

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

April 2006



Being a Father Like Christ

*Christ's fatherhood a model
for all Dads*

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Homosexuals and Holy Orders

Why not ordain homosexuals?

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Cover: The Three Marys at the Tomb

This painting is generally accepted as the work of Hubert van Eyck, brother of Jan van Eyck.

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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.

Playing at a Parish Near You...

There's a reason many don't come back

By Stephanie Block

I struggled with the title for this article. “*Outrageous Programs*” would have been true enough, but when something is as common as a cold, real outrage is difficult to muster - again.

“What! *Another* summons to *another* presentation given by *another* spiritually stunted religious? Can't we go to the movies instead...?”

I mean, how much emotion does a person have to expend?

“Unbelievable” doesn't work, either. What's not to believe?

How about “laughable?” There is, after all, an entertainment factor here, if you're in the right mood. The absurdity of Catholics being *forced* to attend anti-Catholic instruction at a Catholic Church could be the stuff of black comedy - unless this bit of theater is playing in *your* neighborhood, at St. Everyparish, in which case you may not see the humor.

Which brings us to the point: if you recognize this *particular* meeting as having taken place at *your* parish, you're right. It did.

Lesson One

So, after a short, benign prayer service, Sister launched into her theme: “I can't get across to students that Mass is only one way to experience the Holy Spirit... Say, we have to get up at 5 a.m. to go to Mass. If that causes a child to be overly tired and frustrated, it would be better *not* to go to Mass.”

Sister gave a naughty, conspiratorial grin: “Oh, my... Father wouldn't like me to say *that!*”

Knowing Father, she's probably right about the last bit.

But consider what Sister has just taught.

Since when did being tired or frustrated excuse anyone from going... to school, say? Or work? Or, making supper for one's whiney family? Or visiting that cranky, sick aunt? Or helping that cussedly wretched neighbor down the street? Would Sister suggest that one only do those things toward which one is properly disposed? Hard to imagine.

Or, perhaps Mass attendance is, in Sister's world, an exception from all other duties - the single, unique duty from which we are excused if we lack the proper feelings of desire, wakefulness, and interior peace. If so, one must ask where she learned of such an exception. Is it found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*? Scripture? Church Fathers? The words of the saints?

Hmmm. Seems the Church teaches just the opposite.

Lesson Two

Sister's next point was that nowhere in the Bible or in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* did it say that a man *had* to love his wife or how. “A husband could play golf on his day off and show no attention to his wife” without, strictly speaking, violating scripture.

Now, wait a minute. Granting that scripture provides no injunction against wife-abuse-by-golf (as golf had yet to be invented), what about the “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church” verse? Seems to be both a commandment and an instruction, rolled into one.



Love and Duty

“But how do we learn to love each other and the world? The next world war will be over water: how do we teach our children to be good citizens if they only participate when it’s mandatory.” Uhhh...OK. Having just dispensed our children from Mass when they’re tired and frustrated, Sister’s going to complain that they grow up to be reluctant citizens?

“Once their service hours (for Confirmation preparation) are completed, they’re never seen again.” If Confirmation is made to seem like no more than a good citizen badge awarded for service hours, there may be a good reason they leave.

Time for the spiritual component (we knew there *had* to be a spiritual component). Sister explained that she used to wake up early in the morning to see the sun rise. She would raise her right arm and extend it toward the sun and allow the heat and power of the sun to penetrate her body, passing through it and out the left arm, which she aimed toward Saddam Hussein.

Cosmic nuking? Do they teach this to the kids – or just to the sponsors?

One parent asked to see a copy of the curriculum. A good parent, after all, wants to reinforce the lessons at home.

“Yes, darling. Jesus said to forgive your enemies, so we zing him with sun energy like this: *zaaaaap! sizzle!*

“No, dear, Jesus never did that, but Sister showed us how.

“What, sweetie? Does it frizzle Saddam’s hair? Well, just *look* at the man!”

But Sister said copies of the curriculum were only for the mentors’ use. Parents are *never* to learn the ritual actions for curling the enemy’s beard. (No, of *course* she didn’t say that.)

Oh, I’m sorry. I’m totally lost.

What was Lesson Two?

Now to Teach the Kids

All right, so what *does* this parish teach those seeking to be confirmed in the Catholic faith? This year, they heard a talk from a self-identified neo-Buddhist/Catholic. Sister introduced them to Centering Prayer. Some of their teachers are contracepting; others are in irregular marriages. See, young’uns, the Church is just like The World (yawn).

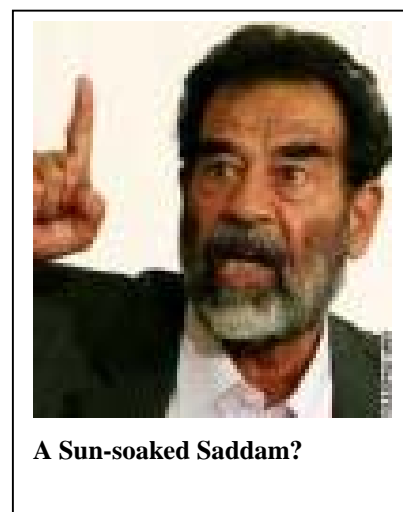
Or is it?

Let’s say it *isn’t*. Let’s say we don’t want our children confirmed in The World – or in anything like it. Let’s say we want our children taught the Catholic Faith and confirmed in *it*.

If that’s what we want, then we’re going to have to utilize the graces of our own Confirmation (think “Soldier of Christ” and “backbone”) and teach by praxis – a little faith in action. Perhaps that means speaking with Sister. Perhaps it means refusing to attend programs that aren’t sound. Perhaps it means finding another parish. Perhaps it means postponing Sacramental reception. Perhaps it means being embarrassed and discomforted.

These lessons, however, are sound: it makes a difference, after all, whether we call on sun power or pray to God. It makes a difference that duty is done in season and out. It makes a difference that truth is worth seeking. It makes a difference that some things are more important than being polite.

Teach that to your children and you’ll have nothing to fear from outrageously preposterous programs. In fact, in the right mood, you can even laugh at them. ☺



A Sun-soaked Saddam?

Homosexuals and Holy Orders, Part II

By Marie P. Loehr

*Do you think that I came to bring peace upon the earth?
No, I tell you, but division...
-Luke 12:51-52*

The current issue of whether homosexual men can be ordained to the priesthood in the sacrament of Holy Orders is an example of this division Christ brings. Even more than the issue of whether women can be ordained to the priesthood, settled with finality by John Paul II in 1994 with a resounding “No,” the question of homosexual ordination has been divisive and confused. In this case, it is compounded by the reality that many homosexuals have already been ordained to the priesthood since Vatican II – knowingly or unknowingly - despite long Church history prohibiting such ordinations. It has also been compounded and obfuscated by the crisis of clerical sexual abuse over the past several years, and the sacrilegious behavior so perpetuated.

These problems demand that we attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of why the Church has taught over and over again through the centuries that homosexuals may not receive the sacrament of Holy Orders.

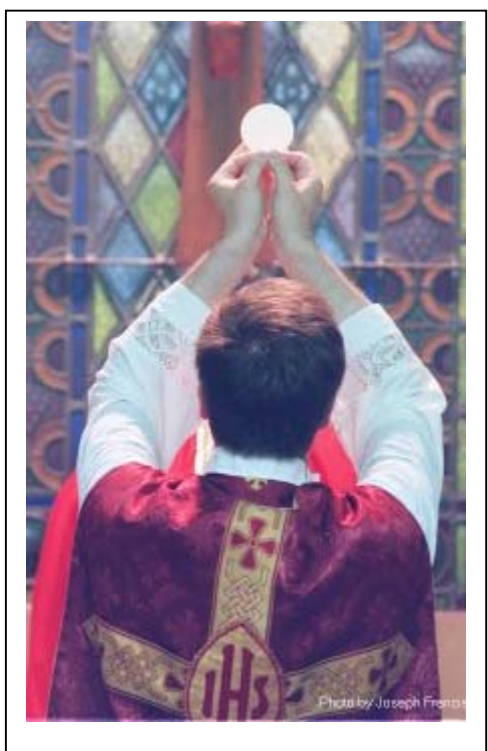
It is not idle or arbitrary whim that names each priest, “Father.” He *is* Bridegroom and Father, as we noted in March. Thus Holy Orders is a call that demands full psychological, as well as physiological, maturity, integration, and wholeness.

This is not possible for the homosexual – whether his homosexuality is exemplified in acts or endured in abstention from acts.

Saying this is not to deny that individual homosexual persons may have the best will and intentions in the world. Many may be far more compassionate and generous in pastoral outreach, have far more gifts for preaching and teaching, than some heterosexual men. Many may be far holier. Further, we are all sinners, all wrestling with sins we find hard to avoid, or abandon. No person is in a position to throw stones at any other person--for whatever sins committed or repented.

Nevertheless, objectively speaking, the homosexual cannot live spousal priesthood in its generative fullness, spiritually or psychologically. This is not a matter of “feelings” or discrimination. Women are not able to live this either, by virtue of their particular nature and gifts.

By its tendencies and dispositions, homosexuality refuses the reality of human incarnation, its limitations and exigencies. That is to say, it denies the spousal iconography of the body, male and female. It sees the body as an instrument of pleasure, and uses its procreative organs in any way that will produce such pleasure, legitimate use or not. In this, it rejects the body, as constraint and limitation on the “freedom” of the spirit to do what it wills, to know as angels know--by direct apprehension of, or union with, essence.



Finally, in this denial of the body and its legitimate created exigencies, homosexuality refuses a spousal Other. Besides the immature or narcissistic implications of this psychological or spiritual refusal, homosexuality simply denies spousal reality--with all its risks and sacrifice. If it has at times been presented as satanic in essence, that is due to rejection of Other and enclosure in self, and exact mirror images of itself. Its essence would appear to deny the Other who is God, who is openness to new life, to a proliferation of difference, to the "Pied Beauty" of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem: in appearance and in "two-in-one-flesh-ness." As a result of these spiritual realities, it is in itself and of its nature, contraceptive and abortive. It is contrary to the generation of life in its essence. It is a denial of God, in spite of itself, not by its conscious intentions perhaps, but by its innate dispositions.

This may be far from an individual homosexual's mind or will. But it is the essence of homosexuality *per se*, its acts, intentions, dispositions and tendencies. As such, homosexuality affects the entire person, in his attitudes and capacities. Thus, it affects the psychology and spirituality of homosexual persons in the priesthood, whether they are aware of that or not and whether they like or want that, or not. The essence of the priest, who is "*in persona Christi*," is Bridegroom, Spouse and Father. Only a man who is spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally, i.e., "affectively," mature and integrated can live this reality in Orders. Only a man who can envision and consider actual marriage and fatherhood as a real possibility for himself is spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally mature. Only a fully integrated masculine person can freely choose and live Orders in its sacrificial reality.

The same cliques and clagues who clamored for the ordination of women are those who now claim homosexuals are as fitted for Holy Orders in the Roman Catholic Church as heterosexuals. In both cases they misunderstand or misinterpret the reality of the Eucharist and Orders. In the case of women and ordination, they proposed the sacraments as "spiritual," thus outward form in body was immaterial, so to speak. In the case of gays and ordination, they propose that bodily form--in this case, a male body to outward appearances and according to its DNA -- is all that is necessary to fulfill the requirements of the sacrament. Indeed, there are those who propose that gays can, do, will make "better priests" because they have the outward form of the male, and the interior disposition of the female in terms of sensitivity, pastoral caring, and creativity. Alas for those so misguided! The sacraments are both material and spiritual, matter and form, body and spirit, physical and spiritual, fully integrated and restored in Christ, the Son of God incarnate in human flesh. To be His image and persona, the priest must be wholly masculine, wholly ordered to spousal reality and its generative purpose, in every fiber of his being, material and spiritual.

These are some of the reasons, based on the nature of the Trinity, the nature of the Incarnation, the nature of Holy Orders, the nature of the Eucharist, and the nature of homosexuality itself, behind the Vatican instruction against the ordination of homosexuals to the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church. ❧



*Project
Life*

Good Friday Prayer Vigil

You are invited to participate in a **Good Friday** prayer service which will include:

**Rosary
Jericho Walk
Stations of the Cross
Divine Mercy Chaplet
Litanies and Hymns**

WHERE

Planned Parenthood Abortuary

In a lot off alley *behind* abortuary at
701 San Mateo Blvd. NE, Albuquerque
(SW Corner of San Mateo Blvd. And Marquette)
Park on Truman, Marquette, or Roma

DATE

Good Friday, April 14, 2006

TIME

9:00 am to Noon

You may come earlier, stay later, or
pray with us only an hour or two.

**Please Join Us in Spending Time
With Our Lord at America's Calvary**



Whence cometh the law? The Foundations of American Justice

Seminars on the Natural Law: Sponsored by the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education

May 26 and May 27.

Law firm in Albuquerque: for more information, call (505) 722-4463

Cost: \$200, excluding lodging, meals and transportation.

What makes an action legal or illegal becomes especially difficult as it becomes crucially important in those areas that underlie laws and constitutions. Join two professors from Thomas Aquinas College and a small group of experienced legal colleagues for a weekend of seminar discussions exploring the foundations of justice in the American polity. Our first day of discussions will compare the views of two great political philosophers with that of our own Declaration of Independence, which justified independence on the basis of "the Law of Nature and of Nature's God". Our evening lecture will address the problem of decrying Southern secession while defending American independence. On our second day, we will turn to the Constitution, looking to "Federalist Papers" to justify the establishment of the Constitution itself. Our final seminar will consider the proper role of Justices in establishing justice based on law.

The program format will be in the Socratic seminar method as employed at "Great Books" schools like St. John's College in Annapolis and Santa Fe, and Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, California. Because of the seminar method, this program will be limited on a first come basis to fifteen participants. All participants will be expected to have read the material beforehand and be willing to engage in thoughtful conversation in the questions set forth below. Dr. Richard Ferrier and Dr. Andrew Seeley, who are both experienced tutors at Thomas Aquinas College, will lead the seminar discussions. Dr. Ferrier will also give a lecture on the "Legality of Secession."

Day One

Seminar I -- Thomas Aquinas on Law & The Declaration of Independence

Readings: Summa Theologiae I-2.90: What is Law? in four articles
The Declaration of Independence

Central Question: Does The Declaration admit of Thomas's understanding of Law?

Seminar II -- John Locke on the Law of Nature and the Origin of Government

Reading: Second Treatise on Government, Chapter 1

Central Question: How does Locke's position compare with Thomas and The Declaration?

Lecture -- Dr. Richard Ferrier: "The Legality of Secession"

Day Two

Seminar I -- The Legality of the Constitutional Convention and Ratification

Reading: Federalist 43, Selections from the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution

Central Question: Was the establishment of the Constitution legal?

Seminar II -- Justice and Justices: Antonin Scalia and Alan Keyes on Judicial Interpretation

Reading: Antonin Scalia on judicial interpretation of the Constitution

Alan Keyes: "The Declaration of Independence and the Spirit of American Law"

Central Question: Do Justices need to be Statesmen?

Biographies:

Dr. Richard Ferrier B.A., St. John's College, Annapolis MD, M.A., Ph.D., Indiana University Dr. Ferrier has taught at Thomas Aquinas College since 1978, and is on the Board of the California Association of Scholars. His writings have appeared in many newspapers and journals, including *Heterodoxy*, *Academic Questions*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Diego Union Tribune*, and the *Ventura County Star*. He has lectured at Southern Virginia College, St. John's College Santa Fe, St. Mary's College, Moraga, and, of course, at his home institution, Thomas Aquinas College. He does frequent radio interviews on current politics and the American Founding, and has been a guest on MSNBC TV, on the issue of affirmative action and its relation to American Principles. In 1996 he was Vice-Chairman, California Civil Rights Initiative Campaign [Proposition 209] and currently is the President of the Declaration Foundation. He has taught the American Founding, Lincoln, Locke, Tocqueville, and the classical historians and political thinkers in most of his 25 years of service at Thomas Aquinas College, and has volunteered many times to lecture in local schools on American politics and history, especially on the Civil War and its causes. His internet writings on Lincoln and his recent detractors have been extensive in the last two years. He has also served as the higher education correspondent for the California Political Review. Dr. Ferrier's academic interests include, besides the American Founding, classical philosophy, especially physics, and the growth of mathematics during the Scientific Revolution.

Dr. Andrew Seeley B.A. Thomas Aquinas College; Ph.D. Mediaeval Studies (Theology), University of Toronto For thirteen years, Dr. Seeley has been a tutor at Thomas Aquinas College in California, a premier institution of Catholic liberal education. He has taught courses in Biblical Studies, Logic, Natural Philosophy, Geometry, Cartesian Algebra, Differential Calculus, Modern Philosophy and Literature, Newtonian Physics, and Music Theory. He is co-author with Dr. Richard Ferrier of *Declaration Statesmanship: A Course in American Government*.

RAPTURE: *The End-Times Error That Leaves The Bible Behind*

By David B. Currie
Book Review by Abbie Collins

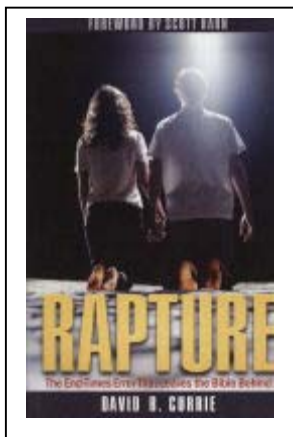
One of the first Catholic quotes I heard after my conversion/reversion was that “To become deep in history, is to cease to be Protestant.” (John Cardinal Newman)

Raised in an agnostic home but always hungry for God since early childhood, I meandered around through various spiritual journeys and eventually joined the Catholic Church in 1969. I say joined because it was in no way a true conversion. This was pre-RCIA, and I hadn’t a clue who Jesus was, why He died or honestly what the Church taught; it was simply the only church that felt like a church so I signed up. Two years later I stumbled into an Assembly of God coffee house Bible study, attended 5 nights a week for 3 years, had a profound conversion experience, fell in love with Jesus and the Scriptures, decided the Catholic Church was in error and a bore and settled into 30 years as a committed Protestant evangelical and went on to do 12 years of stateside missionary work with the AG. I loved apologetics and end-times study, sat at the feet of Hal Lindsey and his ilk for many years and had that pre-millennial, pre-trib rapture teaching down pat.

That was until I channel surfed one day to EWTN, and was stunned by the Biblical teaching I began hearing there - “How could these Catholics know so much about the Bible?” Wow, what arrogance, considering they wrote it and preserved it! The next two years were a wrenching, painful, truly agonizing journey as the Holy Spirit dragged me kicking and screaming into Holy Mother Church. It was a love/hate affair until I realized I’d be living a lie to remain Protestant, and then, once the decision was made to revert, I was hit with a wave of joy unspeakable and full of glory to be Home at last in His true Church.

Mary was a big hurdle for me along with several other typical Protestant arguments that had to be dismantled one by one as I studied my way through the Scriptures and the Catechism, but, by far one of the most difficult beliefs to shed was my solid belief in the rapture and pre-millennialism. I ordered several Catholic books and tape sets, but the Catholic teaching on the subject seemed too confusing, and I shelved it as something I’d never be able to figure out - UNTIL I picked up this astounding book by David Currie (*Rapture: The End-Times Error That Leaves The Bible Behind*, Sophia Institute Press, 2003). This man is a genius. He writes with such clarity and presents his thesis with a profoundly informed historical insight, tying together the prophecies from Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation and the Olivet Discourse in Matthew, and doing all of this on the firm foundation of the Magisterium and our incredibly rich heritage in the writings of our early Church Fathers. I could honestly hardly put the book down and was even up in the middle of the night once plowing through it and taking copious notes.

David Currie is a former evangelical Protestant, so he comes at the subject with a thorough grasp of Protestant teaching and the emotional hold this theology has on one’s entire life and Christian walk. Almost every page contained an epiphany moment for me, an “Oh, now I get it - this finally makes sense.” Just one example; in Matthew 24:33-34, Jesus assures his disciples that the “end-times” events He is describing (which I’d always been taught as a Protestant to be *future* events to take place after I’d been safely whisked away in the rapture) would be seen *by them*, in *their generation*. Currie makes a clear and compelling case for the truth of Jesus’ promise and the fact that these events have indeed been historically fulfilled, and lays out for you how, when, and the ways in which these prophecies perfectly dovetail with those in the Old Testament book of Daniel. This amazingly brilliant book has left me with a sense of relief, that I’ve at long last heard the true and articulate interpretation of these many difficult Biblical passages, once again confirming what I discovered nearly seven years ago, that the Catholic Church is the true Church whose teachings come straight from God’s Throne of Grace, unclouded by the dozens of conflicting Protestant theories, as the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. I hope I’ve tantalized you into adding this book to your collection. ☞



Laminated Maps

Moral compass on immigration swings in several directions

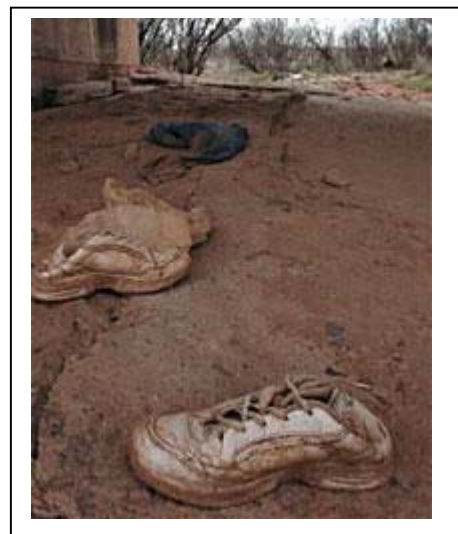
By Jason D Mosher

Lately there has been much discussion about the status of the so-called illegal aliens in the nation and in our state. Recently, both His Eminence Roger Cardinal Mahoney and His Excellency Archbishop Michael J Sheehan have spoken on this topic. People in the United States hold various opinions on this issue for various reasons. My purpose in this article is to address a point that I feel has not been a part of the discussion on illegal immigration in the national, state and ecclesiastical debates. The issue that I feel has been neglected is the morality of violating the borders of a viable state.

Morally, a state is treated as a juridical person. This means for all intents and purposes, a state has all the rights that a person has. It has a right to life, it has a right to defend itself, it has a right to defend its allies, and it has a right to defend its property. This list is, of course, not complete but is an example of the natural rights that must be accorded a viable state. Men of good will have the responsibility to help secure these rights, taking care not to abridge them. The Natural Moral Law from which these rights are derived has been posited by God in the very fabric of Creation as an expression of His Will. One of the ramifications of these rights of the state has direct bearing on the problem of illegal immigration.

If I own a piece of property that I live on, I will have a house and a lawn and a backyard. I have a right to this property because I hold ownership of it. I have broad privileges as a result of this ownership. I have the right to raise a family on it and invite other people to visit. I can throw a party and invite friends and acquaintances to this party, granting them the right to come on to my property. I could even go so far as to invite a friend to take up residence in my home. However, do any of these invited guests have a right to *claim* my spare bedroom for their own without my permission? Does the passer-by on the street have the right to pitch a tent on my lawn without my permission? Does my neighbor have the *right* to use my bathroom without my permission? The obvious answer to these questions and all like them is (generally speaking) a resounding “no.” If this were so, then my home would cease to be mine and I would lose control of that which is my legitimate possession. In a sense it would be a theft of my possessions.

The scenario for the state is similar to that of the homeowner. The state has a right to regulate its borders and it has the right determine who it wants to invite into its “home” - so to speak. If the state desires, it can open its borders and allow all people complete free access to the country. However, the United States has determined, as a legitimate State, to regulate its borders for the safety of its citizens and for the betterment of the country as a whole. This right cannot be morally violated without an overwhelmingly grave reason. It is irresponsible to make a claim that the border policies of the United States are illicit and contrary to the dignity of the human person as some public figures have attempted to assert. It is irresponsible for public figures to support the actions of illegal immigrants because it is the support of an action that is objectively immoral. While the national plight of many illegal immigrants may be lamentable, it is not so grave that it overrides US sovereignty. Therefore, to disregard the state’s legitimate laws is immoral and inconsistent with our Catholic faith. ☞



Bishop Robert Vasa Writes that “Pro-Choice” is Heresy

Writing in the Baker, Oregon diocesan newspaper, Bishop Robert Vasa says the so-called “pro-choice” position among Catholics is “heresy.” The argument that “primacy of conscience” allows Catholics to dissent from basic Church teaching, including the right to life, is seriously flawed.

Bishop Vasa hastened to assure his flock that he was not advocating “vigilante theology,” “but we do need strong words to combat erroneous and fallacious teaching.... There is a very strong word, which still exists in our Church, which most of us are too ‘gentle’ to use. The word is ‘heresy.’”

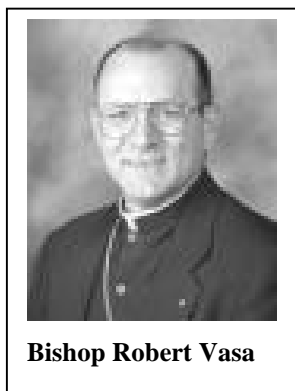
Though some Catholics claim that one can be both a good Catholic and ‘pro-choice’ on abortion, Vasa writes: “The teaching of the Church in the area of life is clear and unequivocal. Human life must be respected and protected from conception to natural death. Those who maintain that any and all decisions about the disposition of pre-born human beings are exclusively the right of the mother or the parents, at least implicitly, reject the clear and consistent teaching of the Church.” This rejection, he writes, is heresy, as defined in the Church's canon law. Those Catholics who hold the ‘pro-choice’ position “reject the clear and consistent teaching of the Church.”

Anticipating protests of “intolerance,” Vasa says that while Jesus was meek and humble of heart, he did not “tolerate” sin. “I wonder if those who heard Jesus say, ‘Whoever leads one of these little ones astray, it would be better if he had a millstone tied around his neck and be cast into the sea,’ nodded approval and said, ‘He is so tolerant and accepting.’ There is a point at which passive ‘tolerance’ allows misleading teachings to be spread and propagated, thus confusing or even misleading the faithful about the truths of the Church.”

In 2004, Vasa instituted a requirement for diocesan staff to publicly adhere to Catholic teaching on abortion and other major issues. At that time he said: “A failure on my part to verify a person’s suitability for ministry would be judged as seriously negligent.”

Shepherding a state that has legalized assisted suicide, Vasa is one of the few US bishops to condemn the court-ordered dehydration killing of Terri Schiavo.

He was also among those bishops who defended then-Cardinal Ratzinger’s position that pro-abortion politicians must be refused Holy Communion. ☞



Bishop Robert Vasa



Charlotte Wyatt

Euthanasia – The Next Step

Doctors in England were legally allowed to withhold life support from a two-year-old brain-damaged child, Charlotte Wyatt-- against the adamant wishes of her parents. The doctors argued that Charlotte’s life was so intolerable that if her condition worsened they should be allowed to withhold treatment. Charlotte suffers from severe lung, brain and kidney damage. But last October her condition improved so much that the judge removed a ruling allowing doctors to let her die. ☞

Another Myth Debunked

Despite popular wisdom that holds maternal mortality will rise without access to “safe, legal abortion,” a United Nations report (of all things) has found nations with permissive abortion laws do not experience lower rates of maternal mortality compared to nations with restrictive abortion laws. Ireland and Poland, often targeted for their strong restrictions on abortion, have lower maternal mortality rates than Russia and the US. Nor did it find that abortion laws decrease infant mortality either (among infants who are not deliberately aborted).

☞

Being a Father like Christ

By Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted, Diocese of Phoenix
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“Let the children come to me.” (Mk 10:13) Presidential speechwriter and best-selling author Peggy Noonan, recently published a book: *JOHN PAUL THE GREAT: Remembering a Spiritual Father*. In the book, she writes (p. 235): “We all want a spiritual father. Whatever the circumstances of your life or family, whatever strong fathers you have in your life, we all want a spiritual father. We want someone who will stand for what is difficult and right, what is impossible but true. We are human, and so we don’t always want to live by the truth or be governed by it. But we are grateful when someone stands for it. And when he walks onto the balcony and you can see him and reach to him and know he is there—well, that is something.”

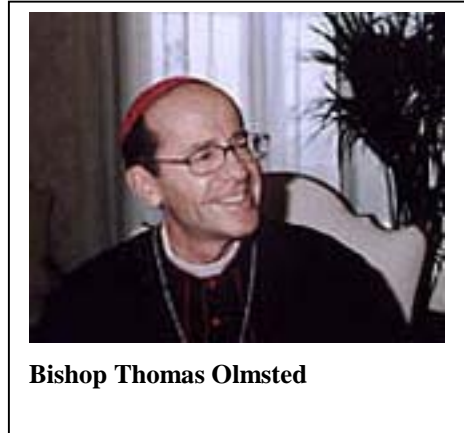
“Let the children come to me.” (Mk 13:16) The role of a father here on earth, whether it be a father in a traditional family or it be a spiritual father, is to aid children in coming to Jesus and through Him to our Heavenly Father. At this Eucharist, I shall consider two ways that we men are called to exercise our responsibility as fathers: through our example, and through our standing for what is difficult and true.

Before touching on these two, however, let me just briefly note that Jesus Himself exercised a fatherly mission as He redeemed the world. Yes, I know that He is the Son of God and Son of Man, that God the Father said to Him: “You are my beloved Son,” and that His primary identity is in His sonship. Nonetheless, as He revealed the Father’s love to us, He fulfilled a fatherly mission; He acted like both a faithful son and a loving father. In doing this, Jesus showed us that the key to being a good father is being a good son.

Notice in Jesus’ life, for example, how often He called his disciples “children.” After a rich young man rejected Jesus’ invitation to follow Him and went away sad, Jesus turned to His disciples and said (Mk 10:24f), “Children, how hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Why did Jesus call His followers “children” at that moment? Was there something in the rich young man that was not childlike and that thereby prompted Jesus to affirm the childlike nature of His followers? Was it not also that He was fathering them even as he was fathering the rich young man?

Notice, too, that at the Last Supper Jesus said to the Apostles (Jn 13:33f), “My children, I will be with you only a little while longer... I give you a new commandment: love one another.” Why not address them as brothers or comrades? Why does He say, “My children?” And why, after the Resurrection when He appeared to the Apostles as they were fishing along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, did He address them in the same way, calling out (Jn 21:5) “Children, have you caught anything?”

“Children” is one of Jesus’ favorite titles for His followers, regardless of their age. He calls us children, not out of a desire to be quaint but to point to a fundamental truth about our identity in relation to God the Father, and also about our relationship to Him. We are children of God the Father because He created us and because He cares for us through His loving Providence. But, we are also children of Christ, members of His Church; He brought us to rebirth through His Passion, death and Resurrection. That is why theologians have asserted for 1800 years that the Church was born from the side of



Bishop Thomas Olmsted

Christ on the Cross. As His side was pierced with a lance and water and blood poured out, symbols of the sacramental life of the Church, symbols of how Christ feeds and strengthens us.

So, we learn to exercise fatherhood from Christ Himself. In his deeds and words, He revealed His eternal Father to us. Let us now move on to the two ways we Christian men are called to exercise a fatherly mission today.

1. Example of trusting God the Father. Actions do indeed speak louder than words. In the home I grew up in, every night before the youngest child went to bed, we would all kneel down in my parents' bedroom, before a lighted candle and some statues and pray a series of prayers. My Dad and Mom set the example. Seeing my Dad on his knees each night left a deep impression about my own Dad, but even more it spoke to me about His trust in the Fatherhood of God. It gave me a lively confidence that God's loving providence would always take care of us.

One of the most striking things about the prayers of Jesus is the way they express His deep love of His Father. For example, he prays (Mt 11:25) "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children. Father, it is true. You have graciously willed it so." No wonder, then, that he taught His followers to call God "Father" when they pray: "Our Father, who art in heaven..." Kids do not really care whether their dad is learned and clever, whether he is rich or poor. They care about whether their dad loves them. And it matters greatly whether he loves God and manifests a great trust in God as Father.



2. Standing for what is difficult and true. Fatherhood exists for the well-being of children. Kids need the care of both a mother and father; they need the nurturing love of a mother and protective love of a father. They need someone to stand against what is wrong and a lie and to stand up for what is right and beautiful and true.

Tragically, as David Blankenhorn writes in *FATHERLESS AMERICA* (p. 12), "Over the past two hundred years, fathers have gradually moved from the center to the periphery of family life. As the social role for fathers has diminished, so our cultural story of fatherhood has by now almost completely ceased to portray fathers as essential guarantors of child and societal well-being."

All statistical evidence makes clear that children without fathers are at a much higher risk of living in poverty, much more likely to fail in school, and predictably on a course of engaging in crime and serving time in prison. Despite all this evidence, fatherhood continues to get a bad rap in society today.

We could look upon this as so depressing that it is not worth trying to change it. We could throw in the towel. Or, we could see it through God's eyes, remembering that He created us for a reason, for this time and season. We could recall that He has given us a mission in the 21st century. We could remember His words: "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves... Be not afraid; I am with you always."

Rather than cursing the darkness, why not encourage one another in our vocation of fatherhood? Was there any time in history when the very existence of children was so threatened as today? Abortion, child abuse, divorce, and many other evils wreak havoc on the entire society but are

most destructive for our children. While women have a vital role to play in combating these evils, the role of men is irreplaceable. That role remains similar to the role of St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus.

A father's first and most basic duty is to protect children, to provide them with the safety and security they need to grow and to mature. When the Holy Family was in danger, Joseph got them out of it. He got them up in the middle of the night. He led them to safety in a foreign land, Egypt. To be sure, God assisted him through angels and dreams, but it was Joseph who accepted the call and responsibility. He acted on God's gifts and took the lead.

What Dads provide in a family certainly entails money and material resources, the things that are needed for physical and material needs. But a father provides something of even greater value to his children when he stands up for what is difficult but true, no matter the cost to himself, and when he lives out faithfully his marriage vows to the children's mother. Children have an innate sense of well-being when they perceive, even unconsciously, that Mom and Dad love one another. Since they perceive at an early age that this world is a dangerous place, their hearts are calmed when they see their father standing strong against what is dangerous and wrong, and at the same time giving himself in faithful love to his wife, their mom. All of us men have key roles to play in the Church's mission of healing our culture. We must equip ourselves mentally and spiritually for this struggle. We need ongoing faith formation and days of prayer such as today. We need a vibrant love for Christ. We need to be men of the Eucharist. Let us not forget that genuine fatherhood on earth begins with faith-filled sonship. As we learn from Jesus to be beloved sons, He teaches us to be courageous fathers. Let us never forget His words: "As the Father sent me, so I send you. Live on in my love."✠

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April Calendar

**Los Pequeños Hosting
Catholic Media Coalition Conference
April 28-May 1, 2006:**
Call (505) 293-8006 for information.

Pro-life Prayer:
Planned Parenthood Abortuary
701 San Mateo Blvd.
Catholic Knights Chapel: (505) 266-4100

12 noon, Thursday
Mass at the Catholic Knights of America Chapel
Fr. Stephen Imbarrato
*For more information, call
(505) 266-4100*

**Project Life
Good Friday Prayer Vigil**
Planned Parenthood Abortuary
701 San Mateo Blvd.
April 14, 2006
9 AM – 12 PM
(Flyer, page 8)



*Please consider a
donation to Los
Pequeños.*



Rev. Chad Ripperger, FSSP
Moral theologian for Our Lady of Guadalupe
Seminary
"The Mass and Its Symbolism"
Tapes of his conference are available at (505) 293-
8006

