

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

April Fools 2007



Special Fools Edition

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Cover: Ship of Fools,
Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1490–1500

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Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo
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We are an Archdiocesan-wide Catholic lay organization committed to a charitable defense of the Catholic Faith by means of education, communication, and prayer. We are devoted to the Roman Catholic Magisterium, the Holy Father, and to the bishops and clergy in union with him. Our members believe what the Church believes and we promote what the Church teaches. To this end, we believe that no individual, whether cleric or lay person, has the right to alter the substance of the gospel message or moral truths which have been inerrantly and infallibly held by the Catholic Church since Her founding.

The Mass Communicator

By The Curt Jester

Ron Coe Church Products introduces the latest in Church tech - *The Mass Communicator*.

Have you ever seen or heard something during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that does not quite fit? Noticed a liturgical abuse that upsets you. Have you ever talked to your priest about it only to get called a Pharisee for being such a stickler about liturgical norms? Are you positive that letters to your bishop are used to keep the diocesan shredder in prime condition? Have you ever griped to your spouse on the way home or blogged the latest liturgical abuse you encountered? If so, *The Mass Communicator* is the device just for you.

The Mass Communicator is the latest in OLED technology with pictures on each of the six selectable buttons to guide you in reporting what you have witnessed at Mass. Simply select one of the buttons such as Liturgical Dancers, Stole Fashion Alert, GIRM, Guitar Mass, Homilies that have nothing to do with the readings, etc. and follow the list of options till you find the one to report. Once all infractions have been entered, simply select Send and the information is sent to us over the cellular network. We maintain a massive internet database of parishes and we track all the information reported by our subscribers.

The Mass Communicator is not just for gripes though. You can report positive things also. Have you heard a homily that actually talks about the sin of contraception? If so click on the Homily picture and scroll down about 30 pages and select "Sin of contraception." Common options are placed near the top and least used options are placed towards the bottom for optimal efficiency. Does your church actually have a tabernacle that you can easily find without requiring a search and rescue party? If so, file a positive report.

Our website gives monthly reports of each parish with members who subscribe to the *Mass Communicator*. If there are several reports of the same type of problem from a specific parish, one of our representatives will be sent to talk to the parish priest, liturgist, or music director. If this does not produce results, we will send one or two others. (In the case of liturgists, backup is always required, including a special team dedicated to fasting and prayer.) If problems persist, a respectful letter is automatically sent to the diocesan bishop for you with specific references to liturgical documents. Our company follows Matthew 18 guidelines for you. If the parish receives a majority of positive reports then a thank you letter is sent to the parish.

The Mass Communicator is a multimedia device with the latest in advanced technology to help you accurately provide reports and to help us determine how valid a positive/negative report is. For example: do you think the choir is singing Kumbaya-style dreck? If so, select the Music button and press "record." The device will then capture the sound via the onboard microphone in the internal flash memory card. When you send the report, a special algorithm will evaluate the sound clip and rate it from one to ten on the Haugen-Haas-Joncas scale of musical sappiness. If you see a vestment that you don't think you can describe or that nobody would believe if you did - activate the built-in 2 megapixel camera to send a photo along with your report.

Each month you can log into our website and see how your parish compares. Whether you think you are in a parish with liturgical riches or liturgical wackiness you can see where you are on the EWTN Televised Mass-St. Joan's Gymnasium Mass Scale. You might find yourself relatively lucky after all.



The Curt Jester, Jeff Miller:
www.splendoroftruth.com/curtjester

So instead of letting your blood pressure rise each month with unresolved rants – report them to *The Mass Communicator*. Subscribe to our service for only \$9.99 a month and with a one year contract we will send you *The Mass Communicator* free! Each month our graphics and menu items are updated to reflect the latest trends in liturgical experimentation and are used to update the firmware of your device for ease of use. If you live in a diocese such as Los Angeles or Orange, let us know and we will send you our 24-button device because you will need it.

Act now and we will also send you a free gift of your choice such as knee pads for kneeler-less parishes. ✈

The Curt Jester is the *nom de plume* of blogger Jeff Miller, a former atheist who, after spending forty years in the wilderness, finds himself with both astonishment and joy, a member of the Catholic Church. His blog - www.splendoroftruth.com/curtjester - presents a humorous and sometimes serious take on things religious, political, and whatever else crosses his mind.



**The Mass Communicator:
A convenient, hand-held solution for
liturgical experimentation**

Standard Model (above) – for run-of-the-mill annoyances
Deluxe Model (below) – for the truly avant garde parish

By the Waters of Babylon

The Thought of Exact Translations of Mass from Latin to English Raises Concern from Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, Pennsylvania and chair of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy at the USCCB

By Anthony Esolen

A flash from the Religious News Service today - *stop the presses!* Catholic liturgical tsars and tsarinas are angry that for the first time since the Novus Ordo was instituted in the 1960's, the Mass will be translated into English. For those of you who aren't Roman Catholic, the Latin text had been folded, spindled, and mutilated, stretched like bubble gum, amputated here and there, diluted everywhere, phrases lopped off, others twisted out of joint, in general to bring the Father down to earth where he belongs. Italians say that every *traduttore* is a *traditore*, meaning that every translator is a traitor; but that treachery can never be laid to the charge of the people who brought us the Novus Ordo in Anguish, because they never really bothered to translate in the first place.

Still, the press release is a study in bureaucratic vagueness and ecclesiastical subterfuge, such as the faithful of any denomination can enjoy. Since the committee here named is not strong on translating, I will provide the service myself, in interpolated remarks:

The Catholic Academy of Liturgy met on January 4, 2007, in Toronto, Canada, prior to the annual meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy. The keynote speaker was Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, Pennsylvania and chair of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Interpolation: Bishop Trautman, who it is said does not like to be called Bishop Trautperson, has been one of the two or three bishops most responsible for the desacralized language of the liturgy. It is no surprise that there are fewer seminarians in his diocese than there used to be fish in Lake Erie. The government cleaned the one pool...

In his address entitled “When Should Liturgists be Prophetic?”

Interpolation: Nothing like donning the mantle of prophecy – after one has doffed every other liturgical mantle in sight. Of course, bishops should be obedient first, and if they are, they may be granted a gift of prophecy, or even a gift of speaking in tongues. Alas, too often the bishops of every denomination speak out from their balconies, and all the assembled people below hear them – and they seem to each to be speaking in somebody else’s language.

...Trautman raised concerns...

Interpolation: Everybody these days “raises concerns.” If they raised welts, they’d be more honest.

...about current directions in the revision...

Interpolation: It is, as I’ve said, the first real translation, rather than paraphrase.

...now underway of the English edition of the Roman missal being prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). The first edition in English of the Roman Missal was issued in 1973. Drawing on biblical scholarship, historical theology, and his many years of pastoral experience as a bishop...

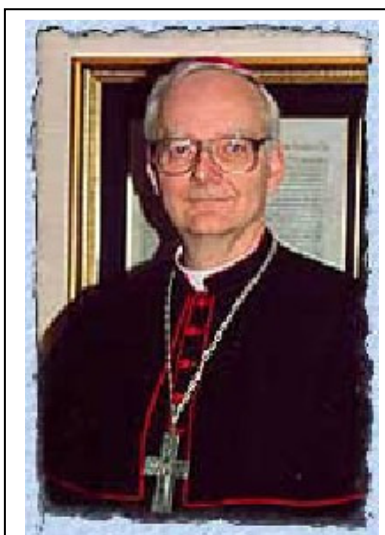
Interpolation: None of which are to the point. A translator from Latin into English needs to know two things: Latin, and English. Now if the Latin is ecclesiastical, and highly allusive to Scripture, and steeped in theological terminology, in exegesis, and in typological symbolism, then he ought to know those things too, which is another way of saying that he ought to know the peculiar form of the Latin he is translating. But what Bishop Trautman neglects to say is that the old transmuters of the text had bleached away the scriptural allusions. Two egregious examples: the clear and potent spatio-temporal allusion to Malachi, “*ab oriente ad occasum*,” “from the rising of the sun to its setting,” has been flattened down to “from east to west”; and the powerful words of the centurion, “*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum*,” “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,” has been flattened down to “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you.” With what pastoral consequences, every wise Catholic knows: empty liturgies in vacuous non-scriptural language make for empty pews and churches converted to antique shops.

...he contended that the new translations do not adequately meet the needs of the average Catholic...

Interpolation: Note the condescension.

...and expressed fears that the significant changes in the texts no longer reflect understandable English usage.

Interpolation: The Bishop is worried about two things. One, he thinks that if you say, “Peace on earth, good will to men,” some people will actually be in doubt whether Cissy and Flossie are included. Nobody is in doubt about that; nobody, upon hearing, “It’s a night not fit for man nor beast,” will recommend that therefore Lulabelle should go out to corral the horses. I could argue at great length that the troweled-over Ken-doll language is unfaithful to the original text, sometimes confusing and often plain dumb in English, and ultimately heretical (for one thing, it leads to the dilution of the name “Father”), but I’ll leave that for another blog. His Excellency is also worried that the people will not understand theological terms such as “consubstantial,” which will replace “one in being with” in the Creed. No question he’s right about that. You dumb down your liturgy, dumb down your sermons, dumb down your catechizing, dumb down your schools, and then, then you discover that your people are not too bright. Well, there is an alternative. Why not try teaching?



**Bishop Donald Trautman:
Not translating well into
English**

Trautman argued that the proposed changes of the people's parts during Mass will confuse the faithful and predicted that the new texts will contribute to a greater number of departures from the Catholic Church.

Interpolation: He meaneth, forsooth, an even greater number of departures. You're sinking in quicksand and there's a willow branch over your head. Don't grab hold of it – it might snap. By the way, let it be noted that solicitude for the feelings of Catholics in the pews was never very high among liturgical innovators, who didn't care at all, say, whether anybody would be confused by revisions of well-known Christmas carols. Then the rubes had to learn their lessons. Call it the post-Vatican II, Eat Your Peas ecclesiology.

The Bishop cited various problematic texts, criticizing their awkward structure and arcane vocabulary...

Interpolation: Repeat after me - nothing is worse than the banal. For the innovators, any periodic sentence was too long; any complex subordination was awkward. As for the arcane vocabulary, well, it's just not the lingo of the man in the street, nor should it be. The Bishop makes it sound as if we'll all be speaking the language of Richard Hooker, rather than some other more recent person of that denomination. 'Tain't so.

...that would be very difficult for the priest to pray aloud and for the people to follow. Just as problematic for Trautman was the recent decision to change the words of consecration that refer to Christ's blood being shed "for all" to "for many." That change could easily be misinterpreted as denying the faith of the Roman Catholic Church that [sic] Christ died for all people.

Interpolation: The Latin reads "pro multis," "for many" or, thinking of the Greek, "for the many." It does not imply that Christ did not die to save all men; it also does not imply that all men will be saved. Got a problem with it? Change the Latin.

Bishop Trautman challenged Catholic liturgical scholars of North America to assist the bishops in promoting a liturgy that is [sic] accessible and pastorally aware [sic].

Interpolation: A liturgy cannot be "aware". That distinction is reserved for people, and often not for too many of them, either. Of course, he is worried that the liturgy will offend the feminists. If only! As for its being inaccessible, I have a well-worn missal used by my grandmother long ago that makes our current Mass look like *The Poky Little Puppy*. If she could be taught, so can we.

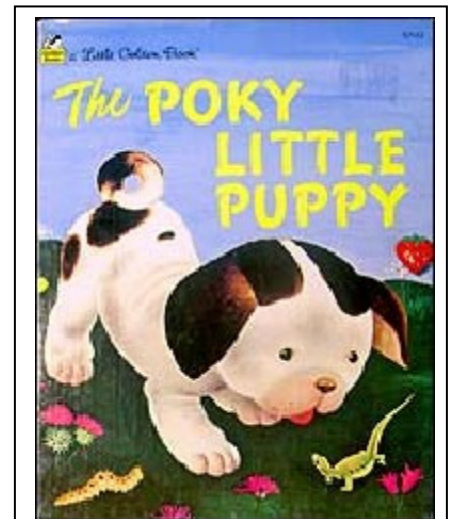
He urged them, in a spirit of respect and love for the Church...

Interpolation: The Bishops have consistently defied the Church

...to be courageous in resisting those developments that would render the liturgy incomprehensible and betray the intention of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Interpolation: Never, though, courageous in opposing the Spirit of the Age, or courageous in calling one's own fraternity to repentance. Note that the Second Vatican Council is called in, exactly as certain justices conjure up not the Constitution (which does not say what they wish) but the Specter of the Constitution (which always does). Such Specters can be awfully obliging – for a time, and times, and half a time. ✎

The above commentary first appeared at *Mere Comments*, the website of *Touchstone Magazine*: www.touchstonemag.com.



"I have a well-worn missal used by my grandmother long ago that makes our current Mass look like *The Poky Little Puppy*."

(Interpolation: There's no reason to insult the Pokey Little Puppy by comparing it to smarmy liturgy...)

CHASM

Catholics Honoring Atheists and Spiritual Minorities: *Introducing the new support group for youth who have rejected Christ*

By *The Flying Buttress*

From the CHASM brochure:

WHAT IS CHASM? CHASM exists because there are high school age young people who are hassled, harassed, and discriminated against because of their (real or suspected) spiritual orientation. They, too, deserve dignity, respect, and acceptance as those who are created in God's image. Members of CHASM work to make acceptance of youth in spiritual minorities – the true culture of death – a reality in our parishes and schools.

CHASM MISSION STATEMENT: All spiritually dead people deserve respect, basic rights and a safe graveyard environment, regardless of their spiritual orientation. Catholics Honoring Atheists and Spiritual Minorities (CHASM), a program of the Diocesan Catholic Ministry with the Living Dead, exists to advocate for respect, basic rights and a safe environment for youth in spiritual minorities through torpid action, lifeless education and inert support.

WHO'S IT FOR? CHASM is for teenagers who want to make death their life. It's for teenagers who need to be propped up and who want to give props. It's for teenagers who are tired of seeing their friends harassed and want to see justice done. It's for teenage atheists and their mortified friends and allies.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A TYPICAL MEETING? We share our "coming out of the casket" stories; We engage in fun consciousness-lowering exercises; We plan community events like "Dead Pride Day"; We read and discuss supportive books, like "The Overhauling of Living America"; We advocate for social causes, like civil unions for the dead; We seek recognition in our high school calendars, by the establishment of a true "dead week" before exams; We advocate for change within the Church, like death-inclusive or death-neutral language, and the ordination of the spiritually dead.

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT: You can be your honest, dead self without worrying about pretending to be alive; There's no spiritual orientation "litmus test" – no one will take your spiritual pulse, or judge you if you don't have one; You need not fear discrimination on the basis of spiritual orientation, or any other form of necrophobia; being dead is no more unnatural than being left-handed; We seek no mere "necropolis on the hill," but a true community of mutual comatose acceptance.

COME IF YOU... Want to share personal stories of harassment by the living and its effects on the lives of the living dead; Want to learn more about CHASM; Are a life-questioning or life-doubting teen; Are an ally and want to meet other allies of the living dead to form dead-alive alliances; Want to make a deadening difference in your community, your school and your parish.

NOTICE: The diocese is an Equal Opportunity Employer, and will not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, ancestry, physical handicap or spiritual orientation in its activities, programs, support groups or employment practices.

The Flying Buttress can be read at tomasthetorque.blogspot.com



Grim Reaper pendants can be purchased for \$11.98. Proceeds go to support your local CHASM chapter.

Orthodox Gnosticism Rejects Demasculinization

By Vir Regnat

Washington, DC—The Bet-Imma [House of the Mother] Gnostic Circle announced on April 1, 2007 that its Executive Board had passed a resolution declaring the property of the eleven circles that recently left the Network as “abandoned” and authorized whatever steps are necessary to recover it. According to the eleven, however, the circle is using the term “abandoned” with certain doctrinal connotations that vitiates the anti-dogmatic dogma of Gnosticism.

The circle argues that the eleven have taken unilateral actions that go expressly against the mind of the majority of Gnostics worldwide, abandoning historic Gnostic orthodoxy of the past thirty years.

In a letter to the eleven, Zona Crepusculi, representing Bet-Imma, argued that the circle’s concern is “not about property but about the legacy we have received and our obligation to preserve that legacy for the future.”

The eleven counter that the circle’s concern is misplaced. “Failure to accept the very texts upon which the circle is grounded...is itself abandonment of the legacy.”

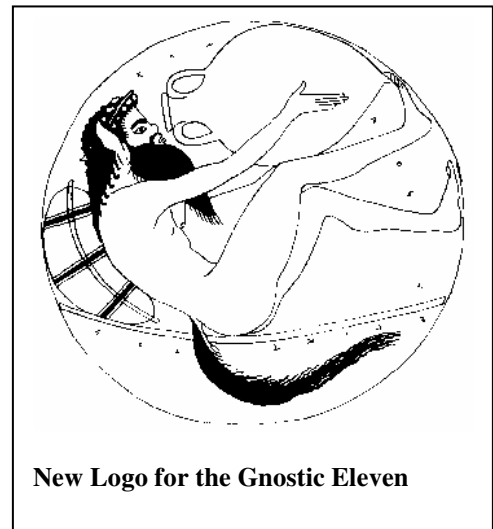
To what texts do the eleven refer? The most pointed is the last saying found in the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*:

Simon Peter said to them: “Make Mary leave us, for females do not deserve life.”

Jesus said, “Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.” (Thomas-114)


The eleven claim that in spite of the repression of Masculinity (sometimes expressed as “*machismo*” in Latino-influenced cultures) by the Gnostics of the last century, it has a long-standing place of honor throughout history and continues to flourish in rural pockets of the southwest United States and Latin America. “Gnostic censorship of texts and heavy-handed attempts to hide the obligatory role of masculinity in spiritual quests gives the impression that the Gnostic gospels are more pro-women than the Bible or Christian theology. In fact, it’s just the opposite. Gnostics are called to be gloriously, unequivocally misogynists.”

Ms. Crepusculi responded: “We do not dismiss, nor do we misinterpret the sacred texts. True misogyny exists not in textual reference, but in life practice. You may perceive misogyny in Gnostic literature, but in practice, both ancient and modern Gnostics are feminists.” ✎



New Logo for the Gnostic Eleven

Comic Relief



Live Dancing Daily!

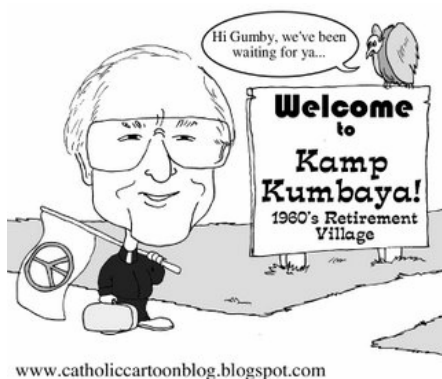
LOS ANGELES
Religious (Mis)Education
Conference 2007

Well, it's that time of year again. Time for the annual Dissent-Fest in Los Angeles! Pick up a tray of the details at the Cafeteria:
<http://closedcafeteria.blogspot.com/2007/02/mahonyfest-2007-shake>



After all these years, the effort has been made, thanks to Pope Benedict XVI, to make this correction. For years, traditionalists have railed against the mistranslation, all the while being denigrated for being such "sticklers." Well, it turns out that the Pope himself recognizes that this issue needed to be corrected. Of course, it doesn't fix everything, but it is a step in the right direction. Related Article:

<http://www.cwnews.com/news/viewstory.cfm?recnum=47719>



He won't retire, don't you worry. He'll be touring *Call to Action* sites around the country, preaching quasi-pacifism and Church dissent, for a long time to come. Link to article & commentary:
<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/2006/12/removed.html>

Paul Nichols is a Pennsylvania-based cartoonist whose site, www.catholiccartoonblog.blogspot.com, displays his opinions in cartoon and word about various issues related to the Church today. And when he says Church, he means the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Roman Catholic Church.

Hymns for the Journey

'Contemporary' church music is not tragedy of cosmic proportions, but much sadness — mixed with irritation, outrage, and bemusement. The following from an unknown source (Canadian?) is an alternative version of the *Dies Irae* found in a supposedly-Catholic hymnal, Worship III:

Day of wrath, O Day of mourning!
Earth to ashes now returning!
Gather, by the millions, burning!
Cleansed at last by cataclysm
Butchered rhyme and battered rhythm,
Neopagan narcissism!

On that day, Lord, when thou comest,
And our dreadful hymnals thumbest,
Smite the ugliest and dumbest.
Smite them, Lord, yet of thy pity
Take their songsters to thy city:
Even Haugen, Haas, and Schutte.

Spare them on the stern condition
that they feel a true contrition
for the Worship III edition.
Doom them not to loss and
ruin
While the darker storm
is brewin'!
They knew not what
they were doin'.

On that day when
Palestrina
Dare not touch a
celestina,
What will Sister
Ballerina?
With thine eyes that pierce
like lances
Still her heathen silly dances
And her flirting with Saint Francis.

Purge us of the prim and prissy,
Ditties fit for Meg or Missy,
Not for Francis, but a sissy.
Cantors who thought nothing grander
Than a sheaf of propaganda
Writ like office memoranda,

Raise them to thy room to bide in
Where their hearts and ears may widen
To the strains of Bach and Haydn.

Let their hearts within them falter,
Hearing, as they near thine altar,
Seraphs sing the Scottish Psalter.

Seize those devils set to pen a
Hymnal neutered of its men—ah,
Fling 'em all to black Gehenna!
Fling them one and all to mangle
Their pronominals, and wrangle
Lest a participle dangle!

Who held manhood in derision,
Preaching double circumcision,
Suffer now their own revision.

Though the songs of Hell are naughty,
None by Handel or Scarlatti,
At the least they'll have castrati.

Pitch, O Lord, the bald and
raucous
Slogans of a leftist caucus
Down to Sheol, or
Secaucus!
Save their singers,
though: restore 'em
To a silent sweet
decorum,
Saecula per saeculorem.

Various are the throngs of
heaven:

Some were lump, and some
were leaven,

Some as lame as six or seven.

When the demons hear thy curses,
And this world's dense fog disperses,
Heal the hobbled—not their verses.

Hush me too, Lord, when I grumble:
In thy mercy make me humble,
Lest On Turkey's Wings I stumble.
Though Haugen sing "Hosea" evermore,
Save me, I pray—but keep me near the door.
Amen.



Ceremonial Jumpsuit
Regular price: \$159.50
Our price: **\$127.60**

Here's an up-dated, pretty good version of *Gather Us In...*

Here in this place, our comfortable parish,
All of the statues carried away,
See in each face a vacuous visage,
Brought here by guilt or by R.C.I.A.

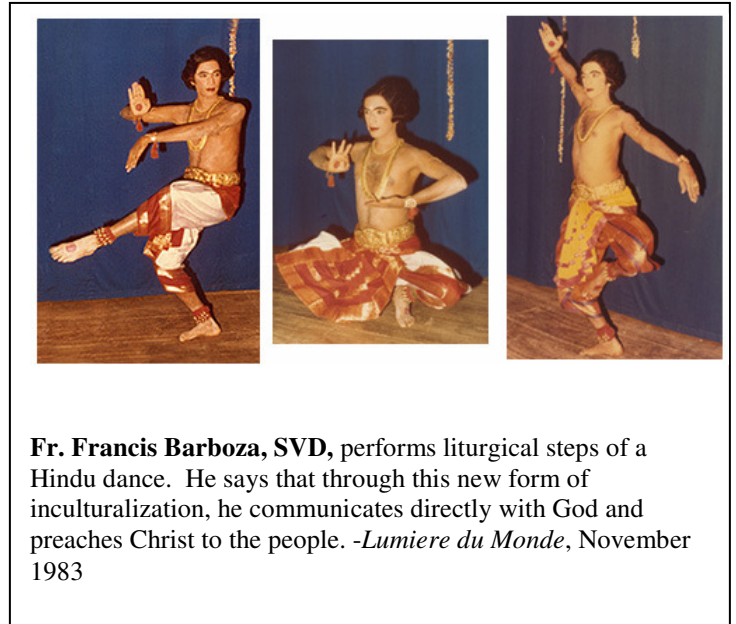
Gather us in, by Bimmer or Hummer,
Gather us in, so we can feel good,
Come to us now in this barren Zen temple,
With only a shrub and an altar of wood.

We are the young, our morals a mystery,
We are the old, who couldn't care less,
We have been warned throughout all of history,
But we enjoy this liturgical mess.

Gather us in, our radical pastor,
Gather us in, our unveiled nun,
Call to us now, with guitars and bongos,
Hang up your cellphones and join in the fun!

Here we will take some wine and some water,
Whether it changes, we really don't care.
But when the Sign of Peace comes, our pastor,
Jumps from the altar and hugs like a bear.

Gather us in, the privileged and snobby,
Gather us in, the liberal elite,
Help us to form our personal Credo,
Give us a choice between white bread and wheat. ✎



Fr. Francis Barboza, SVD, performs liturgical steps of a Hindu dance. He says that through this new form of inculturalization, he communicates directly with God and preaches Christ to the people. -*Lumiere du Monde*, November 1983

Girl of the Limbo Lost

Apologies to Gene Stratton Porter and her Indiana Swamp

By Marie P. Loehr

Midway this way of life we're bound upon, I woke to find myself in a dark wood...

-Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, "Inferno," l. 1-2

In this case there was no dark wood, only the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, Italy, as thick with pedestrians as the leaves in that wood at the opening of Dante's *Commedia*. And there the poet was, ensconced at a sidewalk table, bluetooth in his ear, laptop open for notes. I might have expected Dante, given my request to tour Limbo, but at Stellabucca – Firenze's version of Starbucks? The great medieval poet was sipping a latte, looking Third Millennium trendy, to say the least. He looked up and nodded. "*Ciao, bella*. We have a date to limbo, yes?" Not the dance or the cyberworld and its lingua, but medieval limbo - yes. Who knew limbo better than the man who described it, as Virgil guided him into hell and purgatory, who returned to temporal exile from the Beatific Vision until his death, who was exiled from his beloved Firenze for the latter half of his life?

"You're late," the great man observed, snapping the laptop shut. He drained the last dregs of latte and tucked the computer under one arm. "Venite..."

He set off toward the Piazza del Duomo with long strides. I ran to keep up.

“This is an introductory tour,” he noted, reaching back and catching my elbow. I found myself floating along at his side. The little man who had sold me these red Moroccan leather boots, stamped and gilded à la Fiorentina had said I’d feel as if I was walking on air. Apparently he meant that literally!

Although it’s not widely known, the entrance to limbo is in the Duomo, the church whose name may be roughly translated as *Our Lady of the Flowers*. This is the great cathedral of Florence, noted for its baptistery - and its bell tower by Giotto. We slipped through a grill and down the stairs to the old chapel of San Reparato... from there the path, oddly paved in yellow bricks... “Not *bricks*, madonna,” winced Messire Alighieri, reading my mind. “Tesseræ...”

Ah, of course. Tiny yellow glass mosaic shards then - but it winds God knows where underground. “We will debouch from under the Piazza del Limbo. This maze will take us to the limbo of the liturgical lost under that plaza.”

The bowels of some European cathedrals were used as charnel houses, not whitewashed, but full of dead men’s bones, nonetheless. The Duomo is in fact white and green marble, but there does not seem to be a charnel house in its lower caverns, perhaps due to the water table or Arno floods of yore. Only limbo is there, according to Dante and LimboTour. Damp air blew in my face. Phosphor - Foxfire - from various pale fungi glowed on the walls, creating a stone swamp.

We rounded a curve and a chamber opened beside us. It had the look of a bosque, and there were...mosquitoes. *No*.

“Yes,” said Dante, leaning against the outer wall, looking in warily. In the center of this bosky wetlands, TweedleBrie and TweedleBore were holding court. I could see they were twins by their round faces, rimless glasses, and clerical collars. Every so often they’d fight over a speaking engagement or shred a magisterial pronouncement between them.

“Tweedle de dee is our name and heterodoxical gibberish is our game!” They roared this at the top of their lungs, apparently oblivious to the army of faceless theological wannabes declaiming around them. Sometimes everyone would simply rush off in all directions, only to bang into the walls that confined them. There, they fell to the floor, belly-up, like so many cockroaches hitting a patch of Black Flag.

“But, for once they speak unspun truth,” I noted, surprised. Dante nodded. “They can’t help themselves here. Last stop before the *huis clos* of hell...”

Around the bend, past that thicket of these the illogicals, a new cavern opened up in the right wall. “The nest of the licentious liturgists,” intoned Dante. “Licentious for the license they took with the liturgy, post-Vatican II. A-liturgical might describe them as well: tone-deaf, all of them.”

A very *parlement of foules*, a pandemonium of parrots, a pandemic of budgerigars, shrieking, clattering, preening, flapping their wings, throwing seed hulls with demented abandon! Cacophony in flood spate. In the forefront, two large ravens perched on a cracked rock. They clacked and sidled around when they saw us, looking beady-eyed down their large beaks.

Dante touched my arm. “Watch.” He advanced a step towards the out-of-control liturgical conference. Then he sang in a resonant voice: “Credo in unum De-e-e-um,” Credo III, which even nine-year-olds sang in choir back in the 1950s. The ravens flapped, hopped, croaked up a storm.

Dante smiled. “Reform of the reform, messires? Tridentine Mass, Florentine Mass? Alleluia!” He fell back as the older of the two ravens flew at him, to peck his eyes out, without doubt.

“Nevermore, nevermore,” quoth both ravens, raucous and shrill.

“That must be Dike Man and Sea Salt,” I remembered.

“E vero, cara figlia.” Dante nodded approval. “The architects of liturgical reform, perch and nest prepared even before Vatican II.” He sighed. “No matter how inspired, councils always produce mayhem, especially when the crows gather to make merry on the carcass.”

I shuddered in the chill damp. We moved on. A few yards beyond, the limbo of the feminists yawned. It was a large chamber, with outcroppings and precipices that terminated in utter darkness, bottomless abyss. Nevertheless, former nun and New Age celebrity Mira Luca stalked around the chamber, drawing enneagrams in the air. As she explained her arcane system, an adoring train of putative nuns in *deshabille* streamed after her, clicking notes into their palmpads. Since all this was so much gibberish, the palm pads were full of static and electronic snow.

In this pervasive haze, Schussing Flora was regaling all with the herstory of Mary and Martha. For the nth time, a slightly distorted Christ, slumping and indistinctly fuzzy around the edges, chides Mary for leaving her sister with all the dirty dishes, then goes into the kitchen to wash the dishes himself. As the Schuss finished her exposition, there was a mewling and spatter of applause. The cartoon Christ projected on the back wall waved at the crowd, and disintegrated. More mewling and claquing...

Dante rolled his eyes. “As for catatonics and lukewarm vomit...” He waved his hand.

All over the chamber, in every nook, on every open space, women of all sizes, shapes and undress were making labyrinths, walking rinths, prancing counterclockwise around rinths.

“Their slogan is ‘make rinths, not love,’ I said. Dante nodded.

“Look at those who actually reach the center of the rinths,” he advised. “These inexhaustible, thus exhausting, fifth-dimension pathways are in fact schemata of the Terrible Mother’s womb and envenerons. Those who actually reach the heart of this pagan limbo-in-Limbo are frozen, like Lot’s wife in salt, petrified. The hidden center of the rinth contains no Minotaur, *tant pis*; only the deadly Gorgon Mother herself coils there, all her reptilian reality unveiled and freezing the blood.” He stepped away. “Like Cocytus.”

The chill along our tessellated way—it was strait, if not straight—deepened. I was grateful for the required Gore-Tex long johns under my Pucci palazzo pants and shirt. Dante’s lips twitched. “Fur and velvet might be more suitable down here,” he smiled, hearing my mind again. I noticed he’d slipped his blue cashmere pullover on at some point in our journey.

A quick walk down a side track led to the cells of LimboLost cardinals. Here was Berni, the architect of the bishops’ conference impasse in spades, wearing a red watered-silk cape, a large red S on his chest instead of a pectoral cross, crying to a non-existent audience that the Gospel of John is anti-semitic. When he saw us peering into his nicho, he rushed us.

“Quick,” warned Dante. “He’ll want to feel your Pucci. Praise his Versace, then ask where you put your seamless garment, or we’ll never get away!” Berni hit the doorway and was thrown flat on his back. Dazed, he rolled over and climbed to his hands and knees.

I looked at Dante. “Force fields?”

He shrugged. “Whatever works, girl. But they’re not organic or alive, as some have claimed, these force fields...unless you want to view angels as force fields.”

I sighed. “Not today, messire.”

Across the yellow brick, er, tesserae, road we found a small chamber with yet another solitary cardinal, clutching an alpenhorn in one hand. It was longer than he was tall. He had an anxious look on his face, and a pocket watch in his other hand, like the Rabbit in “Wonderland.” No splendid robes either, just sober black.

“It’s Hans Ours,” I exclaimed. “What’s he doing here?” Dante led me quickly past - wisely, I realized. The alpenhorn reverberated ten magnified times, each blare followed by a feeble cry of “ric-o-la” that petered out, eventually, though not soon enough, in the dark. We covered our ears until the echoes died. He stepped close to me, and whispered in my ear.

“This is what happens when a theologian is too fond of Swiss dumplings. That little Swiss Miss Schtick, miss-tic?”

I patted his hand. “Spit it out, messire. Swiss *mystic*.”

He did spit. “She led him by the nose.”

“You say that, who were inspired by your Beatrice?” I shook my head. He raised his hand and I closed my mouth. He shook *his* head.

“Can you compare my inspiration with his? Think about it.”

It’s true, there’s no comparison. In fact, some think von Belshazzar’s Swiss dumpling is no better than Darth von Speyr. But she’s just boring as hell - Maria von Trapp on downers in dirndl. Sometimes innocence is not innocence, just utter emptiness. And that’s not limbo, that’s hell.

We were of one mind in this. I had to admit it. “Still, Hans Ours had his own insights, and...”

“Ah! But HOvB couldn’t quite let see it that way, couldn’t let her go, so . . . here he is, late for a very important date. Once in awhile Gabriel, Satchmo, and a couple of harper angels drop in and do a set with him. *When the Saints Go Marching In* on the alpenhorn is infinitely red, hot and blue.” Dante cupped my elbow again. We floated on.

Going around the bend, we met Raphael, straight from the Book of Tobias. But his signature fish was not in his arms. Rather than his killing it to save young Tobias and heal old Tobias, he was guiding this fish along the way. It waddled after him, bubbling imprecations on any liturgical translations but his own.

“Yes,” Raphael sighed, understanding my delighted look immediately. “It is the Troutperson, perbeing, perneuter. I can’t use proper gender terms like “man” or “son” in his hearing. He works himself into such a froth. Unfortunately.”

“The usual refusal of clarity that leads to limbo,” murmured Dante. Raphael nodded. A look of commiseration passed between them. The fish, rather large even for a “protected habitat” trout, sputtered about “pro multis” and ALL *all all*.

Raphael twitched his wings. “If I could gut him...” He bent his head, “but He wants to give Trout more time to perhaps change his scales.”

Dante and I looked dubious. “Can an old fish change?”

Raphael fended the Trout away from us. “This one is not as harmless as he looks. If I could gut him,” the angel muttered, “at least the gall extracted might open the eyes of some of the blind...” As it is, Dante thought to me, Raphael must suffer this silly trout and its delusions for the time being, alas.

Raphael studied my garb. “*You’re* dressed for pilgrimage. It must be April overhead. April in Paris?”

"Firenze," corrected Dante. Then, without missing a beat, all three of us burst into the opening to Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales:" "*Whan that Aprille with its shoures soote, the droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote....Than longen folke to goon on pilgrimages.*"

The Trout leapt around, stamping his fins and squeaking, speak ENGLISH, *english, english*. The three of us sighed, and squelched him, again in unison. "We are speaking English. Engliishe, hMiddl' Engliishe - Learn proper English!"

The Trout goggled, swooned, fell on its side, fins fluttering in exhausted dismay. Raphael dragged him on past us, and vanished into the swampfire darkness. Pondering that, I hurried after the great poet. "Wait, messire! Where is the limbo of unbaptized babies? That was my request, you know." The tiles were astellerating now. Light was drifting towards us. Dante stopped on a marble landing.

"There is no time left for that, madonna." He gestured me to precede him. "But that's not important right now."

I set my jaw and stood nose to nose with him, which was difficult. Even in Florentine Air Jordans, he's way taller than I am. "It IS important, this instant or sooner!"

Dante stepped back and hit the wall, struggling not to laugh. He put both hands up, palms out. "Perhaps, lady, but..."

I shook my finger under his nose. "No buts. Take me to that limbo!"

"Not today, *caro*. Patientia." A gust of wind from the Plaza of Limbo blew my pilgrim's hat back off my head. Dante caught my hand, even as I shook a finger in his face. He bent to kiss it. Then he gestured behind me. I turned, stumbling, and stared into the eyes of the Flemish Madonna, the Flowering Glory. She smiled. I fell to my knees...and wakened to the blast of an alpenhorn like the horns of Elfland, faintly blowing.

No, it was my alarm clock and a reverberation of ri-co-la in my head. There were cough drops all over the floor. Before I could dismiss all as a dream, I looked down. I was still wearing red Florentine boots.

"...but," I whispered, uneasily, head spinning.

"No buts about it, madonna," echoed in my head. There was a moment, a single beat, and then quiet laughter. "Ciao, bella! Arrivederci." Is that a threat? Or promise? Only the poet knows...

Academic addenda: In the course of our limbic conversation, I learned that there are Starbucks all over purgatory, one in hell that serves burnt coffee, and several even in Paradise. Paradise? I was skeptical. If you have the Beatific Vision, what need of mochacino? But Dante observed with amusement that God himself created coffee beans, and the Son had become incarnate after all, so why mightn't He enjoy a demitasse now and again? He saw that all He created was good. He enjoyed a glass of wine with his Apostles. Caffeine is hardly a problem for the Deity.

Disclaimer: The contents of this fantasy are simply fantasy. No one can be held responsible for vagrant dreams. The transcriber therefore accepts no responsibility for the contents hereof. Let it be known as well that all tours of limbo and environs require outrageous insurance, indemnification, and whatever therapeutic support may be necessary. LimboTour cannot be held responsible for cardiac episodes, intellectual confusion, or psychotic empathy with the denizens of the LimboLost. All references to "lukewarm vomit" as stated by the Ancient of Days in the Apocalypse of John are legitimate scriptural revelations, and backed up by the Magisterium, papal infallibility, and at a pinch in Parousia, the Trinity itself. Thank you. ✍

April Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting

April 20, 2007

Call (505) 293-8006 for information.

Pro-life Prayer:

Planned Parenthood Abortuary

701 San Mateo Blvd.

Holy Innocents Chapel:

(505) 266-4100

Times: Daily 8 AM – 3 PM

Tuesdays at Noon

Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel

Fr. Stephen Imbarrato

For more information, call

(505) 266-4100

Good Friday, April 6, Prayer Vigil

Jericho Walk

9 AM – 12 Noon

Around the Planned Parenthood Abortuary

701 San Mateo Blvd.



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