

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

March 2007



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*Two articles about
Faith in Public Life
as experienced in New Mexico*



Cover:

Msgr. Anthony A. LaFemina, *The Incarnation*

Many Latin American countries are preparing to celebrate the Day of the Unborn. El Salvador, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Paraguay observe the annual pro-life day, which was promoted by Pope John Paul II. It is held on or near to 25 March, the feast of the Annunciation.

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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 Tangled Web

Faith in Public Life - New Mexico

By Stephanie Block

To appreciate what is being constructed by the *Faith in Public Life* network and how Catholics particularly are being targeted, let's examine the network as it functions in one state: New Mexico.

Rather like attempting to untangle a ball of badly knotted yarn, one could almost begin pulling at any spot. So, for the sake of starting somewhere, let's begin with Sr. Joan Brown

According to the biography provided at the *Partnership for Earth Spirituality* website, Joan Brown is a Franciscan sister who works in Ecology Ministry through the Social Justice Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe. She has a "Master's Degree" in Cosmology, Religion and Philosophy from the California Institute of Integral Studies.(1)

This, by the way, is the same program from which Brian Swimme hails. Swimme is the author of *Manifesto for a Global Civilization*, which he coauthored with ex-priest Matthew Fox, *The Universe is a Green Dragon: A Cosmic Creation Story*, and *The Universe Story* which was written in collaboration with Thomas Berry. These creation "stories" are mythic inventions, having nothing to do with traditional religious visions and meant to discover the place humanity holds in the unfolding story of Earth and cosmos.

This is a program that describes itself as "designed to help shape the intellectual, moral, and spiritual leadership necessary for meeting this historic challenge" of addressing the "unprecedented evolutionary challenge...The ecological, political, and spiritual crisis of late modernity call[ing] for a fundamental reorientation of our civilization, including a transformation of both our institutions and our own consciousness. The cultural historian Thomas Berry has called this task the 'Great Work.'"(2)

Hardly the formation one might hope for a Catholic religious, but it does explain Brown's *Partnership for Earth Spirituality* [PES]. PES is an ecumenical organization "to promote a better understanding of the interdependence of ecology and spirituality." (3)

Partnership for Earth Spirituality

Started in 2002, PES creates programs and projects that run the gamut of silly to pagan.

One of the *Partnership's* projects is "Earth Seminars," such as the one held February 8, 2007, designed to equip participants with the skills they need to address ecological issues. This particular seminar discussed George Lakoff's book *Thinking Points: Communicating our American Values and Vision*.(4) Lakoff, a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley and a Senior Fellow at the Rockridge Institute, which published the book, is an important figure in the *Network of Spiritual Progressives* and in *Faith in Public Life*. The reason? One blurb for the book explains: "*Thinking Points* provides a concise explanation of how conservatives think and use language—and how we as progressives can fight back. For all those awaiting a Rockridge manual for progressives, your wait is over."

Now, an aside about the *Network of Spiritual Progressives* – its inaugural conference, at which Jim Wallis (*Faith in Public Life* initiator) and Lakoff were speakers, was in July 2005 and, just like Wallis' *Faith in Public Life*, its purpose is



Sr. Joan Brown, OSF

Pantheism (also spelled Panentheism)

Pantheism is a term coined by Karl C. F. Krause (1781-1832, and used by proponents of creation spirituality to express the belief that God is immanent in all created being – although God is not limited to the created world. Simply put: all is God, but God is above all.

This contrasts with the Christian view that God created the world distinct from Himself. Fallen humanity and the evil it unleashed on the world are not God's creation.

to counter “right wing” spirituality. Furthermore, many if not most of the *Network of Spiritual Progressives*’ chapter are also part of the *Faith in Public Life* network, meaning these groups swell one another’s ranks.

The *Partnership for Earth Spirituality* conducts Women’s Wilderness and Earth Retreats, offering “time within the natural world to reflect upon one’s spiritual journey within the context of the entire Sacred Earth Community.” Sacred Earth? There was also an “Enchanted Earth Retreat,” which sounds even worse except that as New Mexico has been popularized as the “land of enchantment,” one hopes the retreat promoter was simply trying to find a catchy title.

Then there are the “Change of Season” celebrations – collaborations “with other faith communities like Las Placitas Presbyterian Church and organizations such as Erda Gardens to offer rituals and prayer services to celebrate the solstices and equinoxes and deepen our relationship within the natural world.” The Earth Vespers celebrating the Fall Equinox were held in Placitas at the Jubilee Garden, beginning with a gratitude prayer for the waters from the acequias, remembering those who have passed, followed by a short walk to the gardens where prayers, songs, blessing of seeds and prayer “formed the context of a special ritual.” Remember, this is the lady who works for the Social Justice Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

Some of the rituals Sister has led are available at the website. Composed for a Vernal Equinox service held at Las Placitas Presbyterian Church in Placitas, New Mexico, on St. Cuthbert’s day, March 20, 2006, for example, is an adaptation of the Catholic Tenebrae, traditionally prayed on Good Friday. This has been combined with another adaptation, the Stations of the Cross, but rewritten to reflect the environmental crisis and the alleged growing impact of global warming. At each station, using Jesus’ sufferings as a metaphor, worshipers are asked to consider some aspect of environmental damage that humanity has done to the earth, and then, as in the Tenebrae service, a candle is snuffed. The eighth station – Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem – becomes, for example, transformed into “An Ecofeminist Lament.” The last station – Jesus is laid in the tomb and which is the point in this eco-ritual when all candles have been extinguished – represents the “late, great planet earth” and the coming apocalypse caused by mankind’s sinfulness. Here there is only a single sin: the environmental destruction of the earth...excuse me: of the *Earth*.

Another ritual is offered on the website: “Welcoming the Day.” This, Sr. Joan tells us, is used by her both personally and in retreat settings to start the day “in a more Spirit-filled, meaning generating way.” It is designed to imitate the spiritual traditions of the “First Peoples” and their sense of “revelatory” time as distinguished from those who use time to measure work. This ritual begins with drumming or perhaps the soft tapping of two stones together, trying to find the Heartbeat of the Universe, a chant (“Behold, a sacred voice is calling us...”), readings from sacred text –



Gaia, by Pat Malcolm – taken from the *Partnership for Earth Spirituality* website. The **Gaia hypothesis** is an ecological theory that proposes that the living matter of planet Earth functions like a single organism.



Sr. Joan Brown, OSF, leads the Fall Equinox Vesper Service at the Jubilee Garden.

New Mexico Faith in Public Life Network

Catholic:

Catholic Relief Services

- Gallup
- Las Cruces

Catholic Social Services

- Albuquerque

Catholic Charities

- Albuquerque
- Immigration and Legalization Services Catholic Charities Santa Fe, Albuquerque

Diocese of Las Cruces Social Ministry

Diocese of Santa Fe - Office of Social Justice - Santa Fe

Good Shepherd Center - Albuquerque

New Mexico Community Foundation - Albuquerque

Call To Action

- Las Cruces
- Rio Rancho

Dignity NM

Pax Christi

- Cimarron - Eagle Nest
- Dixon
- Farmington
- Holy Rosary - Albuquerque
- Las Vegas
- Albuquerque
- Santa Fe
- Taos - Ranchos de Taos
- Gallup
- Albuquerque Newman Center & St. Charles Borromeo
- Silver City, Gila

Other Religious Groups:

- Buddhist Peace Fellowship- NM - Santa Fe
- Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch
- First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque
- Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry - Santa Fe
- Mt. Olive Baptist State Convention - Alamogordo
- American Friends Service Committee, New Mexico Area Program - Albuquerque
- New Mexico Conference of Churches - Albuquerque

Community Organizations:

ACORN

- Albuquerque
- Las Cruces

IAF:

- Albuquerque Interfaith
- No. New Mexico Interfaith Sponsoring Committee - Alcalde
- Anti-Defamation League- New Mexico - Albuquerque

Other:

- New Mexico Human Needs Coordinating Committee - Albuquerque

Environmental:

- New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light - Albuquerque - St. Thomas of Canterbury Church - Albuquerque

Progressives:

- Progressive Christians of Northern
- NM Tikun/Network of Spiritual Progressives - Abq
- Tikun/Network of Spiritual Progressives - Santa Fe

Homosexuality

- Souforce Albuquerque

preferably earth-centered, praying “the eight directions” four times each, a sort of kiss of peace or thoughts of peace, depending on whether one is in a group or alone, a blessings the paths – with cornmeal, if possible, and closing with a chant that repeats “All shall be well.”

Ritual materials explain praying “the eight directions.” Its purpose is not to worship nature – pantheism – but to recognize God’s presence in all creation – *panantheism*. Therefore, among the gifts the worshipper seeks, one from each direction, is “community” – a gift that informs us that the “Earth is composed of a rich variety of communities, not just species and subspecies, not just what’s useful and what’s not, not just what’s natural, unnatural, not just what is human and non-human. These communities grow out of a consciousness of each other. If consciousness is awareness, than no entity is devoid of some kind of awareness.”

Another ritual, “Welcoming the Night,” closes with prayer to “Beloved Father and Holy Mother.” It asks, seeming to identify Father and Mother both as “god,” that: “we your creation drink one last time from the pool of the Sun’s energy. With great caring you have helped me this day to walk as your child, a pilgrim on a sacred path. At one with you and all of your creation, I enter into the night. Still me that I might listen to the sounds of this night. You are the source of my existence. Your heart is my home. From you I have come and to you I journey this night.”

The Network

Not surprisingly, the eclectic Sr. Joan with her gift for “community” is networked to a number of other elements of the New Mexico *Faith in Public Life* web.

One member of her *Partnership for Earth Spirituality* board was the former director of the *New Mexico Conference of Churches*. The Board also has 3 members – one a co-director – of Fr. Richard Rohr’s *Center for Action and Contemplation*. Fr. Rohr has been assisting Jim Wallis in reaching the Catholic population with his various “stop the religious right” strategies. And she also has the Director of the Office of Social Justice for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe on the Board.

Sr. Joan is on the steering committee of another New Mexico *Faith in Public Life* environmental group, *New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light*, an organization with about 20 state chapters, three-fourths of which are *Faith in Public Life* members. Founder and executive director, Reverend Sally Bingham, writes that “Taking care of our land, air and water...is the most moral value facing us all.” To the end of defending the “most moral value,” Sr. Joan assisted *Interfaith Power and Light* in holding over 60 showings of former Vice President Al Gore’s movie on global warming, “An Inconvenient Truth.”

The *Call to Action* (CTA) connection is particularly interesting. CTA has been fighting from within the Church for over thirty years to accomplish a number of “changes,” among them that:

- ❖ divorced, remarried couples might receive Holy Communion.
- ❖ women be ordained as priests and as bishops.
- ❖ the Church reverse its doctrine about contraception.
- ❖ the Church mitigate its doctrine about abortion.
- ❖ Marxism, socialism, and pacifism be taught as doctrinally true and morally good practice.
- ❖ the Church reverse its defense of right to property and reasonable profit.
- ❖ the Church be restructured non-hierarchically and democratically.

As the Vatican has upheld the excommunication ban leveled at CTA

participation in one US diocese, one can presume that support of CTA is highly questionable for sincere Catholics.(5) Yet Sr. Joan has been a follower of the movement for some time. She has not only appeared, as a member, in the CTA New Mexico newsletter (6), but she is connected to the CTA-related organization, Pax Christi. The *Albuquerque Catholic Worker's* "Circle of Friends," meeting at Sr. Joan's home, shared Pax Christi's website for several years. The two organizations are "linked in solidarity" and have worked together on a number of projects.

Now, Sr. Joan has free-will. She can pray to whomever and however she pleases. She can join any organization she pleases – anti-Catholic or otherwise. She can promote whatever she pleases. Just bear in mind, however, she's in the employ of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

Some more connections

New Mexico is a small state. It really isn't surprising that people engaged in various aspects of progressive politics would know and assist one another.

Consider the *Network of Spiritual Progressives*. This is another recently (2005) constructed coalition (7) with connections to Jim Wallis. Its kickoff conference in Berkeley included Jim Wallis as a speaker. Sr. Chittister, an advocate for women priests in the Catholic Church, is one of several official spokespeople for *Faith in Public Life* as well as being a national co-chair for the *Network of Spiritual Progressives*. It's tight enough in this circle to make one breathless.

Like Wallis' *Faith in Public Life*, the *Network of Spiritual Progressives* decries the "Religious Right's tactic of reducing the moral values field to two issues, abortion and gay marriage."(8) Its national chair, Rabbi Michael Lerner, accuses the "conservative agenda" of opposing abortion but giving little support to the child once it is born.

But, the good rabbi was not above describing the election of Pope Benedict XVI "a disaster," writing: "we watched with even greater distress as this Cardinal supported efforts to involve the Church in distancing itself from political candidates or leaders who did not agree with the Church's teachings on abortion and gay rights, prioritizing these issues over whether that candidate agreed with the Church on issues of peace and social justice. As a result, Cardinal Ratzinger has led the Church away from its natural alliance with Jews in fighting for peace and social justice..."(9) It seems to be OK to talk about abortion and gay rights if one supports them.

Who was part of the *Network of Spiritual Progressives'* Berkeley conference? None other than *Pax Christi New Mexico's* coordinator, Fr. John Dear, SJ, who is also a *Call to Action* speaker. Sr. Joan and Mara Hoffman, co-chair of the Environmental Covenant Committee for the *Network of Spiritual Progressives* have written at least one article together. (10)

Then there's **Albuquerque Interfaith** and the **New Mexico Organizing Project**, two Alinskyian faith-based local community organizations who, with hundreds of sister-organizations, are also members of *Faith in Public Life*. The liaison between the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and *Albuquerque Interfaith* is the same man who is the liaison between the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and *Pax Christi*. (11) Small world, isn't it?

Of course, in a pantheistic universe, it makes sense - *it's all connected*. ♀

Endnotes

1. www.earthspirituality.org/aboutus/aboutus.htm
2. California Institute of Integral Studies, www.ciis.edu/academics/pcc.html
3. *Partnership for Earth Spirituality*, www.earthspirituality.org
4. The book is available online at: www.rockridgeinstitute.org/thinkingpoints
5. Canon 1374 states: "A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; however, a person who promotes or directs an association of this kind is to be punished with an interdict." An interdict is an ecclesiastical penalty that deprives the person of the right to celebrate or receive the sacraments but is less harsh than excommunication.
6. January-February 1999
7. There are chapters in about 30 states, half of which are also *Faith in Public Life* members.
8. Brent Bourgeois, "The Network of Spiritual Progressives," *CommonDreams.org*, May 23, 2006
9. Rabbi Michael Lerner, "The New Pope is a Disaster for the World and for the Jews: Jewish Leader Denounces Selection of Cardinal Ratzinger as New Pope," *Tikkun.org*, April 20, 2005
10. Mara Hoffman, Robb Thomson and Joan Brown, "Commentary: People of faith embrace efforts to protect God's creation," *Albuquerque Tribune*, December 6, 2006
11. Chris Sandoval



Rabbi Michael Lerner,
national chair of the *Network
of Spiritual Progressives*

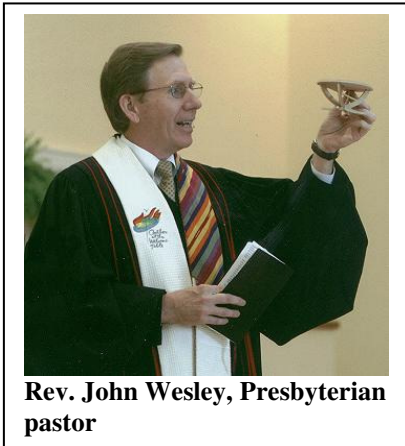
The Thomas “Mass”

Richard Rohr’s “catholicism”

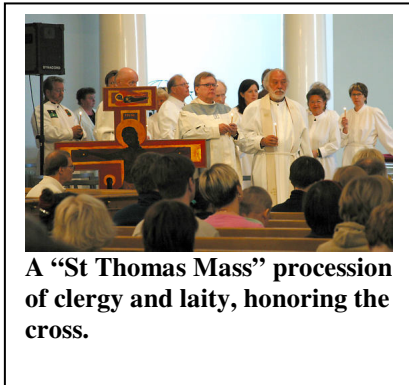
By Stephanie Block

While Jim Wallis was launching his new political movement to co-opt the Catholic vote, Fr. Richard Rohr was there to co-opt the Catholic faith.

One reporter gushed with enthusiasm over “a very powerful ecumenical Communion service known as the Thomas Mass on Sunday morning. It was a tangible and credible example of what the Holy Spirit can do when allowed to flow through us. When together we sang ‘They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love,’ my heart overflowed with the possibilities. I wondered, what if all our actions as Christians led others to Jesus because they were performed with love rather than with moral judgment, arrogant certitude or required duty? What if we were truly recognized by our genuine love for one another? How much good could be accomplished then?” [Pauline Hovey, “Conference Brings Gospel Message into Public Arena,” *Catholic Herald*, Diocese of Arlington, 1-19-2006]



Rev. John Wesley, Presbyterian pastor



A “St Thomas Mass” procession of clergy and laity, honoring the cross.

What is this Thomas “Mass?”

At the *Emerging Worship* website for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Theology and Worship, Rev. John Wesley explains his experiences while on sabbatical in Finland. He had earlier met people who were extolling the St. Thomas “Mass” as a European model for postmodern worship, claiming “this worship service was having a significant impact on worship in northern Europe.” Wesley wanted to see for himself.

Since the St. Thomas “Mass” community began in Helsinki, at the Lutheran cathedral, that’s where he headed as part of his sabbatical itinerary. The pastor of the cathedral community had been frustrated by a worship attendance that was only ten percent of church members. “His church was drowning in a sea of Enlightenment rationalism. He did not believe Finns were antagonistic toward God, but they were not being moved by the sterile ritual of the church.” With about forty others, he “wondered... what worship might need to look like were it to speak to the post-enlightenment person.”

The group consisted of persons from Lutheran, Orthodox, Free Church and Pentecostal backgrounds. For a year they met, prayed and allowed the “holy chaos” to work as they discussed and then began to structure a worship service. Each tradition brought gifts from their church to the formative process. Lutherans brought their deep appreciation for ancient worship patterns and order. The Pentecostals brought their love of prayer and their expectation of the Spirit’s presence in worship. The Orthodox in the group brought a love of symbolism, a respect for living in the mystery and a tradition of movement that could transform the “frozen chosen” in the pews into a living body.

The group settled on the name St Thomas Mass because of their desire to host a worship service where doubters, like the disciple Thomas, and other sinners could encounter that

which was holy in their lives and in the world and could experience the free gift of God's grace.

The first service was held on April 10, 1988 in Helsinki. No one knew what to expect, but over five hundred people came to that first service. Many had been away from the church for a long time. Some were agnostic. Some were from other churches. Some were professors at the university and some called the street their home. No particular age group seemed to be predominant. They were invited to experience God's grace in word, prayer and table. It was the beginning of an experience that has continued to develop and grow in that city and throughout Finland, Germany, Sweden and other parts of northern Europe. In Helsinki St Thomas Mass continues to be celebrated every Sunday evening from 6-8:00 p.m. The average attendance is between eight hundred and a thousand people. [Rev. John P. Wesley, "St Thomas Mass: Ancient, Post-modern Worship," www.emergingworship.org/st-thomas-mass.htm]

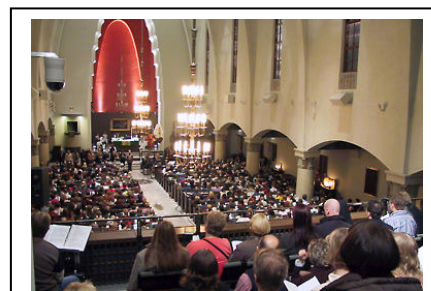
Of course, it wasn't a *real* Mass. It was a "creative service... fresh and innovative" planned week-to-week by different ministers and varying groups of about forty to seventy lay people. There's a list of about two hundred musicians who can be called on to "lead the gathering" in different musical styles - for compensation.

The structure of this worship service is Mass-like at the beginning. There's an entrance hymn and a large processional of robed clergy and laity, following an "iconic cross." "A time of confession includes a public confession, the singing of Kyrie, the prayers of two representatives of the congregation offering a more personal confessional prayer and an absolution pronounced by the celebrant. Having experienced the grace of forgiveness a joyful hymn of praise is sung."

A period of personal prayer and meditation follows, either from the pew or at various altars or stations set up around the sanctuary, after which worshipers are brought back to the Mass-like structure for scripture readings, a sermon, recitation of "a creed" (as opposed to *the* Creed), offering, Sanctus, a "Eucharistic" consecration, the Lord's Prayer, a sung Agnus Dei, a "communion..." For a Presbyterian minister, this must have been rich fare, indeed.

Their method of offering communion was to give the communicant a wafer and then pour wine into a small chalice for each person. There were not enough small chalices for the crowd of 800 or so that were there, so a group of volunteers was constantly taking a tray of chalices to the kitchen to wash them and bring them back. It gave a very earthy feel to the table, a sense that you were using something that had a place in someone's cabinet. It was a very different feel from the plastic cups used in my church each week.

The table is not restricted. No one determines who can come. The celebrant declared that we cannot do for ourselves what God can do for us. The table is a gift to us from God, a sign of God's grace freely given. It is not earned by right action but by humble and joyful reception. modern seekers are more vagabonds or nomads than pilgrims. They don't seem to have a final destination. Vagabonds don't know how long they'll stay where they happen to be today. There are those who are searching for something more in life and he believes rituals have a way of conveying or expressing the central focus of one's life. That is why...the Eucharist is so important. 'Vagabonds' attraction and love for the Eucharist underlines the



The Mikael Agricola Church in Helsinki, celebrating a "St. Thomas Mass"



A small prayer altar erected along a church aisle in Helsinki

importance of ritual to postmodern culture. Rituals connect microcosm to macrocosm. They connect a creature with the Creator. They connect the past and the present. They connect me with my inner self and psyche, with my neighbor, with all creation. [Ibid.]

“Mass” at the *Politics and Spirituality* Conference

Fr. Rohr’s “St. Thomas Mass” at the Washington DC *Politics and Spirituality* Conference had an ordained Catholic priest presiding (Fr. Richard Rohr) and an evangelical minister (Jim Wallis) as “homilist.” Conference materials explained the service’s Helsinki creation by people who: “wanted to create a prayerful service that would again fill their cathedral, but with seekers, searchers, and believers alike. After an initial attempt to create an ecumenical and new liturgy, they realized that it basically had the structure of the historic Catholic Mass. It immediately began to spread across Europe, and both Jim Wallis and Richard Rohr have participated in the Thomas Mass in Munich and other cities. The Thomas Mass avoids the usual denominational turf, arguments, and leadership, while still offering a deeply sacramental structure where disparate groups can gather in a faith-filled way. It retrieves the historic meaning of the very word “liturgy” as a collective work of the people. ... We will be using elements of grape juice and bread for Communion. ALL are invited and encouraged to partake at the table.” [Thomas Mass Program, available in the post-conference section of Rohr’s *Center for Action and Contemplation* website, www.cacradicalgrace.org/conferences/politics/post-conf/Thomas_Mass_Program.pdf]

One blogger, fresh from the conference experience and breathless with excitement, gushes: “Does nobody else realize the significance of the confluence of Rohr... and Wallis?”

Yes, actually, some of us do. When *Father* Rohr tells his audience, this time at the September *Politics and Spirituality* conference in Pasadena, that St. Francis didn’t waste time opposing the Roman Catholic Church, he just “went to the edge of the Church,” practicing “soft prophesy,” he’s talking about himself and what *he* hopes to accomplish.

When he tells the story of Moses and the burning bush and the Voice telling Moses to confront Pharaoh, he speaks of the “church” of Leviticus and Numbers, “concerned with priestly questions,” as if that were not also given by God. In the false remnant of the burning bush people, who seek the experience of salvation on their own terms, he is mostly speaking of what *he*, Richard Rohr, seeks.

Unfortunately, as a spiritual midwife - presiding over a play-acting “mass,” offering revisionist scripture, trying to democratize and politicize religion, particularly among fellow Catholics – his gift to the world is only so much “Rohring” egotism. That’s pretty miserly for a fellow who might have brought them to God. ☹



Fr. Richard Rohr, presiding over a Thomas “Mass” in Washington DC at the *Politics and Spirituality* Conference.



Glass Mountain

It's a slippery slope

By Marie P. Loehr

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. -Matthew 4: 8-9

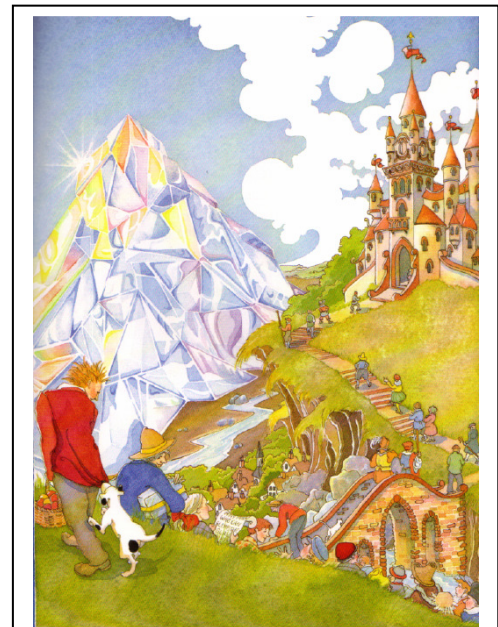
All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them...So modern scientism and its votaries - as opposed to true science which seeks only truth - stand on the high mountain, the glass mountain of the old fairy tale with the princess, and Lucifer in disguise stands before them, holding out the metallic fruit that will win mankind the keys to the kingdom of this world. The fairy tale details the struggles of eager knights to ride their horses up the slippery slope of the glass mountain, seeking to reap the golden apples of the sun and the silver apples of the moon from the princess, seated there on her throne. Whoever could collect all the apples would win her hand in marriage. The kingdom with its power, dominion, and wealth would be his, and with it possession of the princess herself.

Nowadays it is not a princess and apples made of precious metals that the false knights of a falser science seek. It is the secrets of life at the heart of nature herself, the power and dominion and commercial wealth accruing from such a conquest and its triumph. To unravel the secrets of stem cells and their healing potential is more intoxicating than the beautiful princess of the glass mountain, and her dowry. It is still a slippery slope to navigate...As we know, the casualties of this expedition up a spurious scientific Everest (well-named in Chinese: Chomolungma - Dragon Mother of the World) are not so much these false mountaineers, but the tiny sherpas who make such research possible - the infinitesimal embryos who must be sacrificed in the process of the exploratory climb and its literally brittle technology, a laboratory process that uses mountains of glass in flasks, test tubes, petri dishes, slides and pipettes.

How did Western civilization, with its roots in Christ's culture of life, ever come to this point of allying itself, even empowering, the devil's culture of death? God is life, totality of life. From His fullness of being, He shares His power to create new life with material creation, most particularly with human beings. As He creates in the communion of Trinitarian love and intimacy, so He enables human beings to procreate in the communion of marital love and intimacy, preferably! Yet He is so generous with his gift of free will AND life that even in sexual intimacy outside the bonds of marriage, we can still make new life.

But humans began separating making babies from making love almost from the beginning. Contraception and abortion have been with us for millennia - as solutions to fear, as a matter of pragmatic convenience. Once sales of over-the-counter contraceptives were legalized in this country, the slippery slope became more transparent - and more slippery - than ever. If we contracept, preventing the union of sperm and ovum in the act of love, all for the sake of convenience, however rationalized, then abortion and euthanasia will eventually and inevitably follow. Contraception, abortion, euthanasia are all rationalized in the siren song of convenience and quality of life.

Back in the 1990s, a letter to the editor in *The Trenton Times*, published in Trenton, N.J., supported contraception because it saved babies from being conceived into a miserable life of suffering. Over the years from the 1960s to the present, contraception, abortion, euthanasia are not only presented as a benefit to the practitioners of these sinful acts, but as a benefit to the victims as well, even those



The Glass Mountain of fairy tales...

victims not able to be conceived, as a result of contraceptives!

In the context of reproductive convenience, the next step down the slippery slope, beyond contraception, was the practice of artificial insemination, on an increasingly larger scale: not in breeding animals, but in human beings. There were many rationalizations for this--but this too separated making babies from making love. Procreation was the goal, not contraception. Procreation was no longer an act of love in the privacy of a husband and wife's home and embrace. It was now a technological act practiced in the clinic, the gynecologist's office, the hospital.

The next step down the slippery slope of the glass mountain was IVF - in vitro fertilization. ["Vitro" is simply Latin for glass.] Eggs could be removed from a woman's ovaries, fertilized in the test tube or petri dish, grown to a certain point, then implanted in the egg donor's womb for gestation and birth. Of course, many ova were necessary in this process, to make sure several would "take." Then the embryo with the best genetic chance for successful gestation and birth would be chosen. The rest would be discarded--abortion by any other name.

Fertility drugs can be used simply to enhance ovulation to produce multiple ova ready for fertilization at the same time, to optimize chances for fertilization in the woman, rather than in the test tube. This is a procedure for those couples who don't want to separate the act of love from the baby entirely.

However, unless the couple desires multiple births, these "extra" babies are also removed, sacrificed, aborted for the sake of the one chosen to live to birth and beyond. This is done for the convenience of the mother who would have to bear multiple infants, for the father who must support them, and also for the chosen embryo, so that he or she will have optimal space to gestate properly in good health. Nowadays, parents who choose this process will have the extra embryos frozen and stored in cryogenic limbo, in case the couple desires more children without going through the fertility technology all over again.

All this novel reproductive technology was a great break-through and gift for those people who could not conceive, or did not want to conceive, by the ordinary means of sexual love and intimacy. So the pundits informed us....

The next slide down that glass slope, laboratories being full of glass, was surrogate motherhood. For those women who wanted their own child, with their genetic lineage, but who had trouble conceiving and/or feared pregnancy and its risks - or inconvenience - IVF provided the embryo, and other women would become the living incubators for these children of glass, bearing them, bringing them to birth when they would then be handed over to their biological parents.

When the Church spoke out against all these practices in the 1970s, one Catholic woman who had become a surrogate mother complained to a TV news reporter that she just didn't get it. "The Church is always telling us we're supposed to have babies. I'm doing that, and now they're telling me it's wrong!?!?" At the same time surrogate mothers were in demand for the convenience of women who wanted children, but couldn't bear them for one reason or another, perfectly healthy women were choosing abortion. Nobody wanted mere adoption. The idea of convenience became "I want MY baby" no matter how, or "I don't want this baby!" or clump of cells or whatever. Women who bought into the propaganda of convenience have suffered grievously, as a result.

Only twenty years after *Roe v. Wade* opened the floodgates to abortion, there was a plethora of discarded embryos and fetal parts being



Cloning, E.W. Powell 2003

trashed around the country. Following in the utilitarian footsteps of their Nazi forebears, pragmatists in the environs of repro-tech's glass mountain were horrified at such waste. How could this be used to benefit mankind? This too was a rationalization and a euphemism to claim benign purposes - and convenience - for a malignant practice.

Fueled by abortion's "waste," embryonic stem cell research took off, hand in hand with the concept of cloning. The cloning of Dolly the Sheep elicited some bizarre responses from a few clergymen of various denominations, quoted in *Time* and *Newsweek*. Some actually supposed that a cloned human being would have no soul, and therefore could be exploited or employed like any other animal, for human benefit or use.

A clone, of course, is simply a twin, manufactured outside the womb - again, in glass, under glass, in the lab. If human DNA is involved, then there is a soul present, directly infused by God into the union of sperm and ovum. Thus every human clone is fully human, a mesh of body AND soul. There is no such thing as "therapeutic" cloning, a euphemism for turning the embryo or fetus or infant into a parts farm for stem cells or organs or other medical experiments. No matter how this may be presented as medically beneficial for the rest of us, it is an abomination.

The intellectual elites and the media seem blind, deaf and dumb to the reality of adult stem cell research, its successful trials, use, and cure in certain medical conditions and diseases. Although Embryonic Stem Cell research or ESC, has yet to go beyond wish or dream (or nightmare, given its propensity to accomplish no more than tumors and death in lab animals), it remains the Rocky Mountain High for many of those scientists and secular humanists who ignore God, morality, and human origins. We can only speculate why they prefer to cannibalize and destroy the earliest, most vulnerable members of the human race. Perhaps it's simply curiosity and fascination with life at its very source and roots. Perhaps it's the freshness and novelty of pristine stem cells, like a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, that these technicians alone can scribble on. Perhaps it's the temptation to power, to be able to manipulate and dominate this helplessness and its potency.

Perhaps it's just the temptation of the Messiah complex, the temptation to usurp the place of God himself, the Original Sin in a new disguise for our time.

Isaiah speaks of the pagans worshipping in the high places, and the Israelites forsaking Yahweh to join them. This is a high place - this Everest of research effort, this glass mountain. The base of its slippery slope is piled high with whited sepulchers: those who claim to be "scientists," politicians, and media stars, all full of dead men's bones, discarded embryos, those mutilated babies who are less than a clump of cells in the eyes of many. This tech trek began with the convenience of contraception and abortion. It continues with the convenience of power disguised as healing, death masquerading as life.

Convenience, like guns, can be a positive good, a benefit to our health and safety. But convenience turned inside out, made an idol, can be more dangerous than guns - to our spiritual health and safety. Wrongly advocated, convenience can be deadly.

Glass Mountain can mean death or life, an earthly Everest, or a heavenly Carmel. Which high place will we choose and teach: the devil, tempting...or Christ, transfigured and transfiguring? ☆

March Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting

March 8, 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

12 noon, Thursday

Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel

Fr. Stephen Imbarrato

For more information, call

(505) 266-4100

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www.lospequeños.org

Around the Nation

Around the Archdiocese

The **New Mexico of Catholic Conference** started the 2007 legislative session by supporting a bill to ban cockfighting in the state. In a prepared statement, the NMCC explained its policy: “The church teaches that we are called to a stewardship of God’s creatures, and there are principles in how to care for animals....The bishops recognize that cockfighting is abusive of God’s good creation....Cockfighting promotes violence.”

According to a *National Catholic Reporter* article, NMCC lobbyist Alan Sanchez said he hopes the ban will pass, so that the New Mexico legislature can address other issues, including the Church’s call for an end to the death penalty and its opposition to Governor Bill Richardson’s proposal for stem cell research. Oh goodness, yes!

But they certainly didn’t get too far with “Definition of Marriage” (DOMA) legislation, which would have defined marriage as between a man and a woman. It couldn’t get past committee. New Mexico – a predominantly Catholic state – is one of four states that do not restrict the definition of marriage to man & woman.

According to Souforce, a homosexual activist organization and a New Mexico *Faith in Public Life* member, the state’s gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered communities are well organized to respond to any change in the status quo. The new DOMA resolution was expected to go the same route as those of previous years: death in committee. See how it works?

Archbishop Charles Chaput of the Archdiocese of Denver called the Democrat’s pledge to lift eligibility restrictions on state-funded pregnancy prevention and family-planning programs “seriously flawed public policy,” putting him in direct conflict with Colorado’s new governor, Bill Ritter, self-described as “pro-life” and a practicing Catholic. The order has restricted groups that perform abortions from getting state money for family planning and pregnancy prevention and has cost Planned Parenthood hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue.

Archbishop Chaput maintains that Catholic politicians must adhere to Church teachings in their public life. Planned Parenthood responded that, while recognizing the archbishop’s “religious prerogative” to think that Planned Parenthood somehow wants to increase the abortion rate in Colorado, “what we have always done is try to make sure every child is a wanted and a loved child.” Sure.

The **Institute on Religion and Democracy** (IRD) has just released a 90-page report titled, “Strange Yokefellows: The National Council of Churches and its Growing Non-Church Constituency.” The National Council of Churches is an alliance of 35 Christian denominations. IRD is concerned that it is “abandoning its mission to promote Christian unity and instead seeking funds from liberal groups.” Several of these “are so blatantly partisan that they can be accurately described as ... the shadow Democratic Party.” According to the report, in the fiscal year ending June 2005, the Council received \$1.76 million from secular foundations and non-church groups, exceeding the \$1.75 million it received from member churches.

Much of the National Council of Churches’ current work has become advocacy for political and social agendas antithetical to orthodox, moral standards - especially in the areas of abortion and homosexuality. It is another member of the *Faith in Public Life* network to “fight the right.”

The IRD report may be purchased at www.ird-renew.org.

Tucson’s **Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas** doesn’t often get it, but he has publicly not welcomed retired auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton to his Diocese of Tucson because of the group hosting Gumbleton’s talk. The group is *Call to Action* and, as it takes positions contrary to church teachings, Bishop Kicanas has told the group it cannot hold its meeting – even with another bishop speaking - on church property.

“I’m saddened and disappointed to hear it,” said Laurie Olson, vice president of the Tucson chapter of *Call to Action* that is sponsoring Gumbleton, whose talk concerned homosexuality and Catholicism. The conference was held instead at First Christian Church, a Disciples of Christ congregation that believes all religious entities must be more open and affirming of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

“Bishop Gumbleton calls for homosexuals in general and homosexual priests in particular to come out and share their gifts with our church,” Olson said. “It is not what they (Catholics) hear from the Vatican, which calls homosexuals inherently disordered.” Gumbleton has been in the national news lately because he was not reappointed to serve as pastor of the inner-city St. Leo’s Catholic Church, which he’d led since 1983. Gumbleton has said he still wants to lead St. Leo’s and believes he was not reassigned because of the recent openness with which he spoke concerning victims of sex abuse in the church.

How would you prevent sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe?

Some thoughts of a reluctant participant

By Alan Peters

How would you prevent sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe? In an ad on page 5 in the January 2007 *People of God*, newspaper for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, we read that the Archdiocese does it with a mandatory three-hour “Sexual Abuse/Harassment Prevention Workshop” that must be attended by everyone (paid or volunteer) who works for the Archdiocese.

The workshop opens with nondescript prayer and no Sign of the Cross. The instructor stresses her psychological training and therapy background. She is, of course, a Sister of Charity in laywoman’s clothing. With the stress on the secular, it is no surprise that there’s no mention of sin, mortal sin, virtue, sacrament, prayer, modesty of dress, Rosary, Mary, or Holy Family. Rather, much like the government-funded public schools, we’ll introduce the man-centered *Character Counts* program and hope *truthfulness* somehow takes hold in our children.

The workshop has a heavy fact-dissemination component followed by deferral to various governmental and social work organizations. The legal-protection umbrella of a “Policy of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe - Relating to Sexual Misconduct including Sexual Harassment” booklet, which was introduced in 1990 and revised in ‘94, ‘97, ‘00, ‘02, ‘03, and ‘06 – which ought to set off alarms – is the engine driving this train. Unkindest cut of all, the workshop forces participants to fill out a sign-in sheet that includes a release to perform a criminal background check.

But does a workshop which follows the modernist “use your conscience as a guide” maxim, but fails to train the conscience, contain anything that will prevent sexual abuse? If the conscience is poorly formed, then is abuse okay? Obviously not. So one must ask, why aren’t faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, and temperance the foundation of this workshop? They *are* the foundation of Catholicism.

Why is it assumed that “Oh, people know all that stuff.” No, people don’t know *that stuff*. Bishops must teach the Catholic faith. And Bishops must rid their diocese of priests who don’t live the Catholic faith.

That’s how *you* would prevent sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, isn’t it? ❄️

Where Were You?

By Don Schauerte

Almost every day we hear on the news that innocent people are being tortured and murdered in the Middle East and Africa. With the exception of praying, there is little or nothing that we as individuals can do to stop such insanity.

Right here, in Albuquerque, six days a week, innocent pre-born babies are also being tortured and murdered by legalized abortion. Our government even provides this heinous procedure to the poor and indigent with our own tax dollars. However, unlike the Middle East or Africa, we can do something about it. We would contribute much to abortion’s demise if we, as pro-lifers, would choose to use just some of our talents, volunteer some of our time, or donate some of our finances to organizations that help women considering abortion, or to help groups that seek and work to change the law and enact new ones.

We all have gifts of one kind or another. Maybe you have a gift for “gab” and like helping other people – you would make a good sidewalk counselor. Perhaps you are called to constant prayer – you are needed in our adoration chapel at Catholic Knights of America, or to stand and pray the Rosary outside of Planned Parenthood’s abortuary on San Mateo. Perhaps you have a few extra hours a month – there are pro-life organizations that could use you to stuff envelopes. Is Sunday your only free day? Many churches need help periodically in getting pro-life literature and information passed out to parishioners after services – find out who handles the pro-life issues and volunteer. Birthright would love to show you how to help a pregnant mom choose life for her baby. Don’t have any time but have financial resources? Donate to a pro-life group such as Project Defending Life. You get the idea: there is much out there that you can do – *a bouquet of pro-life activities from which you can choose your rose!*

Too often we want others to do our job for us. It is not up to our priests, our ministers, or our bishops to end abortion – it is up to *all* of us. Each one of us has to be willing to step up, meet the challenge, and in some way get involved.

We can not predict God, and none of us know if and when He may place in our path a pregnant woman who is considering abortion. If He does, it may be a complete stranger, a co-worker, a neighbor’s daughter, a friend, or a member of our own family. At the very least, we need to be prepared and to offer a woman faced with an unwanted pregnancy our friendship and help. To do this, we need to educate ourselves on the subject of abortion and make an effort to learn more about the various resources and helpful organizations available.

As Christians, we know we serve Jesus when we serve the least of our brethren and that we are expected to be our brother’s keeper. Is there anyone more innocent, more vulnerable, or more in need of our “serving” and “keeping” than our tiny brother in the womb, with a mother who wants to abort and end his life before he is even born?

One day we will all stand in judgment before Our Savior, Jesus. How are you going to answer Our Lord when He ask: “Where were you when they were killing my babies, my children in the womb – your brothers and sisters? What did you do?” ❄️