try to do. Being properly detached means only that whenever we cannot accomplish the good God asks us to try to do, we must be prepared to ask what he now wants us to try. We must be prepared to switch, as it were, to Plan B when Plan A does not work out. This is precisely what Jesus did. His Father called him to try to gather up the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Although in his divinity Jesus always knows everything and thus knew that Israel would not respond, he humanly hoped that the plan to gather up the lost sheep of Israel would succeed. He naturally hoped that the leaders of Israel would respond and he would achieve the good he sought to accomplish. When he failed to achieve that good because of the hardness of their hearts, he wept over Jerusalem, but he also discerned and did what the Father next called him to do, namely, build his Church on the rock of Peter.

### Nothing is wasted

What should we think when we are not able to accomplish the good God asks us to try to do? Here a sixth point emerges that marks the proper attitude for discerning: we must bear in mind that nothing is wasted. For example, God often calls men into the seminary without calling them to become priests. While no one should enter the seminary without engaging in a serious discernment of priesthood, God is perfectly free to call someone into the seminary with a view to calling him out, using the experience to form the man for what God really does have in mind. Thus, even from a this-worldly perspective God's ways often make more sense than they initially seem to make.

Still, we should not expect our lives to make complete sense in this world. We should not expect them to turn out beautiful and well-proportioned and perfectly acceptable from a temporal point of view, because we are cooperating with God's plan for our *eternal* happiness. Our task is not to build a beautiful edifice in this world, but rather, as *Gaudium et spes* 38 puts it, to prepare material for the Kingdom of God. And our best efforts, even if unsuccess-

ful from a this-worldly perspective, constitute solid building material that the Lord uses in constructing his kingdom. That is why *Gaudium et spes* 39 explains: "after we have obeyed the Lord, and in his Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured. This will be so when Christ hands over to the Father a kingdom eternal and universal."<sup>1</sup>

We have seen how having one's own agenda blocks a person's ability to discern God's plan, and we must now consider how it also makes it hard to accept God's plan after one has discerned it. The properly motivated discernor is prepared to accept whatever turns out to be God's plan. After discerning, one can always say, "I now see what God is asking. Nevertheless, the other possibilities are still possible." And of course they are still possible. But one should regard that thought, which was appropriate before discerning, as a temptation after discerning. After all, one began to discern precisely because one wanted to discover which of those possibilities God desires one to choose. One wanted to follow God's plan. To choose some other option after one has discovered what God wants would be to turn away from that plan, even if that other option is good in itself. Still, such temptations arise when we notice the difficulties we will have to endure if we accept the option our discernment indicates is God's will.

To overcome this temptation, we should focus on the benefits of doing what we have discerned and avoid focusing on what stirs desire for the options eliminated by the discernment. For example, if Jane discerns that God is calling her to accept an offer of engagement from Bill, she should not spend time imagining what it would have been like being engaged to Fred. Likewise, if Jim discerns he should try to enter the seminary, he should not spend time imagining what it would be like being engaged to Gloria. One should no longer focus on the appealing aspects of the other options, but rather should accept what one discerns God is asking by taking steps to carry it out. For example, if George discerns he should try to enter the seminary, he should accept his discernment by beginning to implement it, for example, by contacting the vocations director. Again, one should begin the discernment with a commitment to accept whatever gift one discerns God is giving. And after one discerns one should confirm

that commitment by actually accepting the gift, or implementing the discernment.

## Discernment is ongoing

A seventh point to bear in mind is that discerning one's personal vocation is not a once-for-all event but is ongoing. To make this point clear I am going to change my language slightly. Instead of speaking about discerning one's personal vocation, I will speak, as the title of this article puts it, of discerning the *elements* of one's personal vocation. For one's personal vocation is not a monolithic entity that one discerns once and for all; rather, it unfolds throughout one's entire life, and one can discern its elements only as they become available for discernment.

This point has not always been clearly understood, partly because in former times society was less complex and fewer decisions were required. A young Catholic had one major issue to decide: whether to get married or become a priest or religious. Once that decision was made, many other things took care of themselves. Those who entered religious life had few decisions of their own to make, for they vowed obedience and followed the house rule; and just doing that was regarded as a sure path to heaven. Even married people had many fewer decisions to make than they do now. Career options were quite limited: often the only way to support a family was to farm the land. Decisions about having children also were fairly obvious, for couples generally needed children to help with the work. Pregnancy was more difficult to achieve because the overall health situation was poorer than it is today and breastfeeding was more common. Many children, moreover, died in childbirth or at a very early age. Thus, most couples needed to try to achieve pregnancy quite often.

Obviously, people did have some further decisions to make even when times were simpler, but the general pattern of their lives was more clearly set. The decisions they were left with were largely technical ones about the most effective way to accomplish the things they already knew they had a moral responsibility to try to do. So, it was harder to see that decisions beyond those about one's general state in life were decisions about the elements of one's personal vocation. Discernment centered rather on the one big decision about one's state in life, and the need for ongoing discernment was rarely noticed. Vocation was identified with one's state in life, and

the idea of personal vocation did not clearly emerge, even though the kernel of this idea is in Scripture.

It is much clearer today than it was in the past that making an important and irrevocable life commitment does not settle everything else in one's life. For example, the discernment of a couple called to marriage does not end at the altar. At various points questions calling for further discernment arise. Should they have another child at this time? Should they move? To what school should they send their children? Should the husband take this job or that one? Should the wife work outside the home and, if so, how much time away is appropriate given the needs of the children? To discern these matters is to discern elements of one's personal vocation.

Nor is everything settled when one enters priesthood or religious life. Even though priests and religious are bound by obedience and thus rarely choose their assignment, they obviously make some choices. For example, a priest may need to discern whether a change is needed in the parish catechetical program, or whom to hire as principal of the school. A religious may need to discern whether to discuss Anselm or Aquinas in class. Even a contemplative religious living a very structured life may need to discern whether to use free time perfecting musical skills or recreating with fellow members of the community, and whether to spend extra time in prayer with Scripture or with works of devotion. Of course, people also must discern many other elements of their personal vocations that are not immediately connected to their state in life, for example, what medical treatment to accept, what friendships to cultivate, whom to vote for, and so forth.

Although major commitments do not settle everything else, they do make it easier to resolve many smaller matters, for fidelity in larger affairs tends to shape up smaller things. For example, the commitment of marriage makes certain demands: not as many options remain open when time and effort must be spent earning a living to support the family, making sure the children receive proper health care and education, conversing with one's spouse, and so forth. The commitment of marriage also resolves smaller matters by excluding options that conflict with the good of the marriage. Everything a married person does need not and should not be subordinated to the marriage, but everything must be coordinated with it. So, for example, a married person who takes up a hobby is not obliged to do it for the sake

of the marriage. But a married person should not choose a hobby that prevents him or her from meeting marital responsibilities. This principle excludes many things that otherwise would be possible and appropriate.

The commitment priests and religious make is different from that of married persons, inasmuch as everything priests and religious do should not just be coordinated with their religious commitment but subordinated to it. Everything they do, including their vacations and hobbies, should be done for the sake of helping people find salvation. Here it is even clearer how fidelity in the larger things tends to shape up the smaller. Of course, everyone should live by the principle Paul articulates in Colossians 3:17: “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” But married people can carry out that injunction without doing everything they do for the sake of their marriage, for they serve other human goods in addition to marriage. By contrast, priests and religious should be completely committed to the religious good. They carry out Paul’s injunction by ordering everything to their more specific vocational commitment of helping others find salvation. That is the ordering principle for their pursuit of any good.

Even lesser commitments shape up a certain number of smaller things. For example, a commitment to take an evening class in business management will likely determine how one ought to spend the evening before a test, and given the cost of tuition may also determine whether one should hold off on buying a new car. Of course, the decision to take the course may itself have been made as a way of meeting responsibilities determined by a larger commitment.

In short, we need to keep finding the elements of our personal vocation all our life. Discernment does not end when we have discerned our general state in life as a married person, priest, religious or other member of consecrated life, or single layperson. The larger commitments simplify future discernments by providing principles for discerning and by removing incompatible options, but there are always further elements of one’s personal vocation to discover as life unfolds.

## II. The Process of Discernment

**W**e are now prepared to take up the issue of how to discern the elements of one’s personal vocation. In this section, I will rely in part on the teachings of St. Ignatius Loyola about discernment. St. Ignatius did not have a clearly developed idea of personal vocation. He tended to think in terms of having one clear issue to resolve, and so he includes in his *Spiritual Exercises*, his famous guide book for spiritual directors, what he calls the “election,” in which he offers advice about discerning one’s state in life.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Ignatius clearly realized that we need to make other decisions, and he himself applied the spiritual principles he uses for the election of a state of life to other matters that required discernment. He did not articulate the concept of personal vocation, but he had the underlying insight. After all, he gave to his Society of Jesus the motto AMDG: *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (for the greater glory of God). He understood what we have been emphasizing, namely, that at every moment God wants us to do not just what is good but what is best, all things considered. To know what that will be usually requires discernment; I say “usually,” because St. Ignatius explains that on rare occasion “God our Lord moves and attracts the will in such a way that a devout person, without doubting or being able to doubt, carries out what was proposed.”<sup>3</sup> This, he says, is what happened in the case of St. Paul and St. Matthew when they were called to follow Jesus. But usually we have to go through a process of discernment.

### Consider life’s purpose and ask God’s help

How then do we discern? St. Ignatius exhorts us first of all to focus “only on the thing which is more conducive to the end for which I am created,” namely, “to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord” and to save my soul.<sup>4</sup> We are to be detached from our own self will and seek only what God wants. We also should pray, begging God to help us see what he is asking us to do. This should not be a perfunctory measure but a heartfelt cry to the Lord. Our prayer should be persistent and should arise from within the context of our personal relationship with God; we should turn to him with trust and relate to him



whatever emotions we may experience, including any anxiety about what the future holds for us.

### Consider gifts and needs

Then, since every vocation is a call to service, we should consider our gifts and experiences and try to judge how they match up best with the needs of the world around us.<sup>5</sup> In doing this, we should be open to possibilities that people do not typically consider. For example, one may have gifts that would be of great use in the third world. We should not fail to consider the option of working there simply because it may be unfamiliar or initially unappealing; rather, we should give special consideration to serving where the needs are greatest. Of course, we also should consider reasons not to serve there: one may need to be available for one's family, or be incapable of learning the language well enough, or not be in good enough health. But we should not eliminate possibilities just on the basis of an initial emotional aversion. We should avoid taking for granted that our natural inclination indicates how and where God is calling us to serve.

When we proceed in this way, it quickly becomes clear that many upright options simply do not match our gifts. For example, most people will see that they are not called to try to become astronauts or professional athletes because they lack the necessary gifts or training, or because the scant likelihood of success in these areas as compared with others makes it unreasonable for them to invest the time, energy, and resources to try to develop the necessary skills. Some options can be discarded almost immediately, while others require deeper reflection.

### Consider pros and cons

St. Ignatius instructs us to consider the pros and cons of each option.<sup>6</sup> It might even help to write these out. Sometimes proceeding in this way eliminates all but one option and leaves nothing to discern, but often enough two or more options remain. At this point, it is time for emotion to play its part. St. Ignatius suggests that we imagine how we would advise someone else in our exact situation, and follow the advice we would give to that other person. He also has us imagine what we would wish we had chosen if we were looking back on our choice, first from our deathbed and then from the perspective of judgment

day. He says we should decide now what we would then wish we had decided.<sup>7</sup>

### Let emotion play its part

But how do we narrow the options? We should pay close attention to our affective response to each of them, for God speaks to the heart. St. Ignatius's Rules (or guidelines) for the Discernment of Spirits are particularly apt here. He writes:

In the case of those going from good to better, the good angel touches the soul gently, lightly, and sweetly, like a drop of water going into a sponge. The evil spirit touches it sharply, with noise and disturbance, like a drop of water falling onto a stone.

In the case of those who are going from bad to worse, these spirits touch the souls in the opposite way. The reason for this is the fact that the disposition of the soul is either similar to or different from the respective spirits who are entering. When the soul is different, they enter with perceptible noise and are quickly noticed. When the soul is similar, they enter silently, like those who go into their own house by an open door.<sup>8</sup>

The idea is that if we are upright, God speaks to us through the desires of our hearts. It makes no sense to tell an adulterer or a greedy person to follow his or her desires, but it makes perfect sense to tell someone who is interested in discovering and following God's will to do so. This surely is what St. Augustine means in exhorting us to love and do what we will.

### Beware of deception

As noted above, discernment is possible only among morally acceptable options. It can be tempting to treat as available for discernment matters that Church teaching indicates have already been settled; however, to proceed in that manner is to misunderstand and impede discernment. True discernment, again, is an effort to discover God's will by examining one's affective responses to various possible courses of action that reason has not ruled out. If possibilities that should have been precluded as immoral are treated as live options, one can easily turn the process of discernment into an exercise in rationalization. The reason is that if a person treats as a legitimate option something that he should have recognized as illicit

and eliminated, then he has set himself up to mis-read the interior movements he experiences. He will likely assume that his very willingness to “discern” God’s will indicates that he fits into the category of those who really are going from good to better. With that assumption in place, he is liable to read the sting of conscience caused by the good spirit as an obstacle set up by the evil spirit, and to read the apparent pleasures proposed by the evil spirit as consolations from the good spirit to encourage him to move in the direction he wants. One thinks, for example, of the priest or religious who attempts to “discern” whether God is calling him to leave his priestly or vowed life in order to move in with a woman without benefit of marriage. All too easily, such a person assumes that the appealing emotions associated with the course of action he should not be considering are stirred by the Holy Spirit, and that the unpleasant emotions associated with remaining true to his commitment are stirred by the evil spirit.

Of course, none of us is completely converted. We all have some desires that are not fully integrated into our converted selves. We must distinguish those desires from the deepest desires of our converted

hearts, and be swayed only by the latter. If we have eliminated the morally illegitimate options and sincerely strive to do God’s will, we can be confident that he will speak to us through the desires of our hearts. After some time of pondering the different options, one eventually will emerge as the more appealing, and we will be at peace with embracing it. When that happens, our discernment is over. Then we must accept the discernment by beginning to live it out. ✠

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Gaudium et spes* no. 39, *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher (New York: America, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> See *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 169–89, in Ignatius of Loyola: *Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. George E. Ganss (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1991), pp. 161–66.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 175, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 23, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed treatment of this and related ideas, see Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1993), pp. 119–24 and 191–92.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 181, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, nos. 185–87, pp. 164–65.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 335, p. 207.

## Where and What is Catholicism?

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“It is no accident that Christianity eventually made its bed in the Roman Empire and has been, so to speak, wedded to it ever since. To this day, its geographical parameters coincide by and large with those of Rome of old, its colonies, and the colonies of its colonies, with the exception of Russia. Nowhere else, it seems, has Christianity been able to strike deep roots or make substantial inroads among the native populations.”

^Ernest Fortin, “The Saga of Spiritedness,” 1996.<sup>1</sup>

“When his hour comes, he (Christ) lives out the unique event of history which does not pass away: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father ‘once for all.’ His Pascal mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique:

all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The Pascal mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times, while being made present in them all. The event of the Cross and Resurrection abides and draws everything toward life.”

—*General Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1085.

### I.

**W**e might look at the world in terms of continental or political blocs. Roughly, we have a largely secularized Europe with declining populations being replaced largely by Muslim immigrants. We have North America; this continent is largely Christian, though the culture is different, with the

Latin culture being the more vigorous in terms of population increase. South America is a cultural offshoot of Spain and Portugal with a mixture of native populations, plus later immigrants from Europe, largely Spanish, German, and Italian. Australia is a sparsely populated offshoot of England.

Russia is almost a continent in itself. It is Orthodox Christian but with the doleful heritage of its communist past. Then there is China with another communist veneer over an ancient ethos, rapidly growing in power and aggressiveness. Japan is modern in everything along with South Korea, both are powerful economies with some small percentage of Christians. The Philippine Republic, with its Spanish and American heritages, is the only Asian country to be largely Catholic, though it too has a Muslim problem in its south. Next is India, with its vast mixture of Hindu and Muslim populations. Africa is its own world, Muslim in the north, many Christians, many still in tribal status in the South.

Finally we have the Muslim world itself stretched from the Atlantic in Morocco to the Pacific in Indonesia. In the seventh and eighth centuries, Islam, largely through military means, expanded, once it began, much more rapidly than Christianity in its early centuries. Islam conquered significant portions of formerly Christian lands, including the Holy Land itself with the old Eastern Byzantine Empire. The Crusades were belated, mostly unsuccessful, efforts to stem this tide. The main reason Europe is not Muslim today is because of two battles that the Europeans won, one in France in the eighth century and one at Vienna in the Seventeenth. Thus far, practically no inroads have been made in changing the principles of Muslim culture or its area of control. Indeed, Islam is in many ways suddenly the most expansive and dynamic religion and culture in the world today. We can thus say, roughly, that of a world population of something like seven plus billion inhabitants, one fifth are Christian, a fifth are Chinese, a fifth are Muslim, a fifth Hindu, and a final fifth of everything else.

If we look at these worlds, we see that Catholicism experiences some increase in the non-Muslim parts of Africa, though many of the African wars are caused by Muslim expansion at the expense of the Christians. Christians elsewhere have pretty much left most of the other Muslim areas when they could.

The recent popes have urged those ancient Catholic communities to remain in the Near-East, but one can hardly blame the majority from leaving their essentially second-class citizenship in this area. Much of Near-Eastern immigration into Europe, Canada, and the States is Christian.

In India and China, various ideological and political obstacles exist to any serious Catholic presence. In India, a small Catholic population from earlier colonial, even apostolic, times exists but for the most part it is not allowed to expand. The Indian policy is pretty much dedicated to keeping the status quo. Though there may be many underground Christians, China is simply hostile in spite of the efforts of recent popes to provide for some openings. Catholic bishops and other Catholics remain in jail. The government controls Catholicism through a national church.

Catholicism is experiencing a definite decline in Europe. The secular trends seek to eliminate any religious history or influence, no matter how ancient. Scandinavia has become the model for a new "secular" man. The landscape of Europe reveals many Christian churches closed, many mosques being built. In the Latin American world, once completely Catholic, many inroads have been made by various Protestant sects, especially Pentecostal type ones.

In short, the Church is still a formidable organization in terms of numbers and presence, even in a world wide sense. Still the observation of Ernst Fortin is largely true. Little expansion beyond the old Roman Empire limits and its various extensions from colonial times has taken place. Writers like Philip Jenkins give us some hope that the picture of the Church in Asia and Africa is rather more positive. Certainly if we look at the present composition of the College of Cardinals, the presence of Asian, African, and Latin American members is very pronounced. Talk of a non-European pope is not merely speculation.

Looking at this scene as objectively as possible, not forgetting the further challenges that come to Christianity from an aggressive science, especially biological science that more and more wants to experiment and change what we are even in our physical make-up, we cannot be overly optimistic. We are implicitly used to a philosophy of progress that tells

us, however dubiously, that, as time goes on, things will get better and better. This proclamation is not the view of Scripture which insists also that things can and will get worse. Christians will suffer persecutions to the end of time.

We want to forget, as Robert Royal shows in his book *Catholic Martyrs of the Twentieth Century*, that the century that had the most number of martyrs for the faith was not the first century after Christ but the last, the Twentieth Century. I would add that a certain hard-headed realism about where we are, about those who profess to be our enemies, about our own abilities, warns us to be sober in our times. But we also maintain that God is present in the worst of times as well as the best. What are called the best of times, that is, prosperity, abundance, plenty, is often, from a moral standpoint, the most dangerous times.

## II.

What are we to make of this situation? Modern popes still continue to return to that central concept of Christianity best seen at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Its members are “to go forth and teach all nations.” This admonition implies that “all nations” actually need to know what Christ came to teach us. Nor do they already have everything; otherwise it would make no sense to teach anything that they do not already know. Yet, if there is anything striking about the Church after Vatican II, it is its decrease in missionary vigor and effort, something Paul VI tried to address in his *Evangelium Nuntiandi* and John Paul II in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. But this effort to teach is not as easy as it sounds.

Modern ideas of nationhood, culture, and religion conspire to look upon any such missionary effort, except perhaps in scattered individual cases or when strictly “humanitarian” in scope, as colonialist, or biased, or intolerant, or ignorant. What is called “proselytizing” is strictly frowned upon, even by the Church itself. We do not like others to be constantly interrupting us to try to convert us to their views. We do not like it when, as not a few religions do, they try to convert us. But what, if anything, does Christianity have that these myriads of peoples need? What

is the urgency?

What is wrong with letting the various nations, religions, and ideologies remain as they are? Indeed, not a few theologians, evidently frustrated with the inability of Christianity to make any significant inroads over centuries of missionary effort, have developed ingenious theories whereby people, either individually or collectively, can be “saved” without formally becoming Christian. If people seek God in their own way, or if they are sincere believers in some philosophy or faith, let them be. God will provide. We need not disturb them with our rather complex religion.

Indeed, it has been standard Catholic teaching, repeated in Vatican II, that for those who are invincibly ignorant of the means of salvation, that God would provide a way, even if we do not know what it is. Some think the logic of this view is simply to let God take care of things. We do not really have to do anything. Relatively few people in the world believe the substance of what the New Testament teaches. For centuries, it has been standard teaching that, in the case of death, all one minimally had to believe was what it says in Hebrews 11, about believing in God’s existence and that He rewards good and punishes evil. Some would leave it at that,

The only rub to this approach, which seeks to expand exceptional case argument into the norm, is that mission work seems to be of the essence of our faith. Christian faith and documents strongly insist that people, all people, in all times, need to hear, accept, and practice what the Gospel teaches. Any fair reading of the Bible indicates that Christ was quite clear that there were things everyone without exception needed to do and hold to be saved. This need was why the Apostles and the Church were instructed to carry this “good news” to the whole world. Another implication was that, however sincerely held, wrong teaching or immoral practice had devastating consequences on human lives. One does not refrain from telling a murderer or an adulterer that he is wrong simply because of a popular philosophical view that everyone is free to decide for himself what is good and what is evil. The classic temptation of Adam and Eve was to make this precise claim that it is we ourselves, not God, who decide what is the distinction between good and evil.

We are confronted today with what might be called the normative “multicultural” view of the world, something often imposed on us by law whether we recognize it or not. All cultures, nations, and religions, it is presumed, are equal. Who is authorized to say otherwise? To suggest that something is lacking in Chinese or Hindu culture or religion is arrogance. Neither the Chinese nor the Hindu will allow such talk in his jurisdiction, a jurisdiction now bearing all the authority and power of the modern state apparatus

What we need rather, it is said, is a sort of world parliament of religions under the auspice, say, of the United Nations or UNESCO in some elegant place like Paris. Religions and ethical societies would all be represented in a common body. They would be forbidden, by coercion if necessary, to “impose” their views on anyone else. Even to mention that anything, except certain defined prejudices, is wrong is “hate-language.” We are more and more deprived even of the language in which to speak of what the Scripture calls evil. Religions were all to spend their time finding out how much they agreed with each other. The world would be policed by religious-thought police who would assure that no one disturbed anyone else’s conscience by suggesting that some religion was better than another. Religion, tamed of its anathemas, would be a kind of therapy to calm the people. No full truth or claim to truth could be found in any religion. There would be endless religious discussions, dialogues, and conventions. All rites would be ecumenical. All are welcome at all times.

Religion would no longer have anything to do with the public order. Its expression would be strictly “private” as opposed to public. Things like education, health care, family care, care of the poor, jobs, vacations, would all become public concerns defined by law. Everyone would have a “right” to them. One could not really “do” anything for anyone since whatever one did for someone, that person would already have had a previous right to receive it. Charity becomes justice.

National boundaries would have to disappear or become simply administrative lines, not, as they are now, divisions that acknowledge that there are different ways of life. What is a “right” in one place is a right in another. All “rights” are projected on every-

one. In the name of equality and justice, everything would tend to be the same: education, wealth, housing, welfare. Freedom would mean having a right to these things. Crime would be having more of anything than anyone else. This way of life is what man and the world are said to be all about. Life and death themselves are now defined by the state. Euthanasia and abortions are “rights,” any opposition to which the state will not tolerate. All of this legislation is provided in the name of human autonomy. Religion is in the service of this world and these “rights” which alone define our “dignity.”

### III.

**A**gain, what are we to make of all of this? Recently, I had an e-mail from a friend of mine who was talking about the great falling away from the Church that, whether we like to admit it or not, occurred in the years after Vatican II. He was commenting on a thesis of a Canadian scholar who argued that the nature and presence of evil in the world and the supernatural and sacramental means to confront it had been minimized in the Church itself. My friend remarked that today many people “don’t believe these things any more: creation, God’s existence, redemption, the Creed, Eucharistic sacrifice, Real Presence, or consecrated priesthood.” These are, however, the classic terms in which the Christian understanding of ourselves and the world was presented. They still are. The central teachings of Christianity revolve around the Creation, the Fall, and Redemption. These doctrines explain the nature of the world, what is wrong in the world, and what is present in the world, placed there by God’s revelation itself, to confront what is wrong.

What I want to say here initially is that there is a perfectly solid and intelligible case, measured against the best evidence to the contrary, that each of these Christian understandings of God, man, and the cosmos is still the best understanding, even in terms of reason. Few ever see the case for Catholicism put clearly and coherently against all comers. The modern view of reality is based on an understanding of the world evaporated of meaning, of internal and external order. Into this world, we, as the only sources of meaning, project our own ideas of what

we are and in what happiness consists. Yet, on its own grounds, the grounds of what is really the best destiny for men, Catholicism's understanding of reality is superior to any of its alternatives. This fact, I suspect, is one of the reasons that the Church, in its orthodox form, is often hated with an almost diabolical passion. The accurate description of what Catholicism is, as Chesterton said, is also the major problem from the other side. That is, on the Catholic side, the main reason why we are loathe to hold it is that it is too good to be true.

#### IV.

In the beginning, I cited two passages, one from Father Fortin about the where or the geography of Christianity. The second was from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It was about the “what” of Catholicism. The two questions, the what and the where of Catholicism, are, in my mind, related. A colleague of mine at Georgetown, Father Roland Murphy, S. J., has recently published a very interesting book on the search for and identification of the famous Holy Grail in the work of a famous German poet, Wolfram von Eschenbach, in the famous *Parzifal*. After much sleuth and analysis, which took a considerable amount of theological perception, Murphy concluded that the Holy Grail, of which von Eschenbach wrote, is currently in a museum in Bamberg, in Germany.

And what was this “Grail?” In other versions of *Parzifal*, it was usually considered to be the cup from which Christ, at the Last Supper, drank the Body and Blood. Actually, the Grail is rather a portable Altar Stone, the kind used to say Mass upon for soldiers on the move. The Altar Stone is meant to depict the Holy Sepulcher where Christ was buried. We still retain the idea of Altar Stones in building our churches. There is an amazing amount of symbolism going back to the four rivers of Paradise in this particular stone in Bamberg. The point of Murphy's argument was that we do not need actually to go to Jerusalem, however pious that might be, to find Christ. Christ is where the Altar on which the Holy Sacrifice is said, wherever that may be. Since the Resurrection, there is no “place” where this central act of our redemption may not take place.

With such background I want to speak of the passage in the *Catechism* which bears on the question that I am raising for you today. This issue is precisely “where” is Catholicism to be found? The import of what I am asking is the same whether we talk of Jerusalem in the time of Christ, of Bamberg in the time of Wolfram, or of any parish, any place, in our own time.

To make myself more clearly understood, I want to indicate briefly what we Catholics officially hold about the Mass. The Mass is not a friendly community meeting, however nice or boring that can be. It is not a regular “meal,” even though it takes the form of a meal. I might say here that the best technical book that I know on the Mass is that of Msgr. Robert Sokolowski, at Catholic University, called *Eucharistic Presence*, though John Paul II's Encyclical on the Eucharist is not to be missed.

The Mass includes, and must include, in one action three things—Word, Sacrifice, and Communion. The Mass is not something that a priest or bishop makes up out of his own head as he goes along. It is something to which he is obedient. The Mass is not a drama or play being performed before us in which priest is the main actor after which he bows and the congregation claps. Cardinal Ratzinger in his great book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pointed out that a real danger exists when the priest or the congregation think he is “celebrating” or “acting.” The members of the congregation are thus not to think that they should applaud his word or performance.

The priest is there strictly in *persona Christi*. His personality, whatever it is, has nothing to do with the reality of what is going on at Mass. A priest better be the humblest man in the world when he says Mass because what is going on is not of his making. He is, in the most precise way possible, doing what the Church tells him to do. In a basic sense, in terms of its essence, no priest says a “better” Mass than another priest. All priests say the same Mass if they intend to do what the Church sets down, and follow its prescribed rubrics and words. That is objectively the Mass Christ said at the Last Supper, which was itself, as the words of the Mass themselves explicitly say, cast in terms of what would happen in the next days—His sacrificial death and Resurrection.

With these remarks, let us return to the passage

in the *Catechism*. Basically, Catholicism is where the Mass is. Some place in the world, every day at every hour, Mass is being said. The Mass is the instruction of God to us human beings about how properly to worship Him. To “worship” means to acknowledge and praise God above all things and to hope that we, body and soul, as one person, as individuals who are members of His Mystical Body, will spend eternity in the Trinitarian presence of God. Our life on earth is a good and created thing. But this world is essentially a place given to us to decide what we will finally worship, God or ourselves. We make this choice in the course of our lives and deaths. All who die have made the basic choice, one way or another.

The first thing we are taught here is that the Liturgy, the Mass, is the “Pascal mystery.” We look at the Mass backwards, as it were, from the point of view of the Resurrection, not through the bloody action of the Crucifixion itself, about which we remain vividly aware. The text specifically says that Christ makes this very mystery “present” before us. As a friend of mine says in her autobiography, the Mass is something real, outside of ourselves. We are informed, and we can recall from Scripture, that Jesus, in His life on earth, spoke of this mystery. He both taught with words and actions. This event of his death was “unique.” Its “hour” came after He was arrested and the agony in the Garden.

This event of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection is “the unique event of history” and, as such, it does not pass away. How so? There are four facts: “Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.” We repeat these words in our Creeds, which is one of the reasons we are to say the Creeds in every Sunday Mass. We affirm them. There is evidence of the “death, burial, and resurrection.” There is authority for Jesus being seated at the right hand of the Father.

How many times does this event happen? The answer is direct: “once for all.” Thus, “the Pascal event is a real event that occurred in our history.” “Our history” means human time, human space, in this world. It is not a myth, not a nice story, not an imagination, not a wish. It is a fact, something that took place. Though many try to do so, we cannot in logic deny it without at the same time denying the very fact of reality itself. But this event is unique, because of

whom it happened to, that is to the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the Second Person of the Trinity. “All other historical events happen once, and then they pass away. They are swallowed up in the past.” Christ’s death and resurrection, however, remains because He remains. God is present to all time. “The Pascal mystery of Christ ... cannot remain only in the past.” Why not? “Because His death destroyed death.” That is what both God’s everlasting life and eternity mean. Time is not outside of eternity. Christ’s death and resurrection are now present before the Father. Thus, “all that Christ is—all that He did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times, while being made present in them all.” Much is said here. When we are at Mass in a given place and time, no matter where it is or who validly says it, what happens is the same.

Catholicism is where the Mass is said with the full consciousness that what happens is the making present of the one Sacrifice of the Cross and Resurrection. A thousand priests do not say a thousand Masses in a thousand different places and times. They all say the same Mass, the only Mass, the one that took place “the night before he suffered” in the upper room but as the memorial of the sacrifice of His blood the next day for the redemption of our sins, to bring us, as He would go, to the Father. The paragraph concludes “the event of the Cross and Resurrection abides and draws everything toward life,” toward the eternal life that we are promised in which the Son, through the Spirit whom He will send, returns to the Father. Through His Cross, and this alone, He draws all things to Himself.

Thus to the question “where is Catholicism?” we can say that Catholicism is wherever the Mass is. The Mass is not just any prayer or any understanding of God, but a specific understanding of a specific event that happened “once for all.” What is the Mass? The Mass is the action of the Last Supper, the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of the Christ to the Father, carried out as one single redemptive action, one eternal now. It is always present to the Father. It explains what we are, why we exist. It is not just another way to worship God. It is the way to worship God after the manner in which we are to worship Him. The Mass is the most awesome moment. We surround it

with word, silence, music. It explains what Creation and the world and our lives are about. And it also, in the end, defines who we are. We know that innumerable many reject it. Others never heard it or heard it properly explained. Still others do everything to prevent it from being said. To all of these we are, if they will, evidently sent to teach.

The recent popes have insisted that the basic human freedom is the freedom of religion, the freedom to worship God as He has asked to be worshiped. They do not want any religion not to be free. This freedom cannot be coerced. Once we are allowed to freely hear what the Mass is, we still must choose it. The Mass if we faithfully attend it, learn it, worship at it will draw us to what happens within its divine

action. What does happen? Nothing less than the being made present in the now of eternity of the Lord's Supper with its anticipation of the reality of His Cross and Resurrection. We do not become brethren of one another and then go to Mass. We are brethren. We love one another because we first worship the same God in the way, the only way, that He taught us to worship Him. We are to be present with our "Amen," our affirmations, at the one Sacrifice made present before us, "once for all." ✠

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Fortin, "The Saga of Spiritedness," *Human Rights, Virtue, and the Common Good*, edited by Brian Benestad (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), Vol. III, *Collected Essays*, 234.

## On "The Information of Others"

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With apologies to Father Ribeiro, that most knowledgeable man in all things pertaining to him, let me recall Samuel Johnson, from his famous essay on "The Role of the Scholar," which appeared in the *The Adventurer* on Tuesday, August 28, 1753. This essay begins by citing Bacon, to wit, "reading makes a full man, conversation a ready man, and writing an exact man." (In case you are wondering, Schall recently purchased, for a modest fee at Barnes & Noble, the paper edition of Samuel Johnson's *The Major Works, including Rasselas*, which was published by Oxford World's Classics).

When we read Yves Simon's *A General Theory of Authority*, I frequently point out in class that practically all of our knowledge, both of theoretical and of practical things, depends on authority, on the testimony or instruction of others. At first we might call this situation a defect until we realize that, for us, in order to know absolutely everything about every-

thing, we would have to be gods. We would, consequently, have to cease being ourselves. Presumably, this ceasing is something most of us, though we have nothing against the gods, would prefer not to do.

But the Johnson sentence that haunts me is the following: "Of those whom Providence has qualified to make any additions to human knowledge, the number is extremely small; and what can be added by each single mind even of this superior class is very little: the greater part of mankind must owe their knowledge, and all must owe far the larger part of it, to *the information of others*."

In that sentence, Johnson distinguishes two categories of men, 1) those who know much but can in principle prove nothing and 2) those who can prove a couple of things, but not most things. This limitation of individual knowledge is both a theory and a fact. We do want to know what we are and what we are not capable of.

Johnson's ability to "turn a phrase" was remarkable. Consider the passage, "of those whom Providence has qualified to make any additions to human knowledge, *the number is extremely small*." He does not deny that some additions to human knowledge regularly occur. He delights in such additions. But even



those who do add something to human knowledge must depend on others for most of their knowledge. Not only is “no man an island,” as John Donne wrote in his famous poem, but no man, unless he be particularly obtuse about himself, knows very much of all that there is to be known.

Looked at from another angle, this individual limitation is what a “common good” is about. That is, we must, to learn anything, leave it to others to know something, some particular thing that takes, often, the whole of a lifetime to learn. Chesterton said in a famous comment that “if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.” But if anything is to be done well, we must allow people time to do it. And we must recognize that not everyone has equal talents. It is part of the common good that those few with the capacity to “add to human knowledge” need time and opportunity to learn what they can know; otherwise none of us will know what he can know.

Ultimately, this fact of our own limitation is why we can rejoice that others first know what we ourselves do not yet know. Others figure out something that we have not learned and probably never could have figured out by ourselves. Still, those who know can, if they will, help those who do not know to see

more easily what it means to come to know. This is, ultimately, what teaching is about.

The only way we can know what someone else knows that we do not yet know is for us to listen and follow the argument. Lucy and Charlie Brown are at a fence. Lucy says to a perplexed Charlie, unused to ultimate questions, “So what do you think?” Charlie replies, “what difference does it make, you never listen to me.” Lucy looks straight ahead, “I was just making conversation.” Charlie protests, “when you make conversation, you have to listen, too!” To which Lucy replies to a deflated Charlie Brown, “you do?”

When we make conversation, we have to listen too. We underestimate the great art of listening. We are first listeners, hearers. We hear someone else’s word before we speak our own word. If we just “make conversation,” we hear nothing. And if we hear nothing, we only know what we already know. Even if we be geniuses, which most of us happily are not, our contribution to the whole, as Samuel Johnson calculated, will be “extremely small.” To flourish as ourselves, we depend on the “information of others” ✠

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## Three Virgin-Martyr Plays in the Light of English-Catholic Martyrology, 1577 to 1681

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**I**n London in the 1660s three plays on virgin martyrs were performed and published. The first was a revival of Philip Massinger’s *Virgin Martyr* on St. Dorothea, originally performed in 1622; the second was Matthew Medbourne’s *Converted Twins* on St. Cecilia, performed, as the epilogue implies, at court; and the third was Dryden’s heroic play *Tyrannic Love* on St. Catherine of Alexandria. All three plays are pleas for liberty of conscience which might usefully be read in the light of English-

Catholic martyrology. They are related in their handling of consecrated virginity, persecution, martyrdom, and miracles.

The first two dramatists—Massinger and Medbourne—were Roman Catholics, and they likely chose to write about virgin martyrs to symbolize the plight of English Catholics since the Reformation. The figure of a woman would often serve in that era as a symbol of a community, as for example Spenser’s *Una*. Thus the figure of a consecrated virgin undergoing martyrdom could aptly serve as a symbol for the English-Catholic community undergoing periodic persecution since 1577. Massinger’s play first

appeared when Prince Charles was contemplating marriage with the Infanta of Spain, and it was revived in 1661 when King Charles II's marriage to a Portuguese princess Queen allowed Catholics to hope that they would receive a measure of religious toleration. Medbourne's play, dedicated to Queen Catherine of Braganza contains some overtly Catholic passages in its preface, such as a recommendation of saints' lives written by "some late Authors of the Roman Church" and a taunt to English Protestants regarding their claim to have restored primitive Christianity:

...it is not enough  
 To cloak Religion  
     with new-fangled stuffe,  
 And then cry out Antiquity!  
 You must  
 Believe and honour  
     the Old Martyrs dust.

The way to show fidelity to the ancient Church, Medbourne says, is to revere its virgin-martyrs as Catholics do, honoring their dust, or relics. Little wonder that Medbourne, a friend of Edward Coleman's, was singled out by Titus Oates and died in prison in the pretended Popish Plot.

Although Dryden was still a Protestant in 1669, when his virgin-martyr play was performed, he had already defended toleration in his previous heroic play *The Indian Emperour*, where he showed Montezuma tortured on-stage and pleading for liberty of conscience. Now in *Tyrannic Love* Dryden devoted an entire drama to this theme, only now he showed two atheists—Maximin and Placidius—as the persecutors, rather than Spanish Catholics. This was a significant shift. In effect, *Tyrannic Love* is the first of his satires on atheists pretending to defend the state religion by their persecution of Catholics—the other two being *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medall*. In his prefatory remarks, Dryden noted that some persons of honor had urged him to write this play. One of these could have been the Duke of York, to whom Dryden dedicated his next heroic play, *The Conquest of Granada*. As proprietor of New York at that time, the Duke had already shown his commitment to freedom of conscience by directing his governor to molest no Christian for his religious beliefs. It was in the year 1669, too, that he and the Duchess of York converted to Catholicism. A virgin-martyr play like *Tyrannic*

*Love* was well suited to raise the issue of toleration for Catholics.

Each of the three plays celebrates consecrated virginity as the high road to holiness, even though this vocation had been forbidden in England since the time of Henry VIII (with a small interruption under Mary Tudor). Anyone wanting to make a perpetual vow of virginity, whether male or female, had to go abroad. Under the 1585 Elizabethan statute, if a Catholic priest returned to England, he was automatically a traitor and liable to be hanged and quartered, even when (as often happened) his priesthood could be ascertained only by his refusal to deny it.

In the three virgin-martyr plays, as well as in English-Catholic martyrology, public authorities try to impose the state religion by false accusations, the use of paid informers or bounty hunters, tortures, promises of rewards, and public executions.

First, in each play we find false accusations of sorcery, superstition and treason against Christians that echo the anti-Catholic propaganda published in England. The underlying point of the implied parallel is that English Catholics are as innocent of the charges as the primitive Christians, and this point was made explicitly in the 1660s by Catholic apologists like the Earl of Castlemaine, though their works could only be secretly circulated in England. In Massinger, St. Dorothea is called a "cursed witch" and "damn'd Enchantress," In Medbourne, St. Cecile is called a "Witch," while her fellow-Christians are accused of "blind Superstition" and "superstitious rites." Likewise in Dryden, St Catherine is called an "Enchantress" and a "Christian Sorceress," while her fellow-Christians are described as those "whose minds / An execrable superstition blinds." The word *superstitious* was associated with Catholic beliefs in England, while *witchcraft* was associated with Transubstantiation—for instance Tillotson said that *hocus pocus* derived from *Hoc est corpus meum*, the words of consecration at Mass.

The Christians in Medbourne are also charged with "sedition" and with being "Vipers" to the state. Dryden includes this accusation of treason and turns it on its head. Emperor Maximin excoriates the newly converted Apollonius as a "Traytor to our Gods; but more to me; / Dar'st thou of any Faith but of thy Princes be?" Here "treason" turns out to

be merely resisting an atheist who wants to impose his nominal religion on his subjects as a test of civil loyalty. Dryden suggests that when religion is imposed by political leaders, it is no longer about truth but about civil allegiance enforced by penalties. He makes the same point in the preface to *Amboyna* and in *The Medall*. Also, in *Tyrannic Love* Dryden glances at Henry VIII, not just because the tyrant Maximin boasts that he controls the beliefs of his subjects, but also because he is eager for a divorce in order to satisfy his lust for a younger woman, and commands his wife to seek “a Divorce, or dye.” Dryden shared with Swift a Laudian execration of Henry VIII.

Next, in the three virgin-martyr plays, as well as in English-Catholic martyrology, we find paid informers or bounty-hunters used as instruments of persecution. In Massinger, St. Dorothea sends two servants with alms for her fellow-Christians in hiding during a “heavy persecution,” but her servants embezzle the alms and, when caught and discharged for their misdeed, they revenge themselves by betraying their mistress for a reward and even agree to be her torturers. In *Medbourne*, too, we hear of spies who find out their Christian prey by the smell of incense—“th’are so muskified”—then “dog ‘hem home, and beset the house” to capture them for “a Booty.” This passage well describes the pursuivants who hunted down English Catholics for government bounties, dogging their steps to or from Mass, sometimes being helped by an apostate turned informer. In *Medbourne*, Saphricius apostatizes at the sight of the axe and immediately turns informer, betraying St. Cecilie and the lords Valerian and Tiburtius. In addition to this Judas, *Medbourne* includes a comical version of a lapsed Christian in *Palinodio*, who denies his religion when faced with a whipping, but excuses himself to the audience on the ground that apostasy is rampant:

I am (as many are nowadays)  
 A Millifidian; have a  
 conscience of Chiverel  
 And am content to say any thing f  
 or a quiet life.

This is taunt to the English for being “Millifidians,” men of a thousand faiths, willing to conform to any new religious tenet imposed by political leaders. There are no apostates in Dryden’s *Tyrannic Love*,

but Felicia comes close before being rebuked by her daughter St. Catherine. The atheist Placidius, who keeps urging Maximin to persecute, is a kind of informer, in that he uses occult powers to pry into and attempt to control the mind of St. Catherine.

In all three virgin-martyr plays, as well as in English-Catholic martyrology, we find repeated references to torture by the rack. In Massinger, Theophilus recounts how when he learned that his daughters Caliste and Christeta had turned Christian, he threatened them with “All kind of tortures,” which included being “whipped” and put on the “Rack.” The term *rack* in England would echo back to Elizabethan times when this instrument was much used against Catholics—such as Saints Edmund Campion, Alexander Briant, and Nicholas Owen—to get them to betray others. Just in the last 25 years of Elizabeth’s reign, 124 Catholic priests and 57 laymen and women were publicly executed for their religion, many after being racked. In Massinger’s play, the two sisters withstand torture, but then cave in to their father’s pleading, when he

Kneel’d, and wept, and begg’d them,  
 though they would  
 Be cruel to themselves,  
 they would take pitty  
 On my gray hairs....

The reward for their apostasy is for them to be made votaries in Jupiter’s temple. Later, when they try to persuade St. Dorothea to follow their example, they tell her she must learn to “live again / In all prosperity.” But St. Dorothea leads them instead to repentance, and they atone for their apostasy by going back to Jupiter’s temple and throwing down his statue. One finds parallels for such an action in English-Catholic martyrology, as when the priest Richard Watson agreed to attend a Protestant service so as to be released from prison, but later repenting of it, he returned to the same place and declared publicly he had done wrong in going there, and then was re-arrested and cast into a dungeon. The sisters in Massinger’s play likewise bring down vengeance on their heads by their action, for their father Theophilus executes them.

In *Medbourne*, there are similar references to torture: in his eagerness to exterminate Christians, the ruler asks: “Have you not Tortures? Manacles, and

Racks?” Later the newly converted Valerian says he welcomes “Sword, and Racks.” The term *manacles*, like *racks*, alludes to Elizabethan times. The Jesuit Garnet wrote in 1595 about how the torture of the Jesuit Henry Walpole and the layman James Atkinson consisted in their being hung up in the air for many hours by means of irons that cut into their hands and made them bleed profusely. Atkinson died two hours after being taken down.

In addition to torture, the dramatists all show the power of parental pleadings. Just as their father’s tears assailed the sisters in Massinger, so in Medbourne, St. Cecilie’s parents keep urging her to welcome sexual pleasure and marry. She rebukes them: “what earthly souls you bear,...Heaven is my choice, while here you court but dust.” The word *heaven* glances at her vow of perpetual virginity.

In Dryden’s *Tyrannic Love* we find parallels to Massinger and Medbourne in that there are attempts to seduce St. Catherine by promises of reward, threats of torture, and parental pleadings. As a materialist, the Emperor thinks that “Devotion” is born in misery and vanishes in “happiness.” So he offers Catherine “Great gifts, and greater promises.” When the saint refuses to receive the crown of Egypt back from him on condition of yielding to his lust, he offers her the imperial crown on his wife’s head, determined to “double till I win.” If she still refuses, he threatens to have her torn apart naked on a spiked iron wheel, for he is sure that she like everyone else has a price, or is sufficiently terrified of torture to yield to his will. Dryden borrows from Massinger the temptation of parental weeping, for there is nothing in the acts of St. Catherine about her mother weeping, begging her to give a sign of yielding to the Emperor to save them from martyrdom. But unlike the sisters in Massinger, Catherine is unmoved by her mother’s tears.

Yet another thing the three virgin-martyr plays have in common with English-Catholic martyrology is that at the end the victims welcome death with joy. In Massinger, St. Dorothea welcomes “whips, racks, gibbets, axes, fires” as only “scaffoldings by which my soul climbs up / To an eternall habitation.” Similarly, Pope Urban calls the persecutors of Christians “the Instruments to cut, and hew, / And square us in this Quarry” to make us “Fit” for “Heavens Edifice.” We find Dryden making the same point when the

general Porphyrius, who is not yet a convert, warns Maximin that threats against Christians are in vain, for they “run to fires, and there enjoy their pain.” As Empress Berenice explains, in a passage that anticipates *Religio Laici*, Christianity is

A Faith, which still with nature  
is at strife,  
And looks beyond it to a future life;  
A Faith which vitious Souls  
abhor and fear,  
Because it shows Eternity too near.

We see this joy at St. Catherine’s execution, when she exclaims that her soul will “mount all pure, a white, and Virgin mind; / And full of all that peace, which there she goes to find.” In English-Catholic martyrology there are many examples of martyrs expressing joy at their sentencing or death. For instance the Jesuit Henry Morse, hanged and quartered at Tyburn in 1645 exclaimed on the scaffold before a large crowd: “Welcome ropes, hurdles, gibbets, knives and butchery! Welcome for the love of Jesus my Saviour!” There were four public executions of Catholic priests before vast crowds at Tyburn, in London, just at the time when Dryden was there studying under Busby, and so he might well have seen or heard about this phenomenon of ecstatic joy, which Catholics boasted was unique to their own martyrs. In 1646, the Benedictine Philip Powel cried out on the scaffold “This is the happiest day and the greatest joy that ever befell me.”

The final point that connects the three virgin-martyr plays with English-Catholic martyrology is the presence of miracles at the martyr’s death. In Massinger, St. Dorothea’s former servants beat her with bats, but she remains miraculously unharmed until beheaded. Her little servant Angelo turns out to have been an angel all along; he tells her he came “in a beggars shape” to test her charity, “For in such habits” do angels ask for “alms.” At her request, he brings Theophilus some fruit and flowers from her after her death, and this, along with the music heard at her death, causes his conversion.

There are similar miracles in Medbourne: it is reported first that St. Cecilie was set on fire, but the flames withdrew from her, and later that her neck was struck three times with the axe, but her head did not fall off. She then comes on-stage and ex-

plains that this happened because she prayed for, and was granted three more days to convert her parents. There are other miracles in Medbourne, too, as when an angel appears to crown St. Cecilie and Valerian with lilies and roses to denote their “spotless, chaster Loves” and when a tribune reports that he saw the souls of the two lords “mounting in the air.”

Astonishingly, there are even more miracles in Dryden than in Massinger and Medbourne. Surely one would not expect a Protestant dramatist to follow the medieval account as closely as he does. When St. Catherine is sentenced to be torn by a spiked iron wheel, the angel Amariel descends on-stage and breaks the wheel to spare the saint having to appear naked in public. For she had prayed:

But bare and naked,  
shame to undergo,  
‘Tis somewhat more than death! ...  
My modesty is sacred,  
Heav’n to thee.

Maximin sees only the broken wheel, and when Placidius tells him he saw a youth of “Heav’nly” beauty smashing the iron wheel with a “flaming Sword,” the emperor scoffs that “Miracles” are merely “tricks of Heav’n.” In this retort Dryden shows that atheism is an ideology that is miracle-proof. After the beheading of St. Catherine, a tribune tells of five miracles he witnessed: “Aetherial musick,” a “radiant light” crowning the virgin’s head, a “fragrant” perfume, and finally a missing body, for when he looked for her remains they had vanished, while “in the Air long tracks of light” were seen,

Of charming Notes we heard  
the last rebounds,  
And Musick dying in  
remoter sounds.

The translation of the saint’s body is found in the medieval acts of St Catherine, where her body is said to have been transported by angels to Mt. Sinai. It is astonishing that Dryden includes this translation in a Restoration play. One wonders if he knew that her shrine had been much visited by English pilgrims before the Reformation, or that St. Catherine had been regarded as related to Constantine and of British stock, so that she was included in compilations of British saints like St. Albans and St. Dunstan.

In the 1660s, Latitudinarian clergymen were launching a rationalist attack on miracles. Hence the on-stage miracles in all three virgin-martyr plays of the 1660s can be viewed as a counter to this emerging rationalism. What is most surprising is that Dryden, who has often been mistakenly cast as a rationalist, includes such a number of miracles in his play and adheres so closely to the medieval accounts of St. Catherine’s martyrdom. Surely his embrace of the supernatural in 1669 and his ridiculing of atheists as brutish persecutors aligns him far more with the Duke and Duchess of York at that time than with broad-church Anglicans like Stillingfleet and Tillotson. It is possible that *Tyrannic Love* was the first step in that spiritual Aeneid that would culminate eighteen years later in Dryden’s conversion and his writing that unsurpassed defense of the Catholic Church, *The Hind and the Panther*. ❧

# Catholic International Relations Theory: The Development of a Core Theory

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**T**his paper is an attempt to contribute in a thoughtful way to the conversation on “Catholic international relations theory” elicited by George Weigel in his article in the May 2004 edition of *First Things*. International relations theory possesses several core theories: Realism, Idealism, and Marxism. These theories attempt to explain, describe, and predict on a general level the various aspects of international relations. Each perspective has its own particular actors and assumptions, which distinguishes it from the others. Similarly, through a comparative analysis the distinctive characters and assumptions of Moral Realism can be categorized. Such features include: key actors, core concerns, major approaches, outlook on global prospects, motives of actors, central concepts, and prescriptions. The works of Pope Pius XII, John XXIII, and John Paul II, among others, will aid in ascertaining these aspects to achieve a greater understanding of Moral Realism and help provide potential solutions to international issues.

## Introduction:

**I**n the May 2004 edition of *First Things* magazine, noted author George Weigel threw down the proverbial gauntlet. He challenged Catholics to participate in the retrieval and renewal of what he referred to as “Catholic international relations theory.” Over the centuries the Catholic Church developed a rich intellectual history concerning world politics drawing upon the writing of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, Francisco Suarez, Pius XII and Pope John XXIII, among others. This vast body of work, however, has been sadly neglected over the past forty years. Weigel is firmly convinced that this tradition, which he calls Moral Realism, can make a powerful

contribution to influencing international relations in the contemporary world. What is imperative is that it be re-examined and introduced back into the political debate in light of new developments in the international system, such as globalization, increased sophistication of technology, and the war on terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

Moral Realism is a general theory in the field of international relations. Similar to Realism, Idealism, and Marxism it attempts to explain, describe, and predict the actors, issues and interactions in the international system. What distinguishes Moral Realism, however, is that it presents a distinctly Catholic way of looking at world politics. The unique attributes and assumptions of Moral Realism can best be understood by comparing them with those of the other core theories of international relations. Presenting Moral Realism in this fashion helps to organize the works of the great Catholic thinkers so that they may be better understood. This will create a template to guide statesmen in the formulation of foreign policies and provide a method for evaluating their courses of action.

## Core International Relations Theories:

**O**ver the past century political scientists have developed several core theories to assist them in their understanding of the international system. Among these theories Classical Realism ranks as the most prominent. Its intellectual roots originate in the writings of E.H. Carr and Hans J. Morgenthau,<sup>2</sup> although earlier influences include Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, and Carl von Clausewitz. This core theory begins with the major assumption that the nation-state is the primary actor in the international system. This state-centric perspective

has persisted since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which established the legal concept of national sovereignty. While non-state actors exist, such as international organizations and multinational corporations, they are viewed as being less important.<sup>3</sup> Realists look upon the state as a unitary and rational actor. In international relations states are reacting to external political forces. It is assumed that domestic differences are authoritatively resolved and that the central government of the state will speak with one voice. The rational actor decision-making model plays an important role here. States will prioritize their goals, examine alternatives and consequences, and make optimal choices. The difficulty with this model, however, is that decision-makers are not fully rational. Realists, therefore, realize that the achievement of the optimal choice is pragmatically unattainable. The notion of rationality still holds, although not in its perfect form.<sup>4</sup>

The structure of the international system in which states are operating impacts their decision making. No higher political authority exists which places states in the precarious position of relying upon themselves in order to survive. In such a self-help environment national security naturally ranks as the core objective of the state. The attainment of power is considered to be the ultimate end of the state. Power is the exercise of influence to control and dominate, to get people to do something they would not otherwise do. Realists stress the importance of hard power capabilities, which include military might, population and land size. States will strive to increase their power relative to others, as compared to absolute power, in order to survive.<sup>5</sup>

Logically following from this, Realism focuses heavily on the questions of war and peace. The central concepts of Realism involve balance of power, stability, polarity, national interest, security, and zero-sum gains. The amount of attention that Realists pay to these concepts speaks of the importance of maintaining peace in such a hostile international environment. Peace in this state of affairs means the absence of war. These concepts contribute to the formulation of partial theories and policy prescriptions to achieve peace and explain war.

Classical Realism surprisingly engages in a discussion on morality. It argues that individual morality

and state morality should not be confused. The primary responsibility of political leaders is the survival of the state. To treat this issue otherwise would only lead to national disaster. As Hans J. Morgenthau notes in his seminal work *Power Among Nations*: "Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actors of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place."<sup>6</sup> States are held to a different standard and are not in a position to make moral judgments similar to those of the individual.

The core theory of Idealism, contrariwise, consists of a considerably different set of assumptions. Idealists, also referred to as Liberals, reduce the status of the nation-state in the international system, and elevate the position of international institutions. The rise of the Idealist theory was a consequence of the brutalities of World War I. Idealists believed that the balance of power system, so important to the cause of peace for Realists, was inherently flawed. This unstable peace could be corrected through the creation of institutions, which would properly channel humans' good nature. War is viewed as an international problem that requires collective action. Idealists challenge the assumption that states are unitary, rational actors, who, they believe, seek less than rational objectives through a fragmented decision-making process marked by clashing interests. The Idealists have a broad agenda which places an emphasis on social, economic and environmental concerns. Their motive is to meet human needs, rather than what they consider to be selfish national interests.

In order to promote peace in the international system Idealists call for economic interdependence. This requires the development of a vast network of interlocking economic ties among the states, which consequently increases the costs of pursuing war.<sup>7</sup> Democratization is also high on the agenda. Idealists are firm believers in the democratic peace thesis, which argues that democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with each other. The greater the number of democracies in the international system, the more peaceful and stable the system will become. President Woodrow Wilson made this case in his *Fourteen Points* address, arguing that autocratic regimes were the cause of war. Democracies share certain values

and norms which inhibit the recourse to arms when faced with a conflict of interests.

Alongside the creation of international institutions is the development of an ever-increasing body of international law. International law helps to alleviate the lawless nature of the anarchical international system. The international level does not possess governmental bodies similar to those found at the state level. Distinct legislative, executive and judicial powers are lacking. The development of an international legal system helps to fill in this power vacuum, in combination with international organizations, international norms and regimes. It facilitates conflict prevention and resolution, and can legitimate the use of force according to the principles of Just Law theory. Finally, Idealists argue that a cognitive process is taking place in the minds of statesmen and citizens. Through a learning curve they discover that pursuing war is too costly. Peace is the better choice in relations among nations.<sup>8</sup>

Realists and Idealists have their fair share of critics. Theorists have attempted to provide better explanations for the forces at work in the international system. One such attempt is Neo-realism. Kenneth Waltz is the pioneer of this particular theory. In his book *Theory of International Politics* he explains that the main difference between Classical Realism and Neo-realism is the explanatory power of the anarchical structure of the international system. It determines the interaction among states, constraining them from performing certain actions, while driving them towards others. Individual and state levels of analysis are dismissed. States continue to be the primary actors. They are considered to share the same functions, but they differ in their capabilities. Power still matters, but is no longer seen as an end in itself, but a means to survival. And relative power matters absolutely.<sup>9</sup>

Neo-liberalism builds on the Idealist tradition by concentrating on the important role that international organizations and other non-state actors play in promoting international peace. In their book *Power and Interdependence* Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye argue that there are two theoretical perspectives which form the foundation of Neo-liberalist political thought. First, complex interdependence indicates dense networks of interactions between transnational

actors. This creates a certain sense of vulnerability and sensitivity to the needs of others.<sup>10</sup> Similar to Idealism, trade, the environment, and social issues can take on greater importance than military affairs. Second, the existence of international regimes helps to provide a certain degree of order in the international system, a so-called “ordered anarchy.” Regime in this sense means norms, rules and procedures for interaction agreed to by actors. States do follow patterns of behavior and learn to cooperate. Examples include: the World Trade Organization and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They establish long term rules that regularize the relations among actors.<sup>11</sup> This increases predictability, shapes expectations, and helps the actors know the rules of the game.

The final core international relations theory is Marxism. The nation-state system is still recognized as dominant, but the key actors in this theory are classes. Both of these actors are operating within a capitalist world economy. This global economy is represented by a relationship between core and periphery states. Core states exploit the cheap resources and labor of periphery states, and sell their surplus production to the periphery, thus increasing the core’s wealth. This creates a widening income gap between these two groups, as well as dependency of the periphery on the core. The class structure of owners versus workers within the core states is replicated in the periphery, which simply perpetuates the system.<sup>12</sup> Economic issues are clearly prevalent in this theory. They possess the main explanatory power on how the actors interrelate with one another. The emphasis is on domination and exploitation. The contemporary version is expressed in the literature on the Global-North and Global-South debate.

Marxism also addresses the subject of war. Unlike Neo-liberalism, which argues that capitalism produces incentives for peace through economic interdependence, Marxists believe that capitalist countries are more likely to engage in international conflict in the form of imperialist wars. Industrialized states pursue these wars in search of markets for their surplus capital; and once committed, they must then protect these markets from competing states. In relation to conflict within states, Marxist prescriptions call for revolution. The working class comes to realize they are being exploited by those in the capitalist class.



They unite and throw off the shackles of this system, and all members in the proletariat class become owners of the means of production, thus eliminating the primary source of all conflict.

The core theories of Realism, Idealism, and Marxism are the predominant theories within the field of international relations. Other core theories, such as Constructivism, and numerous partial theories do exist, but these three general theories have received the greatest attention in the literature. By comparing the concepts, actors, and assumptions associated with these core theories, a fuller picture of the complexity of international relations is created. The rejuvenation of Moral Realism will help to further capture this complexity, and contribute to a better, and perhaps more accurate understanding of international relations.

## Moral Realism:

Initially the term “Moral Realism” appears on the surface to be a contradiction in terms. As previously mentioned the core theory of Classical Realism detaches morality from the actions of states in an anarchical international system. There is no room for personal morality. For a state to act morally within such a chaotic environment could lead to national disaster. Idealists have often criticized Realists for their lack of moral standards. Therefore, the word “realism” must necessarily have a different connotation in the context of Moral Realism.

This raises the important question concerning the nature of this realism. Pope Benedict XVI provides a clue in his *Introduction to Christianity* when he writes of a Christian realism which is “beyond the physical world, realism of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to a purely worldly, quasi-physical realism.”<sup>13</sup> This type of realism is “otherworldly” in character, providing a different approach to looking at international politics than the temporally-oriented Classical Realism, although not completely rejecting it. In conjunction with Christian realism, there is moral realist theology. Romanus Cessario, O.P. highlights four distinct features of this theology. First, theology is unitary because it derives from one source. Second, it is a science of faith. Third, moral realist theology

hopes to explain human ends, which is union with God. Finally moral realism requires the assistance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> This moral form of realism focuses ultimately on God. Furthermore, in the *Summa Theologiae* St. Thomas Aquinas, in answering Question 103 as to whether the end of government is something outside the world, argues that the end of a thing directly corresponds with its beginning, and all things find their beginning in God.<sup>15</sup> This idea is powerfully reinforced by the biblical quotation, “The Lord has made all things for Himself” (Prov. 16:4). This is the ultimate reality upon which Moral Realism is founded. It is a more powerful sense of realism.

Combine this conception of realism with the term “moral.” In *Veritatis Splendor*, Pope John Paul II writes of the Church’s responsibility to intervene in the sphere of morals. In addressing this issue he offers a definition of this term. He states, “It [the Church’s Magisterium] has the task of ‘discerning, by means of judgments normative for the consciences of believers, those acts which in themselves conform to the demands of faith and foster their expression in life and those which, on the contrary, because intrinsically evil, are incompatible with such demands.’”<sup>16</sup> Reality is God Himself. Morals are beliefs based on what is deemed good by the Catholic Church. Since God is Good and is reality, Goodness is reality.

In order to develop an understanding of Moral Realism, George Weigel highlights three key assumptions associated with this theory. He notes that while politics has a rightful autonomy from the Church, it is not independent from morality. The U.S. Catholic bishops confirm this by declaring that, “[Politics] should be about fundamental moral choices.”<sup>17</sup> One of the foundational principles of the Catholic international relations theory is that humans are political beings. This notion follows in the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas, who taught that man is a political animal. Human beings naturally associate with each other, and they possess reason which is inherently cooperative, since they can learn from the experiences of others, and they are able to communicate these experiences through speech and writing. Humans require government to function properly.<sup>18</sup> More importantly than this, however, Weigel argues that making moral judgments is inherent in the human person. Politics deals with the question of how

human beings ought to associate with each other. To create a distinction between morality and the realm of politics is counterintuitive. It would be compartmentalizing the human person, rather than allowing the fullness of the human experience.<sup>19</sup>

This brief discussion leads to the first comparative variable in relations to the other core theories. Whereas the core theory of Classical Realism believes the key actor is the state, Idealism focuses on the role of international organizations, and Marxism stresses the importance of the class system, Moral Realism recognizes the primary unit to be the human person. Pope John Paul II declared that, “the human person must be the centre of every civil and social order, of every system of technological and economic development.”<sup>20</sup> Human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, and are loved by God. This is the source of their transcendent dignity. Recognizing and protecting the dignity of the human person is the main motivational factor of all actors in the international system. In his encyclical *Centesimus annus* Pope John Paul II outlines the duty of the state, to promote the common good and protect the rights of the individual.<sup>21</sup> A similar case can be made for the duty of international organizations, multinational corporations and other international actors. They are to promote human dignity and not destroy it by treating it as a means to an end.

The second assumption of a Catholic international relations theory addresses the topic of power. As noted above Classical Realism defines power as getting others to do something that they would not otherwise do. This theory views power as an end in itself. Idealism hopes to dampen the destructive nature of power among nations through the establishment of international organizations, while Marxism views power from an economic perspective, as bourgeois domination over the proletariat. Power appears in many forms. In international relations theory a distinction exists between hard power and soft power capabilities. Hard capabilities include the size of land, population, economy and in particular military affairs. Soft capabilities on the other hand consist of social, cultural and economic attributes, efficient state administration, and quality of leadership, among other things. Realism emphasizes the role of hard power,

whereas Idealism and Marxism look to soft power.

Currently a debate is raging as to which set of capabilities is of greater importance.<sup>22</sup> This is particularly applicable to Moral Realism. Generally, Catholic International Relations Theory focuses on soft power capabilities. Pope John Paul II had continually stressed the importance of culture. In the area of conflict resolution the Catholic Church consistently calls for disarmament, negotiation and diplomacy. And yet hard power capabilities do exist, and Moral Realism recognizes that they have their proper place. In the world as it is, poverty, hunger and other forms of human misery exist, as well of a variety of government regimes that do not respect human rights. Given this reality, military and police capabilities play a protective function. Moral Realism attempts, however, to make the case that the utilization of soft power is more productive and rational than hard power. Nevertheless, occasions will arise when actors may legitimately revert to hard power capabilities. To disregard this possibility leads to utopianism.

Traditional Catholic teaching views the ends of power quite differently. Weigel defines power as “the capacity to achieve a corporate purpose of the common good.”<sup>23</sup> In this case power is a means to an end, which is the common good. And thus, it is viewed in a positive light. This notion of the common good originates from the dignity, unity, and equality of all mankind. Expressed in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes*, it is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”<sup>24</sup> This is fortified in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. At the international level state power should be organized, whether hard or soft, in such a way as to promote the common good for all peoples. This is also applicable to all levels of power, and no one is exempt from cooperating in the attainment and development of it.<sup>25</sup>

One prevailing element of the common good is the commitment to peace, which is the third assumption of Moral Realism. Catholic International Relations Theory has a distinctive outlook on peace. The other theories propose their own methods for achieving peace, but they produce a false sense of peace. Realists, for instance, will promote strategies of

deterrence, mutually assured destruction, and balance of power in order to maintain peace. The pursuit of these policies, however, diverts resources from meeting societal needs and thus removing some of the root causes of war. The accumulation of weapons or the development of alliances necessary to increase a nation's power may tempt it to revert to the use of force rather than to pursue more peaceful solutions. The end result of these policies is a reinforcement of the atmosphere of distrust that pervades international politics. While peace may be achieved, it is unstable and short-lived.

Moral Realism attempts to establish a more stable peace among the family of nations. It views peace as the supreme good, as a condition for attaining other goods.<sup>26</sup> Drawing upon Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, genuine peace is based upon "four precise requirements of the human spirit: truth, justice, love and freedom."<sup>27</sup> These should be developed among mankind, along with an increased awareness of the dignity of the human person. Pope John Paul II, in his first World Day of Peace address entitled "To reach peace, teach peace," declared that education for peace should occur at all levels: within a person, among neighbors, within a country and between nations.<sup>28</sup> Peace is possible and it is a duty.

In the realm of international affairs peace can be practically achieved through negotiation, diplomacy, disarmament and the rule of law within an international order based upon a divinely established order. International organizations and international law play critical roles in the promotion of a cooperative environment. The Catholic Church believes these organizations are the embodiment of the community of nations, and can lead to the consensual establishment of a world public authority which a moral order requires. This new public authority would not be a super-state, but would respect the principle of subsidiarity and the proper authority of the state.<sup>29</sup>

Subsidiarity is one of the central concepts of Moral Realism. It recognizes that "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view of

the common good."<sup>30</sup> The Catholic Church considers it a grave evil for higher associations to take on the duties that subordinate organizations can perform. Therefore international organizations perform certain functions, while still recognizing the legitimate authority of the state and not attempting to usurp that authority. Likewise the state will recognize and protect the authority of subordinate institutions within its territory including civil society and the individual person.<sup>31</sup>

Closely associated with the Church's support for international organizations is her emphasis on the role of international law. This was the theme of the Pope John Paul II's 2004 World Day of Peace address. International law has formulated "universal principles that are prior to and superior to the internal law of states and that take into account the unity and the common vocation of the human family."<sup>32</sup> The Pope further stated that international law should "become exclusively a law of peace, conceived in justice and solidarity."<sup>33</sup> It can become the guarantor of peaceful relations among states and peoples.

Solidarity is another central concept in Moral Realism. It reflects man's communion with Christ and with his brothers and sisters here on Earth. It is a communion based on the words of Jesus Christ: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Mt 25:40). Solidarity is a witness to the virtues of love and charity, which seek the good of others in the promotion of the common good. Among the family of nations it will help in the general task of alleviating those conditions that drive individuals to pursue violence.

The core theory of Moral Realism provides a uniquely Catholic perspective of international relations. The key unit is the individual person, around whose transcendent dignity all governing institutions are grounded. There exists a powerful unity with God, since all things are directed towards Him. The anarchical nature of the international system can be transformed into a new international moral order. Power takes on an entirely new meaning. Domination is replaced with love and pursuit of the common good. An authentic peace supplants the less than real peace offered by other theories. Subsidiarity and solidarity become the new norms in relations among peoples.

## Conclusion

**M**oral Realism is inherently a normative political theory. This creates a certain level of vulnerability shared with that of Idealism. The core theory of Idealism was rejected by the Classical Realists believing that it had a naïve understanding of human nature and the structure of the international system. It is tempting to associate Moral Realism with Idealism. They share a common view on the importance of international organizations and international law. There is a strong tendency to focus on human welfare. Moral Realism, however, is based on a higher order, God's will for mankind. If this was not the case, the term Moral Idealism would have sufficed. Moral Realism reflects the ultimate reality of God's goodness, His love for mankind and His desire that we love one another. The theory provides a template for creating a governance system and policies to best achieve this reality.

A serious question remains. Is this theory too normative? In other words it is possible to achieve, or will it be banished to the realm of utopianism? There are two positive solutions to this query. First, in his encyclical *Veritatis splendor* Pope John Paul II writes, "Christian morality consists, in the simplicity of the Gospel, in following Jesus Christ, in abandoning oneself to him, in letting oneself be transformed by his grace and renewed by his mercy, gifts which come to us in the living communion of his Church."<sup>34</sup> It is possible and all mankind is called to it. Second, Moral Realism possesses a dynamic which recognizes the world as it is. The realities of international politics are not rejected. They are taken into consideration and acted upon prudently.<sup>35</sup> A Catholic International Relations Theory intrinsically includes reality and facts, as it does ideals and values, and policies and actions. The development of these three dynamics will help further our understanding of Moral Realism. ✠

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> George Weigel, "World Order: What Catholics Forgot," *First Things*, 143, (May 2004), 31-38.

<sup>2</sup> E.H. Carr's classic work *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*, and Hans J. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*.

<sup>3</sup> Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> See Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Viotti & Kauppi, *International Relations Theory*, 195-196.

<sup>9</sup> See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> See Keohane & Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 23-37.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, ed. *International Regime* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1-5.

<sup>12</sup> Ole R. Holsti, "Models of International Relations and Foreign Policy," in G. John Ikenberry, *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays, 5th Edition* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 22-23.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 276.

<sup>14</sup> Romanus Cessario, O.P. *Introduction to Moral Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 17-22.

<sup>15</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Question 103.

<sup>16</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 110, 6 August 1993.

<sup>17</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2003), 1. www.usccb.org

<sup>18</sup> George Klosko, *History of Political Theory: An Introduction, Ancient and Medieval Political Theory*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 247-251.

<sup>19</sup> George Weigel, "World Order: What Catholics Forgot," 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> Fr. C. John McCloskey, "Universal Church, Global Village," *National Catholic Register*, 25 July 2004, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Centisimus annus*, no. 11, 1 May 1991.

<sup>22</sup> See Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (PublicAffairs Pub., 2004).

<sup>23</sup> George Weigel, "World Order: What Catholics Forgot," 32.

<sup>24</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Guadium et spes*, no. 26, 7 December 1965.

<sup>25</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Washington, D.C. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2005) nos. 164-167.

<sup>26</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See," no. 6, 10 January 2005. www.vatican.va

<sup>27</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment*, no. 6, 1 January 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Pope John Paul II, *To reach peace, teach peace*, 1 January 1979. www.vatican.va

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Liguori Publications: Liguori, MO, 1994), no 1883.

<sup>31</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nos. 185-186.

<sup>32</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace," *ZENIT News*, 1 January 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, no. 119.

<sup>35</sup> See Stephen M. Krason, "Toward a Catholic-Realist Framework for International Political Life," *Catholic Social Science Review*, Vol. 4, (1999), 291-301.

***Ten Dates Every Catholic Should Know: The Divine Surprises and Chastisements that Shaped the Church and Changed the World***, by Diane Mozcar. Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2005.

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The ten dates that Diane Mozcar believes that every Catholic should know are the following: 313 A.D., the Edict of Milan; 432 A.D., Pope Leo I turns back Attila and the Huns; 496 A.D., the baptism of Clovis; 800 A.D., the coronation of Charlemagne; 910 A.D., the foundation of the Abbey of Cluny; 1000 A.D., the beginning of the Church's most glorious age; 1517 A.D., the Reformation; 1571 A.D., the Battle of Lepanto; 1789 A.D., the French revolution; 1917 A.D., Fatima and the 20th century. Each date serves as a focal point for the discussion of a particular era of Church history.

Professor Mozcar begins her history with the conversion of that multi-faceted personage who was the Emperor Constantine. Given his position and power, his acceptance of the faith was to have telling practical effects on the Church. The persecution of Christians ceased, and Christianity became an officially sanctioned religion. And then there was gradually to develop a rather too cozy relation between Church and state, a relation which was not to prove an unmitigated blessing for the Church. Constantine was to be the first, but by no means the last, civil leader who showed a penchant for interfering in ecclesiastical affairs. The deleterious results of the close relation between the secular and

sacred realms were to become especially pronounced in the Eastern Empire. There a number of unfortunate precedents were set by Constantine, the adverse consequences of which, I think it can be argued, have never been completely overcome.

When the empire in the West eventually collapsed—an implosion caused by thoroughgoing internal corruption—the Church had no choice but to fend for herself in what had suddenly become a very hostile world. There were barbarians of various stripes almost constantly on the rampage, and in the East there loomed an ever menacing Islam. The Dark Ages had arrived. The Vandals provided what little external pressure was needed to hurry along Rome's final collapse. Then came the Huns, in comparison to whom the Vandals might have passed for gentlemen. But Pope Leo I's brave stand thwarted their plan to pillage the city of Rome itself. But the Dark Ages were not all dark, and one definitely luminescent event that occurred during them was the baptism of Clovis, in 496 A.D. He did not come into the Church alone, but brought the whole nation of the Franks along with him, and thus the Eldest Daughter of the Church was born. (We will pass over in silence the state of that eldest daughter today. Seniority does not imply moral superiority.) There were some great women saints in those days, such as St. Genevieve of Paris, and St. Clotilda, the wife of Clovis.

There is good reason for saying that the Dark Ages ended, or at least their end was put in sight, by the coronation of Charlemagne, by Pope Leo II, on Christmas Day, 800 A.D., for it was Charlemagne who brought about the Carolingian Renaissance. Perhaps the single most

significant of his accomplishments was the institution of cathedral and monastic schools, as well as the one he established at his own court. Charlemagne thus laid the foundation for an educational system which was gradually to grow into one of the jewels of European culture. What was planted in the monastic cloister was eventually to blossom into the university. But, to back up a bit, one must not neglect to acknowledge what Europe owes to Charlemagne's grandfather, Charles Martel, who defeated the invading Muslims at the Battle of Tours in 732. They had already gobbled up Spain, but France, and Western Europe as a whole, was denied them.

Professor Mozcar gives due recognition to the signal importance of the Cluniac reform. Contemporary Europeans, who cannot bring themselves to admit what they owe to Christianity, can hardly be expected even to be aware of what they owe to monasticism. There is no obtuseness more obtuse than that which denies the past. St. Benedict, the Father of Western Monasticism, had founded his order in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and it got off to a most promising start. But, thanks in great part to the intrusive meddling of secular rulers, the once edifying institution of monasticism, was, by the 10<sup>th</sup> century, showing any number of sad signs of serious corruption. (*Et corruptio optimi pessima.*) But then came Cluny. The genius of this foundation lay in the wonderful foresight of its founder, the Duke of Aquitaine, who took pains to ensure that the monastery would be free from secular control. In the founding charter he wrote: "The religious will have the power to elect as abbot, according to the Rule of St. Benedict, whomever they please, without the prevention of regular election by any authority."

And then the Duke had the eminent good sense to appoint a very holy man, St. Berno, as the monastery's first abbot. Happily, Cluny was to have a succession of saintly abbots, perhaps the most famous of whom was St. Odo (died in 1048), called "the greatest religious force of his generation." Daughter houses of Cluny were to proliferate across the European landscape, and with the most beneficial of consequences.

The year 1000 A.D. seems aptly described by Professor Mozcar as the gateway to the Church's most glorious age, leading up to what has been called "the thirteenth, the greatest of centuries." To call an age glorious is not to imply, as Professor Mozcar is quite aware, that it is perfect. The Middle Ages, like every other era, had its complement of sinners, and sometimes they were rather spectacular ones. But Professor Mozcar detects—correctly, I believe—an attitudinal difference, with respect to sin, that dramatically sets off that age from our own. She writes: "But unlike in our day, most sinners and villains acknowledged that that is what they *were*. Except in the case of some of the more extreme heretics, they did not pretend that they were some new kind of saint." Well said. How many people today, caught up in certain of the more woeful of perversions, not only want to pass themselves off as a "new kind of saint," but insist that their self-canonized status be recognized and approved by all. Aberration seeking accreditation.

But even glorious ages fade, and sometimes with astonishing rapidity. So it was with the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The great legacy left by St. Thomas Aquinas was not given the preservation it deserved, and indeed demanded, and his eminently healthy philosophy and theology was pushed off to the side in favor of the great

flabby phenomenon called Nominalism, which is still with us today, although vested in modern garb. The essential flaw of Nominalism is its not according sufficient respect to the objective order of things. It is, at bottom, one of the many forms of idealism. Among its other deleterious effects, Nominalism led the way to the Reformation, which Professor Mozcar appropriately designates as the "Protestant Catastrophe." In the aftermath of that catastrophe, the days of Christendom were over.

As if the Church did not have enough to handle in the Protestant rebels, Islam was making a new concerted push into Europe, and this time it looked as if the Muslims might go all the way. But a new Charles Martel rose up to save the day, and Europe, and his name was Don Juan of Austria. The decisive event was the Battle of Lepanto, which took place in 1571. In commenting on that critically important encounter, Professor Mozcar remarks tellingly: "One might have thought at the time that any further threat to the West from Islam was a pipe dream. Instead it turned out to be a nightmare." Will Christian Europe—to the very small extent that it still deserves to be called that—finally succumb, as did the Roman Empire, not to external compulsion but to internal corruption? Europeans today would seem to be spiraling downward in a veritable moral nosedive, locked in the grips of what has all the marks of a collective death wish.

Professor Mozcar begins her account of the Reformation by dismissing the mythological version of the event, a vision which is still to be found in many of the standard history textbooks. She then sets the record straight, relying, in doing so, on the most recent scholarship. Interestingly, she traces the begin-

nings of the catastrophe to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the spiritual coldness that seemed then to have settled over Christendom, and which St. Francis had pointedly called attention to. The fact is that even by that time too many Christians had become altogether too worldly, more concerned with getting and spending than with the one thing necessary. That the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) saw fit to mandate that Catholics, under pain of serious sin, must receive Communion at least once a year is a clear indication of just how bad things were. Think of it: Catholics had to be effectively forced to receive the greatest gift that was ever given to mankind! Today Catholics do not hesitate to receive Holy Communion, but with what attitude do they approach the Holy Table? How many of them believe in the Real Presence?

The French Revolution may be regarded as the dress rehearsal for the succession of major tragic dramas which were to be played out over the next two centuries. The 20<sup>th</sup> century showed itself to be the goriest, the most grossly inhumane, in the whole of human history. Josef Stalin, one of its major monsters, wrote the epitaph for the century: "One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic." And in 1917 Our Lady came to a little town in Portugal to try to warn her children of dire things to come if they did not amend their lives and turn toward God. What has transpired since 1917 might be taken as a fair indication of the extent to which her warning was heeded.

So, how do things stand now with the Catholic Church? Professor Mozcar's assessment is not particularly encouraging, but who can say that it is not accurate? She writes: "Today, in many Catholic countries in Europe, something like five

percent of Catholics—the people of Charlemagne and St. Odo, of Scanderberg and Gregory VII—actually attend Mass regularly. Religious indifferentism, doctrinal confusion, and moral ambiguity have plagued the Church on many levels.” What is the remedy for this lamentable situation? It is as easy to specify as it is difficult to realize: saints.

*Ten Dates Every Catholic Should Know* is not a big book, quantitatively speaking, but it is so if regarded in qualitative terms. Professor Mozcar presents us with much more than a mere chronicle of events. The topics she deals with in the book were carefully chosen for their “landmark” character, and she explores each of them with rich and revealing results, guided by the twin notions of surprise and chastisement, which she weaves into her story with very good effect. But chastisement? Have we not been taught in recent decades not to think in those terms? Are we not now too sophisticated, too progressive in our thinking, to entertain the possibility that any historical event or state of affairs should be interpreted as a chastisement from God? If so, some serious rethinking on our part is called for, so that we might develop some new perspectives on the Church and her history. This very fine book can help us to do this.

***Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past***, Suellen Hoy. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

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**W**omen religious played a very important role in the building up of the

Catholic Church in America, especially during that dynamic period of rapid growth that began in the mid-19th century, with the dramatic increase in the number of Catholic immigrants, to the mid-20th century, when, in the years immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council, the Church experienced her golden age in this country. It was short, but golden nonetheless. But beyond the obvious and direct impact for good the Sisters had on the Church, they played no insignificant part, though in a more indirect way, in the shaping of modern American culture as a whole. The history of the Sisters' work in this country has been richly diverse and wide-ranging, and Suellen Hoy has provided us with a particularly fascinating slice of that history in *Good Hearts: Catholic Sisters in Chicago's Past*.

The story of women religious in the United States cannot be completed separated from the story of Irish immigration to this country, for so many of the pioneering and foundation-building Sisters hailed from Ireland, as part of the great wave of immigration that saw some 3.3 million Irish come to these shores between 1851 and 1920. It is estimated that between four and five thousand Irish Sisters settled in the United States in the 19th century, and hundreds of them were to make the burgeoning city of Chicago their home. At the time of the Civil War, Chicago commenced its fairly explosive growth into a major metropolis; between 1860 and 1870, the population of the city almost tripled, jumping from just over 100,000 to almost 300,000. A large portion of the immigrants was made up of Irish, German, Italian, and Polish Catholics, and Catholicism was soon to become Chicago's dominant religion. In 1920, 70% of the teachers in the city's public

schools were Catholic.

The growth of the Sisters in Chicago was in many ways as dramatic as the growth of the city itself. The first religious to arrive on the scene were five Sisters of Mercy, on September 22, 1846. The Sisters of Mercy had become known as the “walking nuns” in their native Ireland, for their practice of leaving their convents to seek out those who were in need of their care. They were famous for making house calls. This was all fully consonant with the spirit of their congregation, whose foundress, Mother Catherine McAuley, had instructed her daughters that they were “to seek justice, to be compassionate, and to reflect mercy to the world.” Just five years after their arrival in Chicago, their numbers had increased from five to forty-four. When a cholera epidemic broke out in 1854, the Sisters were among the first to respond to the crisis. The superior of the community, 32 year old Mother Agatha, who worked relentlessly at nursing those stricken by the disease, was herself to die of cholera. The Sisters of Mercy founded Chicago's first hospital, and, along with several other congregations of Sisters, they served as nurses during the Civil War. Once the congregation became firmly established in the city, its members steadily multiplying, the majority of the Sisters became involved in educational work, contributing substantially to what was eventually to become one of the largest and most impressive Catholic school systems in the country. Among the other congregations that staffed the city's Catholic schools were the Franciscan and Dominican Sisters, the Sisters of Loretto, the Sisters of the Holy Family, and the Oblates of Divine Providence.

In order to meet the pressing need for Sisters, not only in

this country but internationally, the Sisters of Mercy established in Ireland a special missionary training school, St. Bridget's in County Kilkenny, which over the years was to send out hundreds of Sisters, or Sisters-to-be, to posts around the world. Another source of missionaries for the Mercy Sisters was Our Lady's Hospice in Dublin, which sent nearly 400 Sisters to the United States alone. Ireland was capable of this kind of generosity because of the astonishing growth of the religious life in that country during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, once the penal laws imposed by England had been lifted. At the beginning of the century there were 11 convents in Ireland; at century's end there were 368.

Much is often made in the standard social histories of Jane Addams and Hull House, and rightly so, but when that institution opened its doors in 1889, Catholic Sisters had been doing "settlement house" work in the city for decades. But they were not ones to call attention to themselves or their work. Professor Hoy writes: "Catholic sisters did not customarily act with an eye to the public; they assiduously shunned any form of self-revelation or self-promotion as they went about their business of pursuing good and 'saving souls.'" Their behavior in this respect is to be explained in good part by the fact that they were motivated by the conviction that they were living out a vocation, a special call from God, not following a career. Again, Professor Hoy: "The Protestant social gospel and its humanitarianism differed radically from the Catholic theology that governed convent life and its service." The Sisters were religious, not social workers, and though they labored to make a better world, they never lost sight of the fact that we do not have here a lasting city, not

even in Chicago.

The Good Shepherd Sisters arrived in the city in 1859, and immediately set about rescuing girls and young women from the cruel and degrading life of the street-walker. Caring for "fallen" women, and those in danger of falling, was the special work for which the order had been founded. The Sisters were very much needed in Chicago, for it is estimated that at the time of their arrival there were some 4,000 prostitutes in the city. The House of the Good Shepherd was quickly established. It is a tribute to the dedication and resiliency of the Sisters that, though their newly constructed facility was completely destroyed by the great Chicago fire of 1871, they quickly rebuilt, and by 1878 the home was caring for over 300 women. Rehabilitation was as much the aim of the Sisters as was rescue, and consonant with this they established the Chicago Industrial School for Girls in 1866, the purpose of which was to equip the students with employable skills. In 1912, the Good Shepherd nuns opened the Illinois Technical School for Colored Girls. It had been their original intention that the school should be for girls of all races, but they were talked out of that intention by an Illinois state official. *The Chicago Defender*, the city's African-American newspaper, vigorously protested against the school's being for colored girls only, arguing editorially that segregation was "anti-American." As it turned out, the school did excellent service for its students throughout its history, holding faithfully to its original purpose of taking into account "the whole child, her physical care, her education, social and spiritual well-being, and artistic training."

One of the most impressive chapters in the history of Catholic Sisters in Chicago is the work they

did among the city's black population, to which Professor Hoy fittingly gives special emphasis. Here, as in so many other areas, they were pioneers. Their work among black Chicagoans could be regarded as all the more significant for the fact that only a small portion of the black community was Catholic. The migration of blacks into the city of Chicago from the Southern states was an altogether remarkable phenomenon, for it represents, as Professor Hoy notes, "one of the largest and most rapid internal movements of people in history." The biggest surge of immigrants came right after World War Two. By 1966, there were more blacks in Chicago than in the entire state of Mississippi, and more in just one of the city's housing developments than were living in Selma, Alabama. Most of these newcomers were poor and sadly undereducated. They settled mainly on the city's south side, and, following what was quickly to become a typical pattern of American urban life, as the blacks moved in, the whites moved out. A good portion of those whites who vacated their old neighborhoods were Irish-Americans, for the south side had been very "Irish." The Sisters, however, did not move out.

Not only did the Sisters not move out, many new ones moved in, looking upon the south side as effectively a new mission field. In the 1950's there were around 100 missionary Sisters working among black Chicagoans. There were two congregations that did especially noteworthy work here, the Oblate Sisters of Providence, and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. The latter community had been founded by St. Katherine Drexel, a native of Philadelphia, with the express purpose of ministering to African-Americans and to the American Indian. But



in fact all of the congregations had a hand in working with Chicago's blacks, and labored zealously on their behalf.

In 1906, the Sisters of Loretto had founded Loretto Academy on the south side, in the vicinity of the University of Chicago. When blacks began pouring into the neighborhood from the Southern states, the Sisters at the Academy made a conscious decision that henceforth they were going to run a fully integrated school. The American superior of the Sisters of Loretto, Mother Constance McMahon, sent unambiguous instructions to the principal of the school: "Do not use any ratio to determine the number of students for September registration. Whatever screening be used, let not the color of the student be considered." Loretto Academy had established over the years a deserved reputation as a school that maintained the highest academic standards, and the Sisters wanted to maintain those standards while at the same time running a school which was open to both black and white girls. However, as the neighborhood underwent speedy transformation—businesses as well as residents deserted the area—middle class parents, both black and white, whose girls would have come to the school with solid educational backgrounds, stopped sending their daughters to the Academy, with the result that, despite the Sisters's best efforts to prevent it, the school's academic standards gradually began to deteriorate. Enrollments fell precipitously while costs rose relentlessly, and the school was forced to close its doors in 1972. Unfortunately, not even the noblest intentions and the most earnest exertions of totally dedicated religious are enough at times to counter the overwhelming effects of large and rapid social changes.

The final chapter of *Good Hearts* tells the story of the Sisters of the Sixties. Professor Hoy refers to the 1960s as "that exciting and devastating decade," which seems an apt enough description, in the sense that the decade, or at least a certain spirit of the decade, would seem to have proven to be particularly devastating for the Sisters themselves. The 1960s saw the advent of the "new nun," an individual who, from what Professor Hoy reports, appears to have been the singular creation of Cardinal Leon Suenens of Belgium. The year 1963 saw the publication of his *The Nun in the World*, and it was a best-seller among the Sisters. Seemingly every Sister read it, and a great many of them were quite swept off their feet by it, buying into its message with a kind of innocent uncritical attitude.

Persuaded by what they considered to be the utter rightness of the cardinal's way of thinking, a large number of overly docile Sisters rather quickly decided to desert the convent and take to the streets, not in the manner of the early Sisters of Mercy, however, but rather as "activists." To be an activist in the 1960s often meant getting involved in media events such as public protests or demonstrations. On June 12, 1965, six Daughters of Charity were arrested in Chicago's Loop for refusing to obey police orders. This was considered by many at the time to be of great symbolic significance, though the precise nature and import of the symbolism was far from clear. The idea, more or less, was that activities of this sort were what Christian witness was *really* all about. A corner had been turned, a trend had been set. Subsequently, as the Sixties devolved into the Seventies, we all bore witness to a veritable sea change in the lives and habits (the latter in more ways

than one) of women religious in the United States. Professor Hoy writes that "many Catholic sisters sought to redefine themselves," and they "believed deeply that 'a new world [was] coming.'" All indications are that the majority of those Sisters—those, that is, who chose to remain in the religious life—succeeded all too well in redefining themselves, and the anticipated new world did indeed arrive. But we are permitted to ask: Just what was the nature of that redefinition, and of the new world in question? Are they to be assessed as positive or negative? The large facts of recent history provide us with a sufficiently clear answer to that question. What we saw in the decades following "that exciting and devastating decade" of the Sixties was the wholesale abandonment, on the part of women religious, of the religious life as traditionally understood and lived. (This was not a gender specific phenomenon, by the way, for the men were as quick to shuck the religious life as were the women, perhaps even quicker.) To what end?

Where is the "new nun" today? She is a member of a dying breed. The average age of the American Sister is now over 68 years. Communities that could once boast of yearly novitiate classes of 30–40 young women have not had a single novice in years. Tellingly, the only communities that today draw large numbers of young candidates are those whose senior members had the independence of mind, in those critical years following the Council, to question the analysis of the status quo offered by Cardinal Suenens, and who failed to see unmitigated wisdom in his recommendations for future courses of action.

But the fact that the religious life is today in shambles should not so distract us that we fail to acknowl-

edge, and appreciate, what it once was, and what the valiant women religious of yesteryear accomplished in this country, and so impressively. Their history is an illustrious one. We are indebted to them, and we are indebted to Professor Hoy for telling us a part of that history, in her engaging and immensely interesting account of the work of women religious in the city of Chicago. "Adopting to local needs and conditions," Professor Hoy writes, "Catholic sisters built an array of institutions that were unmatched by any other single group of Americans." The legacy these women left is permanent.

***Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1830-1920***, Maureen Fitzgerald. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006, pp. 298.

Reviewed by D. Q. McNerny, *Professor of Philosophy, Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, Lincoln, NE*

The "good nuns" of the days before the Second Vatican Council, sometimes spoken of disparagingly if not dismissively by a certain brand of cranky Catholic, were in fact just that—good, and extraordinarily so. They were totally dedicated women, for whom hard work was a way of life. It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent and quality of their accomplishments. One could not have a correct understanding of the astonishing growth of the Catholic Church in America over the one hundred year period from mid-19th century to mid-20th century without taking into account the substantial, multifaceted, and wide-ranging contri-

butions made to that growth by women religious. To cite a specific instance, the once great American Catholic educational system—surely worthy to be remembered as among the chief wonders of modern Church history—would simply not have been possible were it not for the assiduous, selfless labors of the teaching Sisters. And then think of the multitude of Catholic hospitals spread across the continent, most of which were founded, administered, and staffed by nuns.

The story of the collective accomplishments of women religious in America has never been told in its entirety, and indeed, given its richness and complexity, one can wonder if any telling could ever do complete justice to it. However that might be, Maureen Fitzgerald has succeeded impressively in narrating an especially interesting part of that story in her book, *Habits of Compassion*. The focus of Professor Fitzgerald's study is New York City, during the ninety year period from 1830 to 1920. This was a time of explosive growth for New York, due principally to the thousands of immigrants who were flooding into the city. A very large portion of those immigrants were Irish, a group which was going to have a significant influence on the shaping of the city's future cultural milieu, especially with respect to its religion and politics. The Irish were in a sense reluctant emigrants, for they had been forced from their native land, by the twin, and closely connected, circumstances of the Great Famine and callously oppressive British rule. The vast majority of Irish who arrived in New York were desperately poor, uneducated, and unskilled. And of course they were Catholic, and for that reason alone they were decidedly unwelcome in a country that had already developed a tradition

of anti-Catholicism. In a Protestant publication of the time, quoted by Professor Fitzgerald, we read: "Last year [1864] 155,223 persons landed here from Europe, of whom 92,861 were from poor, ignorant, bigoted, Catholic-cursed Ireland."

Of the sum total of Irish immigrants who were to settle in New York, half of them were women, and most of these were young and unmarried, which, because of their poverty, put them in an especially vulnerable position. It was thanks principally to the initiatives taken by Catholic nuns that the integration of these young women into their new society was rendered safe and relatively smooth. The care given to newcomers by the nuns was not limited to young Irish women, but extended to all immigrants. However, for pressing practical reasons, concentrated attention was given to the former.

A number of religious congregations of women were involved in critically important charitable activities in New York during the 19th century, but there were three whose work had an especially deep impact on the life of the metropolis: the Sisters of Charity, founded by St. Elizabeth Anne Seton, and established in the city in 1817; the Sisters of Mercy, brought to New York from Dublin by Archbishop John Hughes in 1846; and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who came to the city in 1859. New York's Archbishop Hughes could show himself at times to be somewhat obdurate and officious in dealing with nuns in his diocese, and with religious in general, for he insisted that they owed obedience directly to him, not to their proper superiors. As a result of his confrontations with the Sisters of Charity, he engineered a break with the mother house in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and an autonomous

daughter congregation was set up in New York. The archbishop insisted that the Sisters of Charity, and congregations like the Sisters of Mercy as well, devote their principal energies to education, for he wanted New York to have an independent Catholic school system. This posed problems for the Sisters, because it represented a departure from the charitable work for which they were initially founded. The Sisters, in response to the archbishop's directive, showed both their docility and their energetic versatility, for they ended up succeeding spectacularly in both fields, charity work and education.

A particular example of the kind of aid given to young immigrant women by the Sisters of Mercy is instanced by the House of Mercy, a way station which had been founded in 1848, and was principally intended to serve Irish immigrants. Only five years after its founding, it had already sheltered 1,656 women, and 7,365 women had been placed by the Sisters in "respectable situations," which in most cases meant that they had found employment as domestic servants in middle and upper class households. By the 1860s, the House of Mercy, staffed by a community of thirty Sisters, had offered assistance, short or long term, to over 10,000 young women.

In 1848 there were around 100 women religious in New York; in 1865 they numbered 550, and of these 335 were Sisters of Charity. One of the perhaps unforeseen benefits that accrued to the Sisters as the result of their going into the educational field was that their schools proved to be a fertile source of vocations. Over the succeeding decades scores of young women, deeply affected by the exemplary lives of their teachers, chose to follow in their footsteps and enter the religious life. In 1877, the Sisters of

Mercy alone could boast of 70 novices. In 1896, there were 400 Sisters who marched in the funeral procession for Sister Irene Fitzgibbons, and they represented but a portion of the 3,000 Sisters who were then active in New York.

Sociologists tell us that the Irish-Americans are now one of the most affluent ethnic groups in our society. This was not the case in mid-19th century, and especially not among the New York Irish. But, though poor, they were prolific, and because of their poverty a great many parents could not adequately provide for their children. They needed outside help, and they received it in abundance from the Sisters. By the end of the Civil War there were already established in the city a number of Protestant-backed charitable organizations, but they had an entirely different understanding of the nature of poverty, and how families beset by it should be treated. For them, the ideal solution to the problem of impoverished Irish immigrant children was "placing them out," a system whereby the children were removed from the care of their parents and put into foster homes, some of which were located in the far away Midwest. These were almost always Protestant homes, and the children were sometimes treated as little more than cheap labor by the families that took them in. It is estimated that by the mid-1870s, some 10,000 children per year were being "placed out" by various agencies. Understandably, Catholics, but especially the Sisters, were alarmed by this state of affairs, for it put the natural family in serious jeopardy, as well as the Catholic faith of the children. Nor was this simply an accidental after-effect of the system, for, as Professor Fitzgerald points out, "reformers' efforts to dismantle poor families were central to the

mission from the time the placing-out system began."

It was at this critical junction, during and immediately after the Civil War, that the Sisters took decisive action. Professor Fitzgerald writes: "Catholic sisters in New York City began to construct institutions that would eventually undermine the placing-out system." There was, for example, the Catholic Protector, founded in 1863, which in time was to become the largest single institution for children in the United States. One important reason the Sisters enjoyed the success they did in their work is the fact that it was largely supported by public funds. In 1880, St. Joseph's Industrial Home, an institution for boys run by the Sisters of Mercy, received \$77,000 from the City of New York, in comparison to the \$3,000 which it received from private sources. In 1885 there were 19,000 dependent children being maintained at public expense, and 80% of those children were in Catholic institutions. At that time there were 2,000 Sisters involved in charitable work in New York. Another important factor that contributed to the success of the Sisters work was the passage, by the state legislature in 1875, of the Children's Law. This law mandated, Professor Fitzgerald writes, "that each destitute child would be housed in an institution of his or her religious background and that the city was bound to pay for the child's maintenance."

From the end of the Civil War, when the Sisters initiated their efforts "to save the children from the Child-Savers," to the end of World War I, when their work in this area was essentially completed, the Sisters had to put up with almost continuous opposition, which was sometimes tantamount to harassment, from various social reformist

organizations. This opposition could be said to have had its deepest roots in a tenacious anti-Catholic bigotry, but its more direct explanation lay in the fact that these organizations were guided by a social philosophy which was entirely different from that to which the Sisters adhered with unwavering fidelity. Unlike the Protestant-based organizations, the Sisters did not regard the major cause of poverty to be moral deficiency on the part of the poor themselves, and they put all their efforts into bolstering up the family and preserving its integrity. The latter effort entailed championing the rights of parents with regard to their own children, rights which the Protestant organizations were sometimes inclined to treat in rather cavalier fashion.

The social reformers argued that their placing-out system was superior to institutional care, on the premise that it kept the child in a family environment—albeit the family in question might not be to the liking of the child's natural parents. The institution, the reformers maintained, was unnatural, among other reasons, because of the celibate lifestyle of the women who governed it. It was the unexamined assumption of many who opposed the Sisters that the children whom they took under their care spent the better part of their formative years in institutions, but this was emphatically not the case, and ran completely counter to the whole approach which was followed by the Sisters. It was the aim of the Sisters that children should spend as little time in their institutions as was absolutely necessary for their overall welfare. That the Sisters' theory was manifested in practice is brought home by the fact that by the 1890s, the average length of time a child spent in one of their institutions was a scant 18 months.

Again, the focus of the Sisters was very much on the family, which, as their work clearly shows, they were attempting to supplement, not supplant. Extensive industrial training was provided to older children in institutions run by the Sisters, with the express purpose in mind that their charges would be able to be gainfully employed once they were old enough to go out into the world.

With the advent of what was hailed as a new "scientific" approach to social issues in general, and to the care of dependent children in particular, a fundamental shift in thinking took place during the Progressive Era of the 1890s. Most of the professionals now regarded it as quite backward to look upon social work and its problems in religious terms. Professor Fitzgerald makes the interesting observations that "the Darwinian and Spencerian 'struggle for survival' shaped the logic of scientific charity enthusiasts profoundly." One of the major figures in the movement, Charles Loring Brace, was said to have read Darwin's *Origin of the Species* thirteen times.

In was in the intellectual environment created by the advocates of scientific charity that, in 1909, the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children was convened, and this proved to be a pivotal event for the impact it was to have on the work of the Sisters. There was an initial attempt, thwarted by President Roosevelt, to exclude Catholics and Jews from the conference. As it turned out, it was only the Catholic and Jewish delegates who spoke out in defense of the value of institutional care for dependent children. This directly countered the position that was being favored by the conference, where much emphasis was given

to promoting the novel "cottage" model for child care (caring for them in a small, supposedly home-like environments), as over against the "congregate" model, which was regarded as inferior, and which had its most prominent expression in the institutions run by the Sisters.

As the result of the eventual triumph of the mode of thinking known as "scientific charity"—some of whose principles even some Catholic social activists came to adopt—combined with a change of political regime in New York, the Sisters and their work had to endure an increasing amount of opposition in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their institutions became the objects of severe scrutiny on the part of hostile city officials who were clearly prejudiced toward the whole philosophy of child care adopted by the Sisters. The Sisters were, according to their critics, hopelessly behind the times, and they had to change their methods. A special commission was set up by the mayor of New York, and in 1916 and 1917 the Sisters were the subjects of "a massive investigation that publicly pilloried them and their work." Conditions in Catholic institutions were described as "horrible," and it was the decision of the Commission that henceforth only "sub-normal" children would be allowed to be kept in Catholic institutions. The Sisters rightly rejected this uninformed and unjust response to their work, and refused to surrender or compromise the sound principles according to which they had been operating with unquestionable success for several decades. It was because of this provocation, and, perhaps more importantly, because of a number of changes then taking place in society at large, that the Sisters began a process of gradually closing down their institutions. An

era had ended. "Once Aid to Dependent Children was established," Professor Fitzgerald notes, "all Catholic institutions for dependent children closed permanently."

Because of the self-effacing vocation they had chosen to follow, not many names of the thousands of dedicated Sisters who gave their lives to the care of needy children have made it into the history books. The exceptions would be those who played decisive leadership roles, prominent among whom were Mother Mary Augustine (née Ellen McKenna), of the Sisters of Mercy, and Sister Mary Irene Fitzgibbon, of the Sisters of Charity, alluded to above. *Habits of Compassion* begins with an account of the funeral of Sister Irene, which took place on August 17, 1896. Thousands of mourners of all faiths lined the sidewalks as the procession following the hearse, consisting of an estimated 20,000 mourners, made its way to the church for the requiem Mass. The headline of the *New York Times* that day read simply, "Sister Mary Irene Is Dead." The paper described her as "the most remarkable woman of her age in the sphere of philanthropy." In the 1860s, Sister Irene, along with Sister Teresa Vincent McCrystal, established the Foundling Asylum, which was to become, Professor Fitzgerald writes, "perhaps the most popular institution in the city." Its purpose was to provide a refuge for young unmarried women who were pregnant and to see them through a safe child birth, as well as to take in any and all babies who, for whatever reason, could not or would not be cared for by their mothers. It was the strict policy of the Sisters not to ask any prying questions of their clients. There were no set conditions that had to be met before mothers or babies would be admitted to the Sisters' care, and

provisions were even made whereby a mother could leave her child with them anonymously.

The aforementioned investigative commission was scandalized at what they regarded as the Sisters' woefully unscientific way of operating the Foundling Hospital, and attempted to get them to establish rigid standards whereby only "worthy" applicants could avail themselves of their services. The Sisters firmly declined to comply with the commission's wishes, for they did not want to subject the young women to any kind of intrusive examination that would cause them embarrassment or humiliation. As of the year 1919, 23,301 of the children who had been given over to the care of the Sisters had been eventually returned to their parents or guardians, an additional 24,658 had been placed in judiciously selected homes, and 3,200 had been legally adopted.

*Habits of Compassion* is the result of thoroughgoing and meticulous research, and is replete with interesting and illuminating information. It should be considered required reading for anyone who wants to be informed of a very important, but hitherto neglected, aspect of modern American history. Professor Fitzgerald contributes substantially to "setting the record straight," by showing how the work of women religious was of major consequence in benefiting, not only the Church, but American society as a whole. More particularly, she demonstrates that it was the work of the Sisters in New York that effectively laid the groundwork for the welfare system of that city. Of particular interest is her pointedly calling into question the notion, initially fostered by elite activist women in the Progressive Era, that they were the first of their sex to initiate a whole array of significant social activities. But history

tells us otherwise. The fact of the matter is that the "good nuns" had been involved in those very activities for years, and indeed, in some cases, for centuries.

*After Asceticism: Sex, Prayer, and Deviant Priests, The Linacre Institute*, Author House: Bloomington, IN (2006) 260 pp, paperback, \$24.95, ISBN 1-4159-0924-8

Reviewed by Rev. Leonard A. Kennedy, C.S.B., Ph.D., *Professor of Philosophy, The Academy of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, Barry's Bay, ON, Canada.*

This book is the work of The Linacre Institute, an association of Catholic medical doctors founded in England but now international. The book is an excellent treatise on the causes and effects of sexual control in general, and of clerical sexual abuse in particular.

One of its basic theses is that in the 1950s there was a sea-change in our culture's attitude towards sexuality. Among people in general, actions which had been labeled sexual sins came to be considered less serious than before, with some of them not being considered sinful at all. This attitude was taken by the secular section of our society first, but was soon followed by the non-secular section.

The sexual drive is powerful, and can be restrained only by a determined counter-force. Yet we have noticed in our Church a let-up in urging the laws of fasting, the laws of abstinence, the importance of prayer, the use of the Confessional, life-long self-control, and, in general, an acceptance of all the moral laws of the Church, especially in sexual matters.

"Those who do not pray, or who

pray poorly, . . . become particularly insensitive to the effects of their own sinfulness.” They become indulgent in food and other creature comforts, and especially sex, because of its strong pleasure, and develop a distaste for the arduous task of devotion.

A second basic thesis propounded by the author or authors of this book is that a priest’s spirituality has a great effect on the laity, or on other priests, to whom he ministers pastorally. Whether or not a priest has faithfully accustomed himself to the spiritual practices just mentioned shows itself in the effect which his spiritual life has on the many persons who are influenced by him and by his spirituality. We might consider in particular the control of sexual fantasy. Sexual fantasies and desires shape a priest’s moral and spiritual character as “father” even if there is no overt sexual behavior. His sexual behavior can have “a corrosive effect on prayer life,” and a “profound debilitating effect on his pastoral effectiveness.”

However, “some priests and bishops defend the homosexual orientation of clergy and display hostility towards laymen, priests, or bishops who would point to it as a problem.” “Many Catholic leaders have a common conviction today that the sexual behavior of the priest (or bishop) has little correlation to his ability to care for the spiritual life of his parishioners.” To prove this point, the book devotes five pages to recounting twenty-five horror stories illustrating that “it was quite clear that ascetical doctrine was completely ignored by, or unknown to, those bishops or seminary directors who were witnessing . . . the erosion of clerical chastity.”

A third basic thesis of this book is that a priest must avoid a naturalistic or secular attitude to sexuality,

or think that believing that there is a battle between flesh and spirit is something passé, or that asceticism may be potentially pathological, or that sexual behavior and fantasy are necessary to human happiness.

A fourth basic thesis is that the mental health professions, with their “therapeutic psychology,” treat chastity or virginity or prayer other than superficially at best. “Therapeutic psychology does not recognize . . . that there is an objectively knowable natural law; . . . that habits and emotional states can and must be formed in a manner consistent with moral realism, which perforce requires a sincere and consistent effort to follow all of the commandments; . . . [that] males find happiness regarding sexual behavior only through marriage open to fatherhood.”

“Influenced by the therapeutic mentality, segments of the clergy, who completely abandoned the ascetical traditions of the Church, became convinced that these traditional practices were not only anti-scientific but also serious obstacles to successful living. The results of this change were stunning in speed and magnitude . . . . In 1966, seminary enrollment in the United States reached an all-time high of 40,000 but by 1974 this number had suffered a 60% decline . . . . The evident loss of sexual modesty, and the aggressive secularization of the public square, played their part . . . . Sadly, we now know that some of those men who did not leave the priesthood, finding themselves in an environment lacking the spiritual and psychological resources of ascetical discipline, sank into the sordid affair of pederasty. Others developed a new or lapsed into a previous sexual behavior, and continued to ply their evening wares at truck stops and unlit parks. Some developed other disordered habits,

tepidity in prayer, insubordination and loneliness, leading almost inevitably to a disgust, with a deep disappointment in their chosen vocation.”

In dealing with the recent cases of clerical sex abuse, this book makes use of two United States reports. One is the John Jay Report: *The nature and Scope of the Secular Abuse by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States*. The other is the companion report from the National Review Board: *A Report on the Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States*. The book points out however that sometimes these reports fail to present as much detail as they should have. For example, besides giving the number of accusations against a certain number of persons in different seminaries, the book should

include the number of seminarians in the seminary. The omission of this information can give a false impression of the relative seriousness of the problem in particular seminaries. It is helpful also to give the names of the seminary rectors involved.

This book deals in great detail with many aspects of “elevated sex drive” and homosexuality. “[The] problematic psychological characteristics associated with elevated sex drive, [include] precocious sexual experience, promiscuity, depression, suicidal tendencies, drug abuse, and autoerotic activity of chronic masturbation and pornography.” And the book outlines “the findings on the treatment of sex offenders” and “the profound destabilizing effect on friendship that extramarital sexual experience entails.”

It seems to be accepted that the cases of clerical abuse began in the 1950s and increased in numbers into the 1980s and then began to decline in number. This book contains a number of charts and descriptions of the clerical abuse problem, and

also underlines the responsibility of homosexuals for much of the problem: "That eighty-one percent of the reported victims of child abuse by Catholic clergy were boys shows that the crisis was characterized by homosexual behavior."

This book is an excellent treatise, and perhaps the best, on causes and effects of clerical spirituality in general, and of the recent scandal of clerical sex abuse in particular.

***Imperfection and Defeat: the Role of Aesthetic Imagination in Human Society***, Nemoianu, Virgil, Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006. pp. 150.

*Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty, Dean Emeritus, School of Philosophy, The Catholic University of America*

This volume may be best described as a philosophy of history. An introductory first chapter is followed by chapters entitled, "The Dialectic of Literature and Religion," "The Dialectic of Literature and History," "Literature as Allegory of Human Persecution and Survival," and "East/Central Europe as a Confirmatory Case Study." Virgil Nemoianu, the William J. Byron Distinguished Professor of Literature at The Catholic University of America, derives the title of his book from Paul Claudel's conviction that imperfect human nature is designed not to obtain victory but to ward off defeat.

In its opening pages, Nemoianu makes a distinction between what is regarded as history and what is commonly thought of as literature and then discusses the relationship between the two creative forms. Certainly the writing of history resembles what we call literature. Nemoianu quotes his fellow coun-

tryman, the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, as saying that he wished he had "more literary talent, so that he could be a greater historian." The relationship between the empirical and the historical record is of particular interest to Nemoianu. He writes, "When we look at what melts into thin air after a century or two, we find it is the 'hard facts.' Models and hypotheses have a better chance of survival." The allegiance to Marxism, he claims, is not based on empirical data or on a purported class struggle but on emotional and imaginative factors. Nemoianu acknowledges that literary endeavor is fraught with ambiguity, but then he asks, "Are details principal?" With A.G. Baumgarten, he notes that any gain in distinctness is often accompanied by a loss of fullness and variety. Through the centuries, the timely, often political texts of one period become "literature" in another. "Vitruvius and Pliny, Burton and Darwin, even Newton and Kant as well as Burke and Marx, began to acquire a literary status as soon as their practical effectiveness began to decline."

Speaking of what he calls the "anarchic destructive impulse" of contemporary deconstructions, Nemoianu writes, "It is better to accept frankly the nature of literature and come to terms with it, rather than build huge clunky machineries for hiding and compensating unpleasant realities." The modification of literary canons for the benefit of social purposes he finds absurd. Having spent his early years under a dictatorial regime in his native land, Nemoianu is acutely aware of the dangers wrought by political attempts to control artistic content. The memory of the banning and burning of "degenerate" art by the fascist and nationalist regimes of the twentieth century should remain

as a guide. Progress in art and literature is not like progress in other areas of human life: "Literature and art do not fit in with human order; they partake of irrationality, and randomness, and surprise; rejection and dispersion are part of their very essence."

The unique contribution of this volume may be found in chapter four where Nemoianu addresses what he calls the "common ethos" of East Central Europe, that is, the geographic territory that today consists of Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia, and Romania. Given his encyclopedic knowledge of European history and literature, Nemoianu finds it easy to recognize a common cultural identity that distinguishes East Central from Western Europe. He is impressed by the reverence for science and culture that he finds in Eastern Europe, something he takes to be an expression of a common ethos, one that values learning above gainful labor, common, too, in the sense that it permeates all levels of society from the poorest through the middle classes to the aristocracy. He gives an account of the ideological origins and manner of dissemination of this ethos and then chronicles its decline and "its unexpected survival/revival in North America." This broad and deep sociological survey is used to illustrate the theme of the volume, "imperfection and defeat" as reflected in the literature of a people bound by a common ethos.

*Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy*, Lolordo, Antonia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp. x+ 283.

Reviewed by Jude P. Dougherty, Dean Emeritus, School of Philosophy, The Catholic University of America

This work is aptly subtitled “The Birth of Modern Philosophy.” Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) is not a household name, but he was in his own day engaged in one way or another with the leading intellectual figures of his time. He corresponded with scores of his illustrious contemporaries, notably with Descartes, Galileo, Kepler, Hobbes, Campanella, and Christina of Sweden. His influence on Locke has been noted; Mersenne was a close friend.

Although Gassendi was trained as a theologian in the Scholastic tradition, he chose to work as a philosopher. Lolordo’s chapter headings alone indicate the breadth of his interests: “Gassendi’s Philosophical Opponents,” “Skepticism, Perception, and the Truth of Appearances,” “Cognition, Knowledge and the Theory of Signs,” “Space and Time,” “Atoms and Causes,” “Bodies and Motion,” “Generation, Life, and the Corporeal Soul,” and finally “Faith, Reason, and the Immaterial Soul.”

Gassendi clearly stands at the threshold of modernity, anticipating the British empiricists by more than a century. It is Descartes and his artificially created “mind-body problem” that stimulated Gassendi to address the age-old problem of universals and the relation between sense and intellectual knowledge. In his criticism of Descartes, he writes, “When you say that you are simply a thing that thinks, you mention an operation that everyone was already aware of—but you say nothing about the substance carrying out this operation:

what sort of substance it is, what it consists in, how it organizes itself in order to carry out its different functions. . .” In Lolordo’s judgment, “Were one a seventeenth century intellectual who finds Cartesianism unacceptable, Gassendi’s philosophy was an obvious alternative.”

Lolordo takes the reader through the evolution of Gassendi’s thought from the *Exercitationes paradoxiae adversus Aristoteleos* (1624), the *Disquisitio Metaphysica* (1644), a critique of Descartes, and the posthumously published *Philosophiae Epicuri Syntagma* (1649). In doing so she documents the progression of Gassendi’s thought, from his early skepticism to his eventual espousal of a mechanistic interpretation of nature. Confronted with startling advances in the natural sciences, the young Gassendi can no longer remain a skeptic. He is forced to develop a philosophical understanding of nature. Gassendi’s resultant atomism is worthy of a study in itself. Many of the conceptual problems confronting the physics and chemistry of the seventeenth century remain in an analogous form today. One of Gassendi’s dictums could well be inscribed as a classroom motto: “It is not permitted to transfer into Physics something abstractly demonstrated in Geometry.”

The reader may find interesting the chronology of Gassendi’s philosophical journey. We find him deeply engaged in criticism of the three main intellectual systems of his day, i.e., Scholastic Aristotelianism, Renaissance neo-Platonism, and the philosophy of Descartes, before he attempts to develop his own philosophical outlook. Many of his criticisms remain telling. Eventually Gassendi had to reconcile his mechanistic atomism with certain tenets of his Catholic faith, notably his belief in the immortality of the

human soul, free will, and an infinite God. Having failed to grasp the fact that much of what he accepted on faith could be defended with the metaphysics of Aristotle, he seized upon the natural philosophy of Epicurus to ground both a theory of knowledge and the moral philosophy he was antecedently committed to hold.

A short review cannot do Lolordo’s scholarship justice. This is more than a book about Gassendi. The author, by placing Gassendi within the context of the intellectual climate of his day, provides a valuable sketch of an entire period in the history of thought.

*The Unchanging Heart of the Priesthood*, Fr. Thomas Acklin, O.S.B., Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, (2005). ix-180 pp. Paper, \$12.95.

Reviewed by Patrick Doering, Duquesne University

To say this book on the priesthood is a must read for priests, theologians and anyone interested in a genuine evaluation of the priestly office today is a massive understatement. Not only does Fr. Acklin solidly ground his reader in the biblical and theological tradition of the priesthood, he also engages the issues and controversies of the present day directly and with great candor. What the reader encounters throughout this book is the author’s bringing together vast experiences as a teacher of theology (and former seminary rector), psychoanalyst and spiritual director. Admittedly, there are times in the book where the psychoanalyst-psychologist emerges and dominates the texts in a heavy way, but overall the integration of these various



experiences leaves the reader with great clarity.

The theme that unites the entire work is, as the title suggests, the heart of Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus' heart that the individual hearts of those ordained to priestly ministry are united, strengthened and directed in their ministry and quest for personal sanctity. Not remaining in the abstract in his evaluation of the priestly office the author places the questions and controversies about the priesthood today in the context of personal sin and holiness and the ontological reality of Jesus' being the source and sustainer of the priestly office. "...whatever crisis of soul can be diagnosed in priests and in the priesthood is usually a symptom of the failure to enter into the unchanging heart of Christ" (p. 23). Hence the "controversies" surrounding the priesthood today—the requirement of celibacy (in the Roman Rite), the role of authority and service, the Sacramentality of Holy Orders and the so-called "pedophilia scandal" are the result of a theological and spiritual confusion about the priesthood common today (i.e., Hans Kung's *Why Priests?*), but more-so it is a crisis of holiness and fidelity in the lives of individual priests themselves.

In order to correctly situate the identity of the priest and the proper role of ecclesial authority (not authoritarianism, the abuse of authority) Fr. Acklin makes use of Adrienne von Speyr's (utilized by Hans Urs von Balthasar) complementary distinction between the priestly office of love—represented by St. John, and authority—represented by St. Peter (p. 29). While the modern cry for "freedom" has entered into some theologies of priesthood the underlying issue that needs to be exposed is a rejection of the Church's obligation, through Her priests, to teach and preach that

which is necessary for the salvation of souls—objective morals and doctrinal purity. "If we look carefully at priestly identity as Church Tradition has faithfully transmitted it, we find that the exercise of authority is not in competition but rather is integrated with service" (33). Thus the call to abolish the hierarchy or view priests as merely functional figures not only fails to grasp the ontological reality of the priest as acting *in persona Christi* but also creates a fictitious partition between two mutually enriching realities—authority in the service of love. Perhaps one of the more striking sentences of the entire book is the author's direct criticism of the episcopacy in allowing dissent to flourish among the clergy to the detriment of the faithful. "It is as much a failure on the part of a bishop to move a priest to another parish after he has disrupted a congregation by dissenting from Church teaching from the pulpit as it is to transfer to another parish a priest who has engaged in sexual misconduct" (40). While some readers may not agree that dissent and sexual misconduct are comparable issues the point being made is clear. In order to love, one must properly situate *genuine love* within the context of love as fidelity to Christ in living out and internalizing the evangelical counsels more perfectly.

In discussing the priest's living out the evangelical counsels more perfectly, Fr. Acklin is not afraid to acknowledge that ongoing conversion is essential to the life of a priest. In engaging the so-called "pedophilia crisis" of recent memory, Fr. Acklin does not immediately jump to clarify the many misconceptions that are common in the media and most likely, the pew (although he eventually does so). Instead, he begins by situating human sexuality and human love in its proper context. In

order to do this he relies on the insights of Pope John Paul II's *The Theology of the Body* (p. 55-67). Besides being a very good summary of the pope's work it helpfully explains the human person as being inherently made for giving and receiving an authentic gift of self. Simply put, the human person is always a gift to another in a *bodily* manner although not necessarily in a *sexual* manner. While we can make our bodies "lie" through sinful sexual acts the truth remains that all loving encounters inherently are rooted in our corporeality. Thus all love is, in some fashion or another, *bodily*. The point Fr. Acklin is making is that this truth applies to priests as well as married people and necessitates their having a well integrated sexuality in order to genuinely live out their vocation in love.

Perhaps the most insightful part of the book deals with the "pedophilia scandal" that has rocked the Church in America in recent years. Citing the 2004 John Jay College of Criminal Justice study the author clarifies that "the incidence of pedophilia among Catholic priests is no higher than among the general population" (83). A more accurate title for the recent scandal would be to label it for what it really is—a homosexual scandal. Citing the aforementioned study, Fr. Acklin notes "that there has been a considerable amount of sexual misconduct on the part of Catholic priests, and much of it has been homosexual," in point of fact about 80%—a much higher rate than the normal population (83). While he acknowledges the disordered nature of homosexuality the psychoanalyst emerges in speaking of it more as a "spiritual dysfunction" than anything (89). It is interesting that while a large amount of the abuse by priests has been committed by homosexuals,

Fr. Acklin paints a picture of modern seminaries and their charges as being, by and large, well integrated sexually and not predominantly homosexual. Directly addressing both Donald Cozzens and Andrew Greeley's wild assessment and assertions of a dominant homosexual culture in both seminaries and the clergy, Fr. Acklin brings to the fore his own experiences as a seminary rector and teacher along with numerous studies to debunk such a hopeless evaluation of the clergy. The sexual crisis is not something that can be solved by changing the discipline of priestly celibacy (how a married priesthood would alter the supposed homosexual culture is unclear) but rather by entering into priestly life with a genuine desire for holiness and self-giving love. The author states this best when he writes, "there must be a recovery of the meaning of priestly celibacy and a renewal of priestly life by a radical deepening of the self-emptying love that configures the priest to Christ in his very heart" (99).

Chapter 5 begins with a very fine summary of priesthood in the Old and New Testament along with a brief examination of the Apostolic Church as well. The heart of the chapter, however, is its discussion of intimacy and the celibate life, which includes lengthy quotes from some students in a class Fr. Acklin periodically teaches, entitled "Celibacy, Sexuality, and Intimacy." This section gives the reader a first hand account and hope-filled view of seminarians today—their desires, fears and hopes. What these quotations convey, and what Fr. Acklin seemingly wants to show, is that seminarians today are not predominantly homosexual. The more common struggle is, rather, how to integrate a celibate sexuality while dealing with the concurrent desire for a family and the mar-

ried life. In Fr. Acklin's experience what seminarians want today is deep prayer and a life of holiness. The final section of the book looks to give concrete ways that the priesthood and priestly life can be renewed today. Fr. Acklin considers the renewal of priestly life first and foremost beginning with a serious, committed prayer life guided by an experienced spiritual director. The mainstay of this spiritual life is the Blessed Sacrament, including Adoration, and Marian devotion, especially the Rosary.

While not avoiding any of the hot button issues of the present day, Fr. Acklin takes a serious look at the state of the priesthood all the while recognizing there has been a failure on the part of priest, especially the sexual scandal. The book is shockingly honest in its evaluation of the priesthood today and the spiritual failures that have shaken the Church to Her core. This evaluation, however, integrates solid psychology and spiritual principles within a faithful theological vision of the priesthood. The solutions offered are not simple or easy, but then again, if holiness were easy, everyone would be a Saint!

The only real disagreement I could muster with the author concerned one statement he made regarding the priest sex scandal. Fr. Acklin states that distinctions have not been made between priests that have "slipped once, perhaps under the influence of alcohol, stress, or other pressure" and those that have habitually abused (83). Certainly one time abusers are not as bad as habitual abusers, but can such distinctions really be made concerning sinful, abusive behavior? Also, while I agree that alcohol, stress and pressure can mitigate the culpability of abusive behavior, it does not excuse it.

#### Fr. Acklin, O.S.B. Replies:

**T**hank you so very much for your kind words. I feel you have grasped the heart of what I am trying to say about the heart of priesthood: the heart of Jesus Christ. In response to your disagreement at the end of your review of my book, many disagree with this. I believe that there is a profound difference in terms of therapeutic prognosis and the possibility of change between a person who slipped once, possibly under the influence, and one who has a serial addiction, sexual or otherwise. Many believe that any sexual misconduct should cause a priest to be prohibited from any further priestly ministry. I would not agree, preferring rather to differentiate these two types, considering serial sexual misconduct a bad prognosis for returning to ministry—certainly if this involves prepubescent children—but would want to consider one-time offenses on a case by case basis, even if they involve post-pubescent teenagers.

If a married person was unfaithful or abused minors, once, would there be permanent sanctions? I know that priests are held to a higher standard, but I think at the moment a lot of rage about the decline and deterioration of marriage and family and the widespread sexual abuse of children, mostly taking place within the immediate family, are being loaded onto priests. I am open to discussion on this and have spoken about it with several bishops who agree with me. Nonetheless, I am aware I am in the minority, and the provisions of the Dallas Charter follow the more strict policy.

***The Fulfillment of All Desire: A Guidebook for the Journey to God Based on the Wisdom of the Saints***  
by Ralph Martin (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2006)

Review by Janet E. Smith, Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Ethics, Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, MI.

In *The Fulfillment of All Desire*, Ralph Martin wants to invite everyone to embark upon the journey to holiness and to urge us on. He is the ideal travel agent; one who makes the destination and journey both sound irresistibly appealing in spite of the hardships involved. Perhaps it is because it is a bleak lonely grey cold day in January in Michigan when I am writing this review but the thought of a warm feast with chatty, entertaining, and spiritually very deep friends is a very appealing image right now -- not that it wouldn't be in any circumstances. *Fulfillment* is just that, a warm feast with chatty, entertaining, and spiritually very deep friends. So although speaking of hills and valleys and deserts and mountain peaks is fitting when describing a journey, I am going to stick with the analogy of a host at a dinner party to describe Martin's book.

One purpose of *Fulfillment of All Desire* is to show that in spite of the different number of stages identified by the different spiritual masters and despite the different imagery they use to describe their experiences, it is very clear that they have all traveled the same path, and that we all must if we want to have true intimacy with God. *Fulfillment* provides a helpful chart showing how the different levels, stages, and "rooms" correspond to one another, but what is really helpful is Martin's shifting

from author to author to let us hear how the saints bring their particular gifts into the project of describing experiences that truly are ineffable. To describe the indescribable requires great imagination; it is the job of poetry to be able to find the precise image among what is familiar to us to enable us to envision the unimaginable. *Fulfillment* gives us a great sampling of the poetic descriptions of such saints as John of the Cross and Bernard of Clairvaux.

Martin is the perfect host because he is so good at getting the best out of the guests at his table and he serves up such a delectable feast. Martin clearly knows the luminaries at his table; he is at ease with them; he provides useful biographical introductions to them and then proceeds to invite them to tell their stories in their own words. Martin does very little paraphrasing; he skillfully finds the apt text and lets the author speak in his or her own voice. One might think it would be difficult to switch from voice to voice but, as at a dinner party, it is delightful to hear one after another chime in with highly individualized descriptions of the same terrain and to some extent the same experience.

Martin is very attentive to the needs of the other guests at his table, his readers, those he has invited to come to the feast to meet his famous friends. He notices if we his readers are shy and feeling unworthy about being in such august company. He senses when we are skeptical about what we are hearing or need to have some of the more outrageous claims of his extraordinary guests explained to us. Most of them speak in fairly outlandish terms about what kind of relationship is possible between the soul and God, terms that, in fact, seem fanciful and even presumptuous to those who

think of God as a distant foreboding judgmental figure rather than as the most tender of lovers. With a kindly voice, Martin assures us that they are not exaggerating and also that we too can dare to hope for the experiences they have had. Martin identifies for us what might be the obstacles or false presuppositions that lead us to be wary about believing the testimonies of these great saints. He boldly confronts our lazy excuses and we would be embarrassed at our timidity concerning doing what is best for us, if Martin weren't so gentle.

One great irony of the story of the journey of a soul is that making progress largely requires learning to be still, learning to pray, learning to wait on God. Our bodies fidget and desire action and movement and accomplishment, something we can measure and touch and display for the world to see. Most of us would rather undergo severe physical trials that tax our endurance to the limit than to try to put a stop to all our activity and simply open ourselves to what God wants to communicate to us in the deep recesses of our souls. The spiritual life is an interior journey that needs silence and solitude, receptivity and repose.

Precisely because the spiritual journey is an interior one, it requires great patience and courage and a desire and ability to pray. *Fulfillment* reviews the prayer techniques of the masters -- St. Francis DeSales is perhaps best on the basics. Many readers will need to pause for some time at those spots to learn how to pray. One hopes they will soon eagerly seek out a retreat with those who can assist in the practice and refinement of prayer techniques, such as many Jesuits. Martin has the patience and boldness he wants to nurture in his readers. While he is

patient with our hesitations to embark and persist on the journey, he quite passionately implores us to do so. Of all the marvelous work that Ralph Martin has done to foster the new evangelization, this work may be the most important, for the purpose of all evangelization is to lead hearts yearning for love into the chamber of love and this book should do so for many.

**If you would like to receive a complimentary copy of one of the books below in order to review it for a future issue, please email your request to Alice Osberger at osberger.1@nd.edu**

**If there are books you know of that should be reviewed, let Dr. Brian Benestad know at benestadj1@scranton.edu**

***Thomas Merton: A Book of Hours***, ed. Kathleen Deignan, Sorin Press: Notre Dame, IN (2007), cloth, 223 pp.

***The Church, Marriage, and the Family: Proceeding from the 27th Annual Convention of the FCS, 2004***, Pittsburgh, Ed. Kenneth D. Whitehead, St. Augustine's Press: South Bend, IN (2007)

***CD: Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, from Gate of Heaven: A Collection of Catholic Hymnody*** Mary Oberle Hubley, Composer, Nicholas-Maria Publishers (2005).

***Facing Forgiveness: A Catholic's Guide to Letting Go of Anger and Welcoming Reconciliation***, Loughlan Sofield, S.T. and Carroll Juliano, S.H.C.J., and Bishop Gregory M. Aymond, Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, IN, (2007), Paper, 127pp.

***Interior Castle: Teresa of Avila***, Dennis Billy, C.S.s.R., Christian Classics, Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, IN, (2007), Paper, 314pp.

***Am I Living a Spiritual Life?: Questions & Answers for Those Who Pray***, Susan Muto & Adrian van Kaam, Sophia Institute Press: Manchester, NH, (2006), Paper, 187pp.

***What is the Bible?***, Henri Daniel-Rops, Sophia Institute Press: Manchester, NH, (2006), Paper, 150 pp.

***Union With God: Letters of Spiritual Direction***, Blessed Columba Marmion, Dom Raymond Tibaut, Zaccheus Press: Bethesda, MD, (2006), Paper, 231 pp.

***The Image and Likeness of God in Bernard of Clairaux's Free Choice and Grace***, Luke Anderson, O.Cist., Author House: Bloomington, IN, (2005), Paper, 241pp.

***The Pope, the Council, and the Mass: Answers to Questions the "Traditionalists" Have Asked***, James Likoudis and Kenneth D. Whitehead, (2006), Paper, 374 pp.

***Prayer in Newman***, Giovanni Velocci, C.S.S.R., Newman House Press: Mount Pocono, PA (2006), Paper, 94 pp.

***Absolute Revelation and Universal Religion: European University Studies***, Joseph Pandiappallil, Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, (2005), Paper, 433pp.

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Expressions of Interest to Jack & Marlene Rook, Convention Managers

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## EL DIA DEL NIÑO NO NACIDO

While attending a conference recently, I learned from a lawyer in Honduras that his country and Argentina celebrate *el día del niño no nacido* (the day of the unborn child) on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation. Upon further investigation I discovered that not a few countries in Latin America have the same celebration, usually on March 25. Sometimes the day is called *el día del niño por nacer*. El Salvador was the first country to institutionalize this celebration in 1993. Countries that followed suit are Guatemala, Chile, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Peru. Still other Latin American countries, e.g., Brazil, are discussing the possibility of doing the same thing. A Guatemalan resolution says that the purpose of the celebration is “to promote the culture of life from the moment of conception.” Citizens and their political leaders obviously realize that the best defense against international pressure to legalize abortion is widespread heartfelt respect for unborn human life.

That governments take it upon themselves to persuade their citizens to adopt pro-life attitudes could reasonably be contemplated and defended in the light of Thanksgiving Day in the United States. In an important new book, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, Professor Mary Keys of the University of Notre Dame notes that Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 executive order formally established the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day. The celebration, of course, had its roots in the famous Pilgrim celebration. George Washington had also is-

sued a proclamation in 1795 encouraging Americans to express their gratitude to God for their blessings. Lincoln’s executive order “invited” Americans to celebrate the national holiday in their families. He also asked citizens to beseech God with “humble penitence” to bless those who were suffering in the Civil War and “to heal the wounds of the nation.”

On January 18, 2007 President George Bush issued a proclamation designating Sunday, January 21 as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. The president called upon all Americans “to recognize this day with appropriate ceremonies and to underscore our commitment to respecting the life and dignity of every human being.” This proclamation, probably not noticed by most citizens, was, of course, an invitation, not a requirement.

The new Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, recently addressed the theme of love and the common good in a 2007 publication, *L’Etica del bene commune (The Ethics of the Common Good)*. He argues that it is not enough to aim at a free and just society; “the Christian aims at the fraternal society,” by which Cardinal Bertone means a society characterized by love. If the common good of the political realm necessarily includes justice and fraternity, governments are right to persuade citizens both to respect unborn human life and to encourage them to be grateful to God. ✠

*J. Brian Benestad*  
 Editor, *Fellowship of Catholic Scholars*

## NOTICE

Two members of the FCS will be speakers at the Catholic Record Society in Liverpool this summer, at the end of July. The CRS is the society that publishes *Recusant History*, as well as a series of Catholic Record books. Carol Abromaitis will speak on the Calverts, and William Tighe on Catholic courtiers in the Elizabethan reign.

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