

Los Pequeños Pepper

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Immigrant Rights in New Mexico

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“[H]eartened by the outcry that we have seen against Arizona’s new anti-immigrant law and against Mayor Berry’s recently announced anti-Latino/ anti-public safety policy,” *El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos* recently sent email to its supporters, which include the Archdiocese of Santa Fe’s Office of Social Justice and Respect Life, promoting an interfaith service and protest rally in early June.

Anne Avellone, Director for the Archdiocese’s Office of Social Justice, then forwarded the announcement to her email lists. “Please come and show your solidarity by wearing white” she writes in her preface to *El Centro*’s material. “Through my office and the Office of Hispanic Ministry (Director, Juan Barajas), the Archdiocese of Santa Fe is part of this interfaith coalition for immigrant justice, and Juan Barajas will be speaking at this prayer rally.”

El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos is a Latino immigrants’ rights organization that has a clenched fist, held in front of a blazing sun, for its logo. “We envision a city, state and nation where immigrants can become a collective, conscious, free and powerful force dedicated to the promotion of human rights,” the center says on its website. A sample newsletter shows the picture of seven young people holding the sign: “Citizenship, YES! Deportation, NO!”

Santa Fe based *Somos Un Pueblo Unido* (funded by the *Catholic Campaign for Human Development*) and the Las Cruces *Labor Council for Latin American Advancement*, *El Centro* and the Archdiocese of Santa Fe have been mobilizing for “immigration rights” that give illegal immigrants “an opportunity to become legal permanent residents and fully integrated members of our communities.”

A 2006 rally, themed “United for Justice and Equality,” featured Archbishop Michael Sheehan as a speaker. Meanwhile, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of the Diocese of Las Cruces led a march for similar ends. [*Somos Un Pueblo Unido* press release, 4-9-06; supporting organizations included ACORN, Richard Rohr’s *Center for Action and Contemplation*, *La Raza Unida*, *Pax Christi*, and *Southwest Organizing Project* [SWOP], among others.]

El Centro is also an “endorsing organization” of “Queers and Immigration: A Vision Statement,” produced by *Queers for Economic Justice* – a group working for same-sex marriage and immigrant rights as they “impact LGBT immigrants, their families and communities,” including:

- lifting the current ban on HIV+ immigrants,
- granting asylum based on sexual orientation to LGBTQ immigrants,
- ending the criminalization of illegal immigration,
- repealing the Real ID ACT, and
- supporting “efforts to create and affirm broader definitions of family and kinship patterns in which LGBTQ people already live.”

Particularly, the statement calls for supporting “legalization for all immigrants, including undocumented immigrants.” It’s always good to know where the Archdiocese stands. ↪

Respect For Christ in The Eucharist

One Priest's Perspective

By Rev. Fr. Robert Lange, Priest of the Arlington Diocese

Americans have the option of receiving the Holy Eucharist on the tongue or in the hand. The Vatican granted us the option of receiving on the hand in 1977. This was accomplished by an *indult*, a lifting of the law, so we may receive either way, on the tongue or in the hand. The *indult* was granted because the American Bishops told the Vatican that their parishioners were clamoring for it. "We can feed ourselves" was one of the specious arguments put forward.

After Apostolic times, the Church gradually adopted Communion on the tongue as the universal practice. In the early fourth century the Arians, who denied the divinity of Christ, revived the practice of receiving Communion in the hand specifically to show a lesser respect for Christ, believing that He is not "equal to the Father."

The universal Church law, which requires Holy Eucharist to be distributed to the faithful on their tongues, remains in force; it remains the law. However, the *indult* has the effect of making the law inapplicable where in force.

Foreseeing the demand for the *indult* coming, the Sacred Office for Divine Worship sent a letter to the presidents of the bishops' conferences to advise them how they may implement this option if granted. The letter spoke about reverence for the Holy Eucharist being the number one priority. With this in mind, the letter went into great detail trying to explain this crucial concern. The letter contained the following specifics.

Communion on the hand is an option; it is not the primary way of receiving. Catholics must be catechized to understand this important point. No one is to be forced to receive on the hand.

When receiving the Body of Christ on the hand, the faithful must be aware of the fact that each and every particle, no matter how small, is truly the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore no particle should ever be discarded or treated with less than total respect due to the Body of Christ.

The faithful must also be reminded that their hands must be clean to receive our Lord, Jesus Christ.

When ordained in 1986, I was a proponent of receiving Communion in the hand, but time has changed my thinking on this issue. Seeing so many abuses and forming a deeper respect for Jesus' true presence in the Holy Eucharist were the factors which forced me to rethink my position.

On March 28, 1965, when the Catholic college I was attending opened their newly renovated chapel, we students were told how to receive the Holy Eucharist: standing and in the hand. There was no option given. May I add that this was fully twelve years before any American diocese received the *indult*, which allowed for that option.

Why did those priests, abbots and bishops disobey the authority of Rome? Communion in the hand became the norm for American Catholics in the 1960's. In many cases the practice was not presented to us as optional, but as *the way* to receive.

In my twenty-four years as a priest, I have served in many parishes and witnessed many Eucharistic abuses caused by receiving in the hand. I have picked Jesus off the floor from under pews and picked Him out of hymnals. I have followed people back to their seats and asked if they would give me the host back (they bring it out of a clinched hand or out of their pockets) and have witnessed many other sacrilegious desecrations of the most Blessed Sacrament, far too many and varied to mention, some so shocking most people would simply not believe my words.

As I began to see these desecrations of the Holy Eucharist, I began to understand how very sickening, disheartening and avoidable all of this actually has been. Many religious education programs teach the children how to receive on the hand, with at most a cursory mention of the traditional way of receiving on the tongue. Why? The Church documents do not support such teaching. It was the same with many American dioceses in the 1960's when the faithful were being coerced into receiving on the hand a decade before being granted the *indult*.

Father Benedict Groeschel, a familiar face to EWTN viewers and an accomplished author, announced on his

“Sunday Night Live With Fr. Groeschel” program that he considered Communion in the hand to be an abomination. That is strong language!

Blessed Theresa of Calcutta was asked what was the worst thing that has happened to the Church in her lifetime. She replied without hesitation, “Communion in the hand.” Again powerful language!

Why would these two great figures of our time be so fervent in their opinions regarding this issue if it did not affect their whole being? Somehow I think they would agree that Communion in the hand is a true American tragedy.

Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI leads by example. Since becoming Pope, anyone receiving Holy Eucharist from him must receive on the tongue and kneeling. He is not requiring a change throughout the world, but is giving us a profound message by example.

Proper respect shown to the Holy Eucharist is primary. Please consider these thoughts before receiving Holy Communion this Sunday. Thank you. ☞

Screening Out the Pop Tarts?

Commentator Jeff Miller, who writes the Curt Jester blog, offers his acerbic remarks about contemporary culture:

I think we need a new screening program at Catholic schools and CCD classes. This one directed towards students. This screening test would actually be targeted towards Catholic girls. I propose that a Future Pop Star (FPS) screening quiz should be implemented immediately. The reason the FPS is needed immediately and really should have been implemented years ago is because of the antics of Catholic girls like Madonna, Christina Aguilera, Gwen Stefani, Lady Gaga, etc. Somehow Catholic girls make for the biggest pop stars and those like Madonna and Lady Gaga go beyond just the immodest strutting into using the Catholic faith as something to mock while symbols associated with the Church are used as part of their shows. On Lady Gaga’s latest video:

The pop princess, real name Stefani Germanotta, recently released the music video for her single “Alejandro” and has sparked quite the outcry given its saturation of controversial imagery, including her swallowing rosary beads in a latex-version of a nun’s habit...[etc. Too nasty to reproduce here.]

Before you get annoyed by this ...

“Alejandro” director Steven Klein told MTV that the video wasn’t meant to “denote anything negative, but represents the character’s battle between the dark forces of this world and the spiritual salvation of the Soul. She chooses to be a nun, and the reason her mouth and eyes disappear is because she is withdrawing her senses from the world of evil and going inward toward prayer and contemplation.”

I really need to work on my music video symbolism since I didn’t get any of that from it...

Though at least the Church has given these pop stars a rich history of symbols to mock. You have to feel sorry for the pop singer raised Unitarian – where there are no real symbols to latch on and mock as part of their stage shows.

There has been a term of derision used recently to describe these women singers – Pop Tarts. While I am all for almost any pun, I don’t much like this term. I do have to wonder though if the Catholic variety should be known as Pope Tarts? ☞

Beck vs. Wallis

Understanding a high-profile fight about “social justice”

By Marvin Olasky

Two entertaining controversialists, Glenn Beck and Jim Wallis, blasted each other in mid-March over the meaning of “social justice.”

Their antagonism has a backstory. Wallis, a religious adviser to Barack Obama, took on Beck last September after the FOX News and radio commentator criticized Democratic healthcare proposals. Wallis asked his followers to “tell Glenn Beck that healthcare reform is pro-life,” but *The New York Times* and CNN did not publicize Wallis’ call, and Beck did not give Wallis more attention by firing back.

This past month Beck advised listeners to “look for the word ‘social justice’ or ‘economic justice’ on your church website. If you can find it, run as fast as you can.” Beck said those two terms are “code words” for giving government more power. Wallis again struck back: “Beck says Christians should leave their social justice churches, so I say Christians should leave Glenn Beck. Christians should no longer watch his show.”

This time the *Times* and CNN megaphoned Wallis’ attack. This time Beck responded with criticism of Wallis that gave Wallis an opportunity to shoot back on the show of Keith Olbermann (the anti-Beck). Beck said 19th-century Roman Catholics and 20th-century Communists and Nazis had talked about “social justice.” Meanwhile, Wallis said Beck’s show was “in the same category” as that of sex yakker Howard Stern.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave! Let’s review the history: Was “social justice” born as a Catholic term? Yes, Jesuit theologian Luigi Taparelli tried to stem a socialist surge in the 1840s by arguing that religious and civic groups could justly improve living conditions without relying on governmental force.

Did Communists and Nazis flip “social justice” into a promotion of government power? Yes. Communist Party USA leaders instructed me in 1972 and 1973 to use those words. I haven’t personally researched Nazi usage, but a leading Nazi sympathizer during the 1930s, radio priest Charles Coughlin, established a National Union for Social Justice and published a million-subscriber magazine, *Social Justice*. His radio audience of 16 million heard him attacking an “international conspiracy of Jewish bankers.”

Do those historical wrinkles mean that the term should not be used? No, but it should certainly be defined. We can study the 150 or so times that *mishpat* in Hebrew and *kreesis* in Greek—words commonly translated as “justice”—appear in the Bible. Biblically, justice—tied to righteousness—is what promotes faith in God, not faith in government. Prophets criticized not entrepreneurs but those who combined economic and political power to lord it over others, as today’s bureaucrats and corporate/government partnerships tend to do.

I can understand Glenn Beck’s frustration. As the Beck-Wallis tempest swirled on March 11, I spent 3½ hours in a long-arranged debate with Wallis at Cedarville University. He kept trying to position himself as a centrist rather than a big government proponent. Furthermore, modern usage by liberal preachers and journalists is thoroughly unbiblical: Many equate social justice with fighting a free enterprise system that purportedly keeps people poor but in reality is their best economic hope.

How to respond? I’d suggest four possible ways, one of which is a variant of Beck’s: Challenge those who speak of “social justice” in a conventionally leftist way. If your local church is committed to what won’t help the poor but will empower would-be dictators, pray and work for gospel-centered teaching. If necessary, find another church.

A second: Try to recapture the term by giving it a 19th- (and 21st?) century small-government twist. The Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute are trying to do this. I wish them success.

A third way: Accept the left’s focus on systemic problems but not its faulty analysis. Learn about the biggest institutional hindrance to economic advance for the poor: the government’s monopoly control of taxpayer funds committed to education and welfare. Work for school vouchers and tax credits that will help many poor children to grow both their talents and their knowledge of God.

Fourth and best: Tutor a child. Visit a prisoner. Help the sick. Follow Christ. ☞

Note: To go deeper, please see my Aug. 29, 2009, WORLD column, “Is social justice just ice?” and a full seminary lecture I gave on the subject last October (“Prodigal Doctrines: Going beyond ‘Social Justice’ to ‘Righteous Justice’”). You also can hear my lecture at Cedarville University, which was held just prior to my debate with Jim Wallis, by going to www.worldmag.com and searching through its archived podcasts.

This article was reprinted with permission from the author who is editor-in-chief of WORLD Magazine, Provost of The King's College in New York City, a former professor of journalism, and the author of several books, most notably The Tragedy of American Compassion. Mr. Olasky can be reached at molasky@worldmag.com.

Bonaventure and Creation: Science and Sacrament

By Marie P. Loehr

I am the light of the world the living water....the true vinethe bread of life
– Christ speaking in the Gospel of John

Did St. Bonaventure have these images of Christ in mind, when he was writing his *Hexameron* and his *Breviloquium*?

We can see in Bonaventure's approach to both theology and science his deep sense of both order, *per se*, and that order as rooted in God Himself. For Bonaventure the Father is the Source or principle of the Trinity, Being itself – and then all Creation, created being. The Son is the Mediator and pattern or channel of the Trinity, and its ongoing creativity, even in His making “all things new.” The Spirit is the completion or fullness of the Trinity, in whom the fruition of God's providential plan is fulfilled in Creation.

In her commentary on Bonaventure, *Marriage: The Sacrament of Divine-Human Communion*, vol. 1 of an explication of Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*, Sr. Paula Jean Miller, F.S.E., says:

Bonaventure first emphasizes the dynamic origins of the Trinity in the Father as Source, the Holy Spirit as Consummation, and the Son as the Center, who both receives and transmits the Divine Life.

This order and pattern are central to Bonaventure's thought.

Who is Bonaventure, whom we might call the apologist for the union of all being in the Being of God?

Bonaventure is not only a canonized saint of the Church and a doctor of the Church, he was a Master of Arts who taught at the University of Paris.

As then-Cardinal Ratzinger points out in *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, Bonaventure was called from Paris to become the seventh Master General of the Franciscan Order, with the express purpose of bringing unity to a religious order torn apart between the Spirituals who followed Joachim of Fiore, and those who adhered to the Order's original purposes.

Because of his deep sense of human incarnation, as rooted in Christ's predilection to be Word-made-flesh, he was not tempted to the unworldly, otherworldly excesses of the Joachimites.

Above all else he is a thinker who emphasizes the original harmony and union God intended for mankind and Creation as image of the Trinitarian commitment, communion, and creativity.

What does this have to do with science, however?!

Sr. Paula Jean tells us:

*According to Bonaventure, all creation and especially the human person is symbolic by nature. The human being is composed of an inner and outer reality which empowers him to interpret the cosmos and discover its meaning... **one must come to an accurate knowledge of the literal level in order to penetrate a symbol's hidden meaning**; one must know the nature of concrete realities individually and in relation to the whole, in order to perceive them as “divine footprints” and retrace them to their Exemplar.*

With this insight and its development, Bonaventure lays down a sure foundation for true science, and its cooperation with true theology.

For Bonaventure, as for so many doctors of the Church, Scriptural descriptions of order in Creation, as well as the observed order of the heavens, the seasons, the rhythm of planting and harvest, cause and effect in general, indicated intelligible order in Creation and in its Creator. Creation does have order and structure. It can be measured, weighed and numbered. Modern physics and astronomy would agree!

Writing in *Astronomy Today*, Bob Berman notes that professional astronomers are deeply involved with math. He says he has found that the average layman has no real conception of the importance of math to both physics and astronomy. Math not only makes life manageable and fascinating, it forms an underlying foundation and explication for most of material reality, if not all. Astronomers and physicists rely on math and mathematical equations to examine nature from the infinitesimally small to the astronomically gargantuan! Math reveals and defines the fundamental structure of our universe and our physical being.

Does this distract us or detract from the sacramental reality of Creation?

Not at all – science is simply explication of material, physical creation, as one might explicate a poem to understand it better, to enrich one’s heart, mind, and spirit. Scientists are simply engaged in explicating Creation. This is a necessary spiritual work, whether an individual scientist accepts any spiritual depth and reality or not. Bonaventure would agree!

He comments in Part II, Chapter 12, of his *Breviloquium*:

From this we may gather that the universe is like a book reflecting, representing, and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a trace, an image, and a likeness. The aspect of trace is found in every creature; the aspect of image in the intellectual creatures or rational spirits; the aspect of likeness only in those who are God-conformed.

Modern science has developed many tools and instruments to examine Creation very precisely. Bonaventure understood the potential and need for thus examining Creation. Since he considers Creation the “second Scripture” in fact, by examining it, and learning more about it, we encounter God revealed through his works. We learn more about God. But as with all else, this must be done using reason, discernment, and common sense: one patient step at a time.

Science is necessary to decipher the traces of the Trinity, in its oneness and three-ness, throughout Creation. Like Aquinas, he is insistent on right understanding of the nature of Creation--as a whole or in part--as a means to ascend to God. This knowledge, which comes from below, from human observation, experimentation, and deduction is legitimate scientific study. Science is as necessary to our understanding of God as theology is. Revelation from above, science from below: both necessary to our greater knowledge, thus greater love, and so, greater service to God.

Both avenues of study and learning help to illumine God in His fullness. But we must also come to know God through His self-revelation and self-explication in the written Scriptures, most particularly in the Gospel presentation of Christ as redeemer and exemplar for us. Christ Himself tells us, “he who sees me, sees the Father.” He Himself calls us to this knowledge, invites us to deeper intimacy with the Trinity.

Science, properly understood, helps us to achieve this goal. Bonaventure says in his *Itinerarium*:

In our present condition, the created universe itself is the ladder leading us toward God. Some created things are his traces, others his image; some of them are material, others spiritual; some temporal, others everlasting: thus some are outside us, some within.

Simply in setting forth this three-fold reflection of God in His Creation, Bonaventure presents it methodically and logically. And so he examines both Creation and its relation to the sacraments later in the *Breviloquium*.

All Creation is a ladder, a Jacob’s ladder, if you will, leading us gradually to ascend to God, and God to descend to us – as the angels ascended and descended the ladder in Jacob’s dream.

It is surely no accident or coincidence that Jacob had this dream as he slept on the rock at Bethel.

Science speaks of the atomic lattice of minerals--atoms arranged in regular, fixed order. This is what gives a rock or crystal or gemstone its texture, solidity, predictable behavior when mined or cut. In Jacob’s dream, we see angels ascending and descending a ladder from heaven to earth, and back again. They echo in spiritual reality the material reality of the atomic lattice in crystals, and atomic particles in their discrete leaps along the sub-molecular lattice of material being. This ascent-descent-ascent is the purpose of Creation, as created, a revelation of God’s movement to us in his creating, our movement to Him in our adoring. So Bonaventure understands and defines it.

Since our Fall and the damage done by sin, our ladder of ascent to God becomes the sacraments, the extensions of Christ’s eternal work made present in time and incarnate being. We can also say, as Bonaventure would, that this ladder of ascent is summed up in the Jacob’s ladder, now transformed into the Tree of the Cross.

Both science and theology are essential to learning and understanding these truths.

Miller notes that “For Bonaventure, as for St. Francis, all things reflect their Creator . . . as revealed in Wisdom 11:20, ‘He has disposed all things in measure, weight, and number.’ “Thus science has its proper role for us to understand the order of being, the laws of nature, and the temporal reality of all things. Revelation reveals God’s ordering by his power, his purpose for each by his wisdom, and the eternal truth of each created being in its essence.


Because he understands man as the apex of Creation, its summit and fulfillment, Bonaventure sees the human body as a microcosm of the material universe. So modern science discovers it, ever more deeply, in our own time.

Through human spiritual being and consciousness, the universe is to come to its own true fulfillment in God. Thus the universe is ordered to man, made to serve him. Man is ordered to God, made to serve Him – and in so

doing, bring all Creation into the fruition for which Paul says it yearns and groans in the Holy Spirit. This goal, spiritual and temporal, requires the increasing knowledge and cooperation of science in the temporal sphere, and theology in the spiritual sphere. We cannot stress that enough in an age where new attempts are being made by both atheists and believers to separate the two. The atheists demonize theology and the spiritual. Many believers demonize science and the temporal. Bonaventure understood this urge to divisiveness well, and countered it wherever he could.

He is able to draw all things together in proper order, to value the material and the spiritual because, in all things, for Bonaventure, Christ is the center, the mediator, the hinge that connects all things, draws all being and Being together, in whom not a jot nor a tittle, not a crumb nor a loaf, not a raindrop nor an ocean, not a quark nor a quasar, not an atom nor His own angels will be lost.

We might expand his thought to say: the Father is the root and source of the Trinity, by whom all things are made, redeemed, and glorified. The Son is the trunk, branch and channel of the Trinity, through whom all things are made, redeemed, and glorified. The Spirit is the leaf, flower, fruit, and fullness of the Trinity, in whom all things are made, redeemed and glorified. In restoring all things in Christ, as Paul teaches us, and as Bonaventure desires with all his heart, we turn the lattice of Creation into Jacob's ladder, restoring that original harmony and union in the Trinitarian *communio, processio*, and dance that God originally intended.

This is the vision Bonaventure desires, describes and delights in so clearly and deeply. Let us also . . . 

Giddy Liturgy

Some "Vatican II" Masses around the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

By Alan Peter

What does it mean when the Second Vatican Council teaches: Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority. [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Chapter 1, Part III, A, 22.3]

For there will come a time when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap up to themselves teachers according to their own lusts, and they will turn away their hearing from the truth and turn aside rather to fables. [2 Tim. 4:3-4]

When we pray privately or in common, we draw our prayers mostly from the depths of our own hearts. They are human feelings which we express, modified and colored by their natural source. But the prayers of the Church are almost wholly from the Holy Scripture; they express feelings inspired by the Holy Ghost Himself. When we use the inspired language of the Holy Spirit, these words of the prayer of the Church are worthy of God, because they are His own words. "God," says St. Augustine, "in order that He might be worthily praised by man, praised Himself." This He has done by inspiring the words of the Psalms and the Holy Scriptures, and it is almost entirely of these that the prayer of the Church consists. This prayer is therefore divine both in the feelings it expresses and even in the words used." [The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Chapter II]

What does it mean when the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* states: Nevertheless, the priest must remember that he is the servant of the Sacred Liturgy and that he himself is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of Mass. [Chapter 1, 24]

And when he was drawing near (Jerusalem), the whole company of the disciples began to rejoice and to praise God with a loud voice ... And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it ... And he entered the temple, and began to cast out those who were selling and buying in it, saying to them, "It is written, My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." [Luke 19: 35-46]

I do not deny that many priests are almost giddy with the so-called "freedoms" they have misappropriated over the last 50 years, and use every chance to exhort their parishioners to *celebrate* and *rejoice*. I submit that these same priests may be misreading Our Lord, much as His disciples did during His entry into Jerusalem. As Fr. Urban Snyder noted, "Every valid Mass, considered in itself, has infinite value with respect to the adoration, praise, and thanksgiving which it gives God; but with respect to us its effects are in proportion to our dispositions." So we must ask ourselves: What is my disposition during an ever-changing Mass? Is my *giddiness* actually *dizziness*? Is either a gift of the Holy Spirit?

From Pope Benedict's letter XVI proclaiming a *Year For Priests*, and who himself quotes Saint John Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars, "All good works, taken together, do not equal the sacrifice of the Mass" - he would say - "since they are human works, while the Holy Mass is the work of God". He was convinced that the fervor of a priest's life depended entirely upon the Mass: "The reason why a priest is lax is that he does not pay attention to the Mass! My God, how we ought to pity a priest who celebrates as if he were engaged in something routine!"

"Yet when the Son of Man comes, will he find, do you think, faith on the earth?" [Luke 18:8] ❧

Reporting Clerical Sexual Abuse

“Never waste a crisis.” Chronicles editor Scott Richert describes a propaganda campaign against the Catholic Church.

By Stephanie Block

A few weeks ago, a New Mexico county paper published a political cartoon depicting a small boy standing before a towering prelate, presumably Pope Benedict XVI. The boy says, “I was molested by a priest!” The prelate gleefully responds, “I forgive you.”

There are many “points” implied by this wicked bit of commentary, one of which seems to be that our society’s pedophile problem is a “Catholic” problem. This cartoon is no anomaly. To read secular news coverage, even in a predominantly Catholic part of the country, is to be bombarded with the message – sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant – that clerical celibacy and Church hierarchy intrinsically breed corruption.

Media messages have “an effect. A late April/early May *New York Times*/CBS News poll found that 73 percent of all respondents, and 53 percent of all Catholics, believe that ‘child sexual abuse by Catholic priests is a problem that is still going on today,’ despite the very solid evidence to the contrary,” Scott Richert, executive editor of *Chronicles*, told a June conference held at the Rockford Institute in Illinois. [Quotes are taken from Richert’s June 3, 2010 Rockford Institute lecture, “Clerical Sexual Abuse: Separating Fact, Fiction, and Anti-Catholic Bias.” Video clip of talk: www.rockfordinstitute.org/?p=389]

Richert calls these media messages “propaganda,” and looks at specific polling questions about media coverage of the pedophile scandals “designed to gauge whether a piece of propaganda has been effective, rather than merely to sample public opinion.” Despite evidence “that Catholic clerical sexual abuse has, throughout this entire period, been less common than sexual abuse by those in other professions (especially other profession focused on children),” there is still a popular perception, fueled by unrelenting and distorted media reporting, that the evil Catholic Church is alone in this problem – with the painful, corollary that child sexual abuse will be under-investigated in those fields where it’s most prevalent.

In an interview, Richert answered some questions about this issue.

Block: You describe in some detail the questions pollsters have asked Catholics about priest scandals of the past several decades as reflective of a propaganda campaign against the Church. Could you give any concrete examples of this?

Richert: The final questions of the *New York Times*/CBS News poll that I mentioned in my talk read like push polling—that is, using question to try to change attitudes rather than to measure them. But the most egregious example of bias is found in question 25, right in the middle of the poll: “Do you think the problem of sexual abuse of children and teenagers is a more common problem in the Catholic Church than it is in other walks of life, or is it just as common a problem in other walks of life?”

Notice what’s missing? Those who were polled were given the opportunity to say that sexual abuse is “more common” in the Catholic Church than outside of Her, or “just as common” outside of the Catholic Church as in Her. “Less common” in the Catholic Church (or “more common in other walks of life”) was not an option.

Block: It certainly colors the answer, doesn’t it? Do you have any particularly egregious examples of biased reporting in the media’s coverage of the Church pedophile cases?

Richert: The *New York Times*’ coverage of the case of Wisconsin priest Fr. Lawrence Murphy is a very good example. I’ve discussed it at length on the About.com *GuideSite to Catholicism*: Those three pieces show how the coverage unfolded, and how the *Times*’ narrative—that Pope Benedict XVI protected a pedophile priest—was both untrue and delivered at the instigation of a lawyer who has made \$60 million off such cases and repeatedly sued the Vatican.

Block: In your lecture, you said that the incidence of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church actually began to *decline* in 1980, “before public attention was drawn to it, and before the Church instituted various measures.” What happened?

Richert: One particular cohort of priests—born between 1925 and 1950 and ordained between 1950 and 1975—were responsible for the bulk of the crisis. And most of the bishops who transferred priests accused of sexual abuse and who covered up allegations in the 1980's and 1990's belong to this same demographic cohort. By 1980, they had begun to retire or die, and by 2002, most of them were no longer active priests.

Block: So, the next question would obviously be, why were such a disproportionately high number of problematic priests ordained between 1950 and 1975?

Richert: As early as the 1940's (long before Vatican II, which has often been blamed for this crisis), far too many in the Church—bishops, priests, and laymen—began to regard the priesthood as a profession or occupation, rather than as a vocation. Clerical celibacy is a discipline, but it also reflects a metaphysical reality: The celibate priest is married. His spouse is the Church. He must devote his life to Her the way that a husband devotes his life to his wife. His children are the members of his congregation.

In other words, the celibate priesthood is not an alternative to marriage but a different form of marriage. When, for various reasons, some bishops lost sight of that, they began, as Fr. Thomas Loya, the pastor of Annunciation Byzantine Catholic Church in the Chicago suburbs, has said, “to ordain men to the priesthood who weren't fit to be husbands and fathers.”

Block: Does that analysis apply to bishops, too? Without a doubt, some of the Church's problems – and I mean real problems, not media biased problems – can be laid at the feet of bishops who permitted deeply disturbed priests to continue functioning in positions where they could abuse children..

Richert: Perhaps the best analysis of the problem in the episcopacy was written by Rockford Bishop Thomas Doran and published in the February 22, 2002, issue of the diocesan newspaper, the *Observer*. “Sometimes,” Bishop Doran wrote, “people's intentions are good. They look the other way, or they misjudge the nature of the problem. That was, it must be said, once the case with respect to pedophiles. Not so many decades ago the best science said their obsession could be cured, or at least treated and brought under control, in the same way that people can be freed from the snares of alcoholism and drug addiction. . . . Now we know better. . . . [W]e all must join together in beseeching God to make us duly conscious of the monstrosity of this evil.”

Treating the priesthood like a vocation and treating grave sin as a medical or physical problem rather than a metaphysical one went hand in hand.

Block: It's been particularly disheartening to watch media attacks against Benedict XVI – it's so undeserved. Your lecture went into great detail about all the steps he's taken to address clerical sexual abuse, stemming from years ago, before he was pope. Could you summarize some of them?

Richert: Concerned by the slowness with which cases of clerical sexual abuse were being handled by the Roman Rota (which previously had authority over them), Cardinal Ratzinger wanted to streamline the process—and, also, to control it himself. He successfully lobbied Pope John Paul II to have responsibility for such cases transferred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Since April 30, 2001, over 3,000 cases worldwide have been investigated by the CDF. In those cases in which the CDF has found sufficient evidence to authorize a canonical trial, over 85 percent have resulted in convictions.

Cardinal Ratzinger had a hand, too, in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, adopted in 2002 by the U.S. bishops, and adapted by bishops' conferences in other countries to their own circumstances.

Over the objections of other high-ranking Vatican officials, Cardinal Ratzinger ordered the investigation of Father Maciel, the founder of the Legion of Christ, which resulted in his removal from ministry and his exile to a monastery.

And finally, after his election, Pope Benedict put into place strict new rules to prevent the admission of not only practicing homosexuals but those with homosexual tendencies to the ministry. Over two thirds of all cases of abuse in the United States between 1950 and 2002 involved adolescent (*i.e.*, postpubescent) males, and thus are more accurately described as homosexual acts rather than pedophilic ones.

Block: Why are groups such as Survivors' Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP!) and Voice of the Faithful so critical of Benedict XVI? One would think, with their ostensible concern to clean up abuse in the Church, they would applaud his work...

Richert: Exactly. Which calls into question their true motives. Both oppose the ban on homosexuals in the priesthood; both call for the end of clerical celibacy; and SNAP, in particular, has agitated for women priests. SNAP has also received significant funding from lawyers who have sued the Catholic Church.

Block: You said there were only six allegations of clerical sexual abuse in the entire United States in 2009. I realize clerical sexual abuse is just beginning to be uncovered in several European countries, so the subject is in the news, but it seems there's a disproportionate emphasis about it in the US. What's going on?

Richert: This latest round of media coverage has been served up by lawyers with a vested interest in keeping a dying problem alive. Jeffrey Anderson, the attorney who has made \$60 million off of suits against the Church, directed the *New York Times* to the Father Murphy story. Less than a month later, he used that case as the basis for his latest lawsuit against the Vatican and Pope Benedict.

Block: So, if we accept the thesis that there's a "propaganda campaign" – or a media bias – against the Catholic Church, the next question is "why." What's behind it?

Richert: Beyond the greediness of lawyers who are running out of clients, I think it's the hatred of Pope Benedict XVI for believing—really, truly believing—what the Catholic Church teaches. And "modern" men and women—and journalists today are nothing if not "modern"—cannot believe that anyone could really believe what the Church teaches.

Block: Thanks so much for your time and all the work you've put into researching this. ☞