

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

February 2013

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Archbishop Rahho with Fr Ragheed and Fr Paul Iskandar, victims of radical Islamist violence in Iraq

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Archbishop Louis Sako said that 750 Christians have been murdered in Iraq in the past five years, victims of Islamic terrorism.

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Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo
Stephanie Block-editor, Carol Suhr-copy editor
Correspondence to *The Pequeños Pepper* may be addressed to:
P.O. Box 20428, Albuquerque, NM 87154-0428
Phone: 505-866-0977 or email: www.lospequenos.org
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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.

Iraq's Holy Innocents

By Martin Barillas

A committee of the Canadian parliament studying the persecution of religious minorities heard hair-raising testimony about the treatment of Christians at the hands of Muslims in Iraq. Speaking before the human rights committee on August 17, Filham Isaac of the Nineveh Advocacy Committee testified that since war began in Iraq in 2003, approximately 12 Christian children, some as young as 10, have been abducted and murdered, then crucified near their homes in an effort to torment their parents and warn the Christian community at large. In one case, an infant was kidnapped and then decapitated. The tiny corpse was burned and left on his mother's doorstep, the committee heard.

Isaac also spoke of the many Iraqi Christian churches bombed and burned, clergy murdered, and Christian women raped or doused with disfiguring acid. On August 1, 2004, there were six coordinated bombings of Christian churches on the same day. Subsequent fatal attacks included one on Christmas Day, 2010. Since 2003, there have been at least 45 church bombings in Iraq.

These assaults, he asserted, are part of a systemic effort to purge Iraq of non-Muslims. This was largely accomplished in the 1950s in the case of Iraq's millennial Jewish population, who had resided there since the time of the Patriarch Abraham. Chaldean and Assyrian (also known as Chaldo-Assyrian) Christians were once the largest Christian minority in Iraq and include members of the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the Church of the East. The Chaldeans are not ethnically Arab, being descended from the ancient Mesopotamians who adopted Christianity long before Muhammed and the Islamic religion emerged from the wastes of Arabia.

In a report by the *Ottawa Citizen*, Isaac said that some 300,000 Chaldeans are currently refugees, which is equal to approximately 1 in 3 Chaldeans overall. "It's at a crisis point," said Zaya Oshana of the Nineveh Advocacy Committee, "Christians will be completely annihilated," said Oshana, according to the paper.

Christian Iraqis are hoping to settle in the Nineveh Plains, in northwest Iraq, so as to enjoy some independence and form their own government. Nineveh is the site of what was once one of the greatest cities of the ancient world, which still has fertile soil and may have significant petroleum deposits. There is some support outside of Iraq for the formation of a state in northwest Iraq. Media reports indicate that 700 police officers have begun training to protect the Christians in Iraq. However, at least another 4,000 would be needed to secure the region and establish checkpoints on all highways and roads leading into the vulnerable villages.

The Nineveh Advocacy Committee is made up of four Chaldo-Assyrian organizations in Canada: one, the Assyrian Democratic Movement, which has garnered more votes than any other Iraqi political party in Ontario during the 2005 Iraqi federal election; two, the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac Student Union of Canada; three, the Assyrian Aid Society of Canada; and finally, the Assyrian Society of Canada.

The religious minorities of Iraq make up approximately 5% of the general population of approximately 31 million. They are predominantly Christian, but there are also followers of the Yazidi and Mandaean faiths. ❧

Spero News editor Martin Barillas is a former US diplomat, who also worked as a democracy advocate and election observer in Latin America. He is also a freelance translator.



Iraqi church in Kirkuk that was bombed in September 2011.

A Pro-Life Alternative to the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)

By James Fritz

Christian healthcare-sharing ministries have been around for more than two decades as a creative approach to handling the growing costs of medical care. The largest players include *Medi-Share*, *Samaritan Ministries International* and *Christian Healthcare Ministries*. They market themselves as alternatives to health insurance, though they themselves are not insurance companies but non-profits.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) contains a section that exempts members of healthcare-sharing ministries from purchasing insurance. The Amish, Mennonite, and Indian tribal communities are exempt from the penalty to be placed on Americans who fail to purchase health insurance by 2014. Christian healthcare-sharing ministries have grown in popularity and success ever since the Old Order Amish Church Fund began the modern era of burden-bearing during the 1960's. They receive no funding or grants from government sources.

Medical costs are "shared," not pooled as they are with insurance companies. Also, members can choose to leave the plan whenever they wish. Members themselves vote on what medical procedures should be shared. Healthcare-sharing simply means that a certain group of members share in one another's healthcare costs. Healthcare-sharing offers Christians a way to carry one another's burdens by paying for one another's medical bills while offering prayers and encouragement as well.

Christian healthcare-sharing ministries, for the most part, do not turn people away, cancel their membership or raise their monthly financial "contributions" because of expensive illnesses. Most healthcare-sharing ministries require some sort of evaluation of individuals and families to ensure adherence to Christian values, and subsequently, health values such as non-smoking, excessive drinking, etc., before membership.

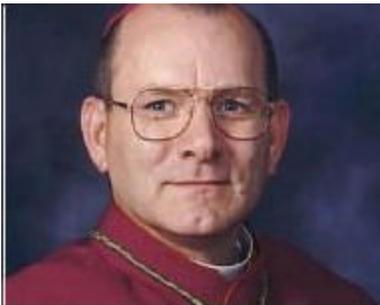
Participants in these ministries commit to a "statement of faith" and a monthly contribution, similar to a premium, based on their desired level of coverage. They are free to choose their own doctors. They then submit claims for qualifying medical needs.

In general, depending on which healthcare-sharing plan the member belongs to, members' fees are either sent directly to another participating member who has a medical bill to pay or to a central office. These monthly fees can range anywhere from \$50 to \$500 per member. Members must also pay a yearly administrative fee. *Medi-Share* has the funds sent to a bank account, then distributed. Everything is done digitally, so members log on to see where their money is going. In the case of *Samaritan Ministries*, members receive a letter in the mail telling them to send a check to a specific member in need each month.

As non-profits, Christian healthcare-sharing ministries aren't required to follow the same state and federal regulations as health insurance companies. They are largely unregulated, except by themselves. This means members cannot go to a state insurance commissioner with a complaint; rates aren't reviewed by an independent regulator, and there is no way to ensure they are following anti-discrimination laws. Unlike an insurance company, there is no obligation to pay, and funding is based upon the amount of money available, but the system has been shown to work well and cover all costs adequately. In examining the current healthcare-sharing plans in existence, it has been found they have a good history, and there has never been an issue with paying.

The Christian healthcare-sharing plans currently in existence include about 40,000 – 50,000 people each, *of all faiths*, and are growing rapidly. Due to its structure, a health share plan generally ends up costing both the employer and the employee less than an insurance plan. It's a more cost-effective measure for families.

As an example a Samaritan Ministries family will pay just \$320 a month in "shares," the ministry equivalent of premiums. At a time when the average monthly health insurance cost for a family of four is slightly more than \$1,500, the savings can be substantial. It will be no surprise that healthcare fees will go up substantially when ACA is implemented. The previously uninsured were not covered due to costs, however, now they will be covered, and the costs will increase for everyone. Also, the government will add a new "tax" to ensure a base amount available for emergencies.



Bishop Robert Vasa of Santa Rosa, speaker at a March 2012 Christus Medicus Foundation and the Life Legal Defense Fund conference co-sponsored by the dioceses of Oakland and Santa Rosa.

Some members generally must pay out of pocket for preventive care like wellness checkups for children and routine tests such as mammograms. Other ministries pay only when a bill is more than \$300 and only if it falls within guidelines voted on by the ministry's members. For example, an unwed woman's maternity care is covered only in rape cases. None of the ministries pay for abortion or contraceptives.

A new Catholic healthcare-sharing ministry, Immaculata Management Group, Inc. (IMC), will be overseeing a new healthcare share plan, called *Solidarity HealthShare*, which is expected to be functioning by January 1, 2013. They state they offer an alternative to the HHS mandate, however, all of the other three non-Catholic groups are also an alternative to the HHS mandate.

IMC will also have a "statement of faith" broad enough to include members of other religions who wish to join. A unique advantage is that it will provide coverage of pre-existing conditions. Because the mandate will not apply to health sharing ministries that have existed since Dec 31, 1999, IMC is partnering with one of the three existing health sharing ministries already meeting this requirement in order to qualify for the complete exemption. ☞

Jim Fritz is executive director of Defenders of the Faith, based in West Virginia.

Those interested in learning more about the healthcare-sharing ministries can use the following contact information:

Medi-Share: www.medi-share.org; phone 866-606-7390.

Samaritan Ministries International: www.samaritanministries.org; phone 888-268-4377.

Christian Healthcare Ministries: www.cbnews.org; phone 800-791-6225.

Solidarity HealthShare: www.SolidarityHealthShare.com (possibly still under construction); phone 486-382-6328

Christus Medicus Foundation functions as a consulting group, Public Policy Advocate, and they develop & offer Health Plans, as well their efforts to build a consortium (nationwide network) of Catholic Healthcare Providers who adhere to the Church's teachings on life and dignity; they also network with other faith-based health plans. For instance the plan they recommended for one person was the *Samaritan Ministries International*. *Christus Medicus* has been working with *Samaritan Ministries* in order to improve & simplify their plan. The plan was recommended to the above-mentioned individual because their CO-OP structure is ideal for smaller needs and certain medical histories. **Christus Medicus** may be the only Catholic organization in the country doing this.

Christus Medicus Foundation: www.christusmedicus.com/

Critical principles that define the ActiveCare Medical Plan: www.christusmedicus.com/ActiveCare%20Medical%20Plan.pdf

Health Care Sharing Guidelines booklet with details on how Samaritan Ministries' non-insurance Christian Health Care Newsletter and Save to Share™ ministries work: samaritanministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/201207-Guidelines1.pdf



Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, whose primary commitment is to care for the sick and the poor, serving in the area of healthcare - medical centers, colleges of nursing, medical offices, home care, hospice services, among other things. "Primary to our healthcare apostolate are the Ethical and Religious Directives of the Catholic Church."



Servants of Mary, Minister to the Sick



Open Letter about Government Healthcare Mandate

It's not just a Catholic problem

By David Green

When my family and I started our company 40 years ago, we were working out of a garage on a \$600 bank loan, assembling miniature picture frames. Our first retail store wasn't much bigger than most people's living rooms, but we had faith that we would succeed if we lived and worked according to God's word. From there, Hobby Lobby has become one of the nation's largest arts and crafts retailers, with more than 500 locations in 41 states. Our children grew up into fine business leaders, and today we run Hobby Lobby together, as a family.

We're Christians, and we run our business on Christian principles. I've always said that the first two goals of our business are (1) to run our business in harmony with God's laws, and (2) to focus on people more than money. And that's what we've tried to do. We close early so our employees can see their families at night. We keep our stores closed on Sundays, one of the week's biggest shopping days, so that our workers and their families can enjoy a day of rest. We believe that it is by God's grace that Hobby Lobby has endured, and he has blessed us and our employees. We've not only added jobs in a weak economy, we've raised wages for the past four years in a row. Our full-time employees start at 80% above minimum wage.



But now, our government threatens to change all of that. A new government healthcare mandate says that our family business MUST provide what I believe are abortion-causing drugs as part of our health insurance. Being Christians, we don't pay for drugs that might cause abortions, which means that we don't cover emergency contraception, the morning-after pill or the week-after pill. We believe doing so might end a life after the moment of conception, something that is contrary to our most important beliefs. It goes against the Biblical principles on which we have run this company since day one. If we refuse to comply, we could face \$1.3 million PER DAY in government fines.

Our government threatens to fine job creators in a bad economy. Our government threatens to fine a company that's raised wages four years running. Our government threatens to fine a family for running its business according to its beliefs. It's not right. I know people will say we ought to follow the rules; that it's the same for everybody.

But that's not true. The government has exempted thousands of companies from this mandate, for reasons of convenience or cost. But it won't exempt them for reasons of religious belief.

So, Hobby Lobby - and my family - are forced to make a choice. With great reluctance, we filed a lawsuit today, represented by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, asking a federal court to stop this mandate before it hurts our business. We don't like to go running into court, but we no longer have a choice. We believe people are more important than the bottom line and that honoring God is more important than turning a profit.

My family has lived the American dream. We want to continue growing our company and providing great jobs for thousands of employees, but the government is going to make that much more difficult. The government is forcing us to choose between following our faith and following the law. I say that's a choice no American - and no American business - should have to make.✍

Sincerely,
David Green, CEO and Founder of Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.

Action Alert: Evangelizing *Humanae Vitae*

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is considering its strategic plan for the next three years. Included in that plan are, appropriately enough, the topics of “Marriage and Family Life” and “Human Dignity.”

This plan can’t be implemented soon enough. As Cardinal Dolan observed earlier this year, the Church has had “laryngitis” since the 1960s when it came to moral teachings regarding sex and marriage, particularly in the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*. One organization, the Bellarmine Forum, has suggested that the faithful write their bishops, assuring them of their prayers and requesting, along these lines:

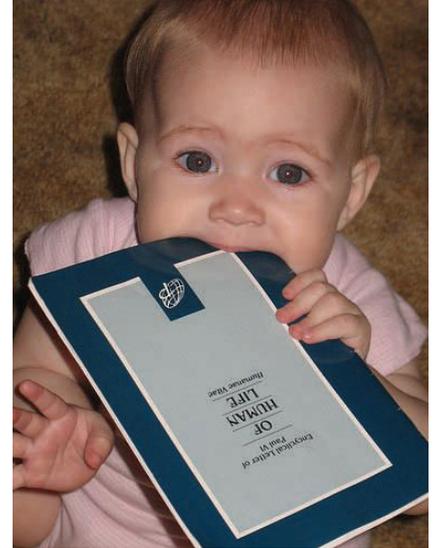
Your Excellency, I prayerfully request that you and your fellow bishops make the teaching of Humanae Vitae a priority of paramount importance in your efforts to outline a strategy for the New Evangelization in the next three years. Our culture has suffered greatly because this wonderful truth has not been lived in so many lives. And it has not been lived because it has not been taught.

I join you in prayer and promise my prayerful support for your apostolic endeavors.

With prayers and regards, I am,

Faithfully,

[your name]



The Bellarmine Forum stresses that “bishops need to know that we support them in fulfilling their teaching office – especially when they teach the unpopular truths that our culture hungers for. And please ask Saints Padre Pio and Robert Bellarmine, who loved and defended *Humanae Vitae* vigorously, to take our efforts under his protection.”

To reach the Archbishop of Santa Fe, mail letters to:

Reverend Michael Sheehan
Archbishop of Santa Fe
The Catholic Center
St. Joseph Place, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120-1709



You can sign the Bellarmine Forum *Campaign For Humanae Vitae*TM: *Prayerful Petition of the Faithful to the Holy Father and to Our Beloved Bishops* at: bellarmineforum.org/humanaevitae

Cardinal Dolan told the Wall Street Journal that *Humanae Vitae* was the “flash Point” of diffidence in the post-Vatican II Church, that “brought such a tsunami of dissent, departure, disapproval of the church, that I think most of us—and I’m using the first-person plural intentionally, including myself—kind of sub-consciously said, ‘Whoa. We’d better never talk about that, because it’s just too hot to handle.’ We forfeited the chance to be a coherent moral voice when it comes to one of the more burning issues of the day.” Cardinal Dolan encouraged the faithful to tell the Bishops: “you as our pastors need to tell us, and you need to challenge us.” That’s what this petition is all about!



Why Is There No National Conversation about Divorce?

By Dr. Joel McDurmon

Amid all of the ridiculous politicization of the gun angle in the wake of Sandy Hook, and even a few calls for a national discussion on mental illness (one more back door for tyrannies, many), why is there so little discussion—or even mention—of what acquaintances of Adam Lanza are calling the turning point in his life: his parents’ divorce?

The Daily Mail reports:



Family friends said Lanza’s problems started to escalate when his parents divorced in 2008 after 18 years together.

His father, Peter, a wealthy executive for General Electric, who is believed to earn \$1 million a year, moved out of the family home in 2006, citing “irreconcilable differences. . .”

One of Lanza’s former classmates spoke of his “noticeable decline” after his parents’ divorce. “He was a loner at school and hyper intelligent,” he said. “But in recent years he disappeared off the radar.

“The word is that he was badly affected when his parents split and that might be what pushed him over the edge.

“He was always weird but the divorce affected him. He was arguing with his mother. He was a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.”

There is very little public discussion, awareness, or education on the effects of divorce upon the children of divorcees. There may be tons of psychological research done on it, but if so, it hardly penetrates into the public sphere.

In this particular tragedy, several news outlets even combed through the parents’ divorce papers, but missed the elephant in the room. They gleaned all kinds of factual data about the mother and father from those papers, but made no point at all about the impact of the divorce itself.

Divorce rates began to spike in the U.S. in the mid-1960s. Feminist and humanist activism in law and the courts, not to mention culture in general, infused the atheistic, Marxist attack on the traditional family into family law through the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) and the American Bar Association.

In 1969, NAWL wrote and pushed a “no fault divorce” law in California. It passed, and was signed by then-governor Ronald Reagan, making California the first no-fault divorce state. By 1985, all but one state (NY) had followed suit.

The divorce rate has since quadrupled. According to one researcher: “Married adults now divorce two-and-a-half times as often as adults did 20 years ago and four times as often as they did 50 years ago... between 40% and 60% of new marriages will eventually end in divorce. . . . Perhaps 25% of children ages 16 and under live with a stepparent.”[1]

Even now, as we hear that this was the turning point for Adam Lanza—the tipping point, after which he went from odd and awkward to murderous—the new reports contain absolutely no discussion of this crucial factor. Why not?

We hear no discussion at all in the media of the need for the presence of a strong and loving father. None. The concept is laughed at, tossed aside in TV shows to be replaced by the portrayal of homosexuals, independent women, single mothers, and womanizing men as healthy lifestyles.

When a husband/wife couple is portrayed, inevitably the male is a dolt, a clown, or an adolescent in a grown man’s body, while the female is the smart go-getter who keeps him in line and holds everything together.

Today we tolerate easy divorce and don’t even stop to question the effects of this on the children involved or on society in general. We have tolerated it for so long the question has been forgotten and replaced by more “progressive” social questions. We—including Christians and conservatives—are culturally desensitized to di-

voice. Between work and home, I drive by billboards advertising easy divorce legal services for a few hundred dollars. You can buy DIY [do it yourself] divorce software in a box for \$49.95.

The legal system used to force struggling married couples to try to work through their differences. This meant confronting personality clashes, selfishness, stubbornness, and many other failures. This is the refining, sanctifying fire of marriage. Divorce would only be granted when one party victimized the other through abuse or adultery, and the other party sued for the fault.

This was Jesus' position, and Paul's. Old Testament law allows the death penalty for adulterers. God is far more serious about marriage and divorce than most modern Christians and conservatives are willing to hear.

When our former legal system was replaced by no-fault divorce, couples no longer have social pressure to improve themselves and their relationships. They can quit at the slightest quibble, calling it an "irreconcilable difference." Thus, a powerful sanctifying power is removed from society. And this means that we have society composed of many people who, when confronted with certain personal deficiencies, rather than go through much soul-searching, gave up on psychological or spiritual growth—and thus, we have adolescents in grown-up bodies.

This is a much condensed account of this phenomenon, but it must be said to begin with.

It's time we reignited the discussion of the social importance of the traditional family. This discussion must begin with Christians and in churches across America. We are up in arms over the homosexual marriage question, and rightfully so. But that issue is merely the current wave atop a deep dark raging sea of social dysfunction. The roots of the problems lie in the way Christians and churches have allowed the state to redefine marriage and family already, and have willingly broken the power of their families through various means, including tolerating easy divorce, public education, wicked media, and more.

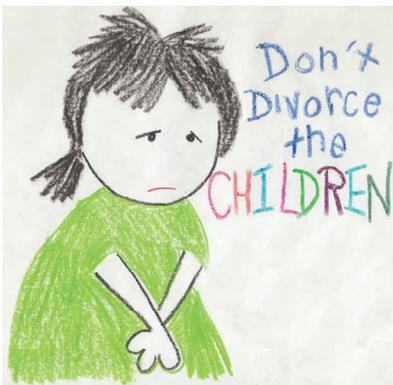
The personal and social effects of this are enormous. I can speak from experience, as a child of divorced parents. It's time churches and Christian leaders make this a very loud and prominent social issue.

There is of course, much more that needs to be said here. My purpose at this point is to raise the issue to the fore. ❧

Endnotes:

1. Brian K. Williams, Stacy C. Sawyer, Carl M. Wahlstrom, *Marriages, Families & Intimate Relationships*, 2005. americanvision.org/6757/why-is-there-no-national-conversation-about-the-divorce

Joel McDurmon, Ph.D. in Theology from Pretoria University, is the Director of Research for American Vision. He has authored seven books and also serves as a lecturer and regular contributor to the American Vision website. He joined American Vision's staff in the June of 2008. Joel and his wife and four sons live in Dallas, Georgia.



***Don't Divorce the Children* is a film about the effects of divorce on children. Hosted by Timothy Busfield; produced for Lifetime Television, it is told from the children's point of view, without experts. This film has become mandatory viewing in court-ordered divorce workshops in a dozen states.**

Trailer: www.florentinefilms.com/sherman/dont-divorce-the-children

In Consideration of Homilies

By Stephanie Block

It's seductive: the Catholic pulpiteer who issues a quote or two from an eminent Protestant theologian sounds ecumenical and literate. Make that Protestant theologian someone who was martyred for his faith while resisting Nazis and there will be instant sympathy for the heroics of right reason against brutal madness.

There's nothing inappropriate about acknowledging that cruel powers wage their bloodbaths indiscriminately and that moral courage may be found in many quarters. Nor is it inappropriate to consider that wise words may be found even in unexpected places. However, it *is* inappropriate to glorify a morally courageous heretic *solely* because he was martyred or had a few wise words.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who articulated the problems of "cheap grace," is a perennial temptation for the homilist. Discipleship has a cost, he writes: "[C]ostly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. It is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'"⁽¹⁾ More significantly, Pastor Bonhoeffer took these thoughts to heart and ultimately died by them. He was a founding member of the "Confessional Church," formed in resistance to statist efforts to interfere with church autonomy, and was executed by hanging (with piano wire) just before the close of World War II because of involvement in an assassination attempt against Adolf Hitler.

The virtue of moral courage, however, isn't absolute. As a model for *emulation*, (which is, after all, why a

homilist uses his few precious teaching moments to introduce the work and words of saints to his congregation) courage must be coupled with *truth*. And *truth* was precisely where Bonhoeffer had some serious, intellectual blindness. Ellis Washington, a former editor of the Michigan Law Review, writes.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In his magnum opus, "Ethics," Bonhoeffer wrote these immortal lines: "In a world where success is the measure and justification of all things, the figure of Him who was sentenced and crucified remains a stranger and is at best the object of pity. The world will allow itself to be subdued only by success. It is not ideas or opinions which decide, but deeds. Success alone justifies wrongs done. ... With a frankness and off-handedness which no other earthly power could permit itself, history appeals in its own cause to the dictum that the end justifies the means. ... The figure of the Crucified invalidates all thought which takes success for its standard."

Bonhoeffer once told a student that every sermon must contain "a shot of heresy," meaning that to state the truth invariably necessitates one to use a measure of hyperbole or express ideas in a manner that will sound heretical. Bonhoeffer clearly intended that those opposed to Hitler must alter their strategy to effectively battle this new, grotesque zeitgeist in Germany.

Deception was key. Bonhoeffer's motivation to embrace this deception originated not from a cavalier attitude about the truth, but from a profound reverence for the truth that was so intense, it compelled him beyond the self-serving legalism of truth-telling.

Bonhoeffer wrote the essay "What Does It Mean to Tell the Truth?" while in Tegel prison where he expounded on the subject of truth. "From the moment of our lives in which we become capable of speech," it begins, "we are taught that our words must be true. What does this mean? What does 'telling the truth' mean? Who requires this of us?"

Bonhoeffer understood God's standard of truth meant more than merely "not lying." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard it said ... but I say unto you." Jesus took the Old Testament laws to a deeper level of meaning and obedience, from the "letter of the Law" to the "Spirit of the Law." Following the letter of the law was the dead "religion" Bonhoeffer's intellectual mentor Karl Barth had criticized. This truth, rooted in religiosity, was man's efforts to deceive God by pretending to be obedient.

God's standard of truth was much deeper than mere religious legalism.⁽²⁾

There are profound difficulties with Bonhoeffer's efforts to reconcile pragmatic decisions to deny a vicious adversary facts to which he had no right (e.g., by denying the presence of a hidden Jew) and truth-telling. The difficulties are *not* that those who opposed the murderous actions of Nazi exterminators may have deceived them but that those deceptions are justified as "higher truths." The murky waters of human self-interest can create too many "higher truths" out of deception to make this "right thinking" ...even if it is, in fact, right action.

Bonhoeffer has other intellectual problems as well. In his book, *No Rusty Swords*, Bonhoeffer wrote: "The New Testament bears witness in doctrine and history; it is nothing in itself, but bears witness of something else. Its words and statements are not in themselves true and eternal and holy. The whole New Testament in all its parts is meant to be expounded as witness, not as a book of wisdom, a teaching book, a book of eternal truth. It is not a book which contains norms, doctrines, or eternal truths." [p. 318]

Bonhoeffer claimed that Jesus did not assume the flesh of a man but "takes to himself the whole human race bodily, that race in its hatred of God and in the pride of its flesh has rejected the incorporeal, invisible Word of God. Now this humanity, in all its weakness, is, by the mercy of God, taken up in the Body of Jesus in true bodily form." [*Cost of Discipleship*, p. 213]

The historical Jesus was distinct from the Jesus of Faith. Bonhoeffer wrote, for example, that "Both historically and dogmatically the virgin birth can be questioned. The biblical witness is ambiguous." [*Christ in the Center*, p. 105]

He also wrote, "There is no longer any need for God as a working hypothesis, whether in morals, politics, science, philosophy, or religion. God is teaching us that we must learn to live as men who can get along very well without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us. 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34). God is weak and powerless in the world and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us."

Again, none of this is said to minimize Bonhoeffer's heroics or personal righteousness. It is, however, meant to question the wisdom of holding him up as an *intellectual* model – a *writer* to be studied by orthodox Christians. The thoughts of Saints Edith Stein and Maximilian Kolbe, two other martyrs of Nazi violence, to take two examples, are more fertile and leave behind no confusing residue. Why are *their* words not chosen for more consideration?

The burden of the cross that Christ assumed is that of corrupted human nature, with all its consequences in sin and suffering to which fallen humanity is subject. The meaning of the way of the cross is to carry this burden out of the world. The restoration of freed humanity to the heart of the heavenly Father, taking on the status of a child, is the free gift of grace, of merciful love. But this may not occur at the expense of divine holiness and justice. The entire sum of human failures from the first Fall up to the Day of Judgment must be blotted out by a corresponding measure of expiation. The way of the cross is this expiation. (St. Edith Stein, "Love of the Cross")✠



**Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross
(St. Edith Stein)**

Notes

1. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
2. Ellis Washington, "Bonhoeffer and truth's gray area: Ellis Washington profiles deception-defending pastor who battled Nazism," The Report from Washington, 4-20-12, www.wnd.com/2012/04/bonhoeffer-and-truths-gray-area

“Same-sex Marriage:” What do Nature and Nature’s God say?

By Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I.

The Illinois General Assembly is being asked to consider a bill called “The Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act.” This is a deceptive title that ignores basic truths.

Marriage comes to us from nature. The human species comes in two complementary sexes, male and female. Their sexual union is called marital. It not only creates a place of love for two adults but also a home for loving and raising their children. It provides the biological basis for personal identity.

It is physically impossible for two men or two women to consummate a marriage, even when they share a deep friendship or love. Does this mean nature is cruel or that God is unfair? No, but it does mean that marriage is what nature tells us it is and that the State cannot change natural marriage.

Civil laws that establish “same-sex marriage” create a legal fiction. The State has no power to create something that nature itself tells us is impossible. Neither did the Church create marriage. The Church asks if a man and woman proposing to marry are mature, responsible and free, willing to commit themselves to one another before the Lord in the presence of the community of the faithful to a lifelong relationship of fidelity to one another and openness to the creation and care for new life in their children.

Christ raised marital union to the dignity of a sacrament, giving it significance beyond that given it by nature; but, like the State, the Church cannot change the natural basis of marriage. Does this mean that the Church is anti-gay? No, for the Church welcomes everyone, respects each one personally and gives to each the spiritual means necessary to convert to God’s ways and maintain friendship with Christ.

The Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Chicago has consistently condemned violence toward or hatred of homosexually oriented men and women.

Good pastoral practice encourages families to accept all their children and not break relationships with them. The Archdiocese offers Mass and other spiritual help to those who live their homosexuality anonymously (Courage groups) and also to those who want to be publicly part of the gay community (AGLO, which celebrates its twenty fifth anniversary this year).

People live out their sexual identity in different ways, but the Church offers the means to live chastely in all circumstances, as the love of God both obliges and makes possible. Should the lame duck legislature or the new Assembly take up the passage of a “same-sex marriage” law, it will be acting against the common good of society.

We will all have to pretend to accept something that is contrary to the common sense of the human race. Those who continue to distinguish between genuine marital union and same sex arrangements will be regarded in law as discriminatory, the equivalent of bigots.

This proposed legislation will have long term consequences because laws teach; they tell us what is socially acceptable and what is not, and most people conform to the dictates of their respective society, at least in the short run.

What happens next? If we ignore in law the natural complementarity of man and woman in creation, then the natural family is undermined. Our individual lives become artificial constructs protected by civil “rights” that destroy natural rights. Human dignity and human rights are then reduced to the whims of political majorities. When the ways of nature and nature’s God conflict with civil law, society is in danger.

It is to that danger that we direct your attention. We urge you to visit www.ilcatholic.org to stay updated on the effort to redefine marriage in our state and to find information on how to contact your state legislator.

Pray for our State. ✠

Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I. heads the Archdiocese of Chicago.



Black is the New White

By Stephanie Block

A recent “Morning Edition” segment⁽¹⁾ on National Public Radio (NPR) concerned a Chinese newspaper editorial that sparked national debate over freedom of the press.

The South Chinese paper is called *Southern Weekend*, which the NPR clip dubbed “progressive” for its position that China adhere to its own constitution, including free speech, free press and rule of law.

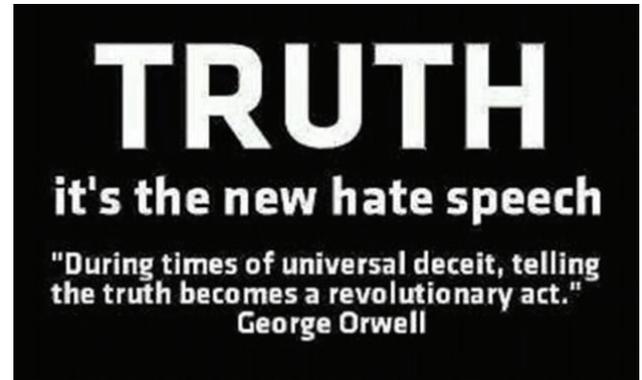
Conversely, NPR dubbed another Chinese paper, the *Global Times*, a “very conservative, state-run paper” for publishing a counter-editorial “criticizing the protest and saying China can’t actually have, you know, what we in the West would consider a free press. And they blamed people – what they call external activists – for hijacking the issue.”

Of course, this is an interesting story in its own right, intended to persuade the West that there is a Chinese spring in the air, but it was the use of “progressive” and “conservative” that was particularly interesting. In U.S. politics, these labels usually are almost diametrically opposite to NPR’s application of them to Chinese politics. The typical American *conservative* is the person who wants his country to adhere to its constitution; the typical American *progressive* wants “change.” Is this just another example of *doublespeak* – a term to describe speech that distorts or even reverses the meaning of words – which has ever been the stuff of public discourse?

I would suspect that the authors of the NPR segment might argue that they never intended “progressive” or “conservative” to represent specific ideological positions but, rather, a relationship to prevailing social positions. Whether government policies are fair or foul, those who support them are “conservatives” and those who oppose them are “progressive.”

This is marvelously useful, particularly in places where “conservatism” is wielded as a pejorative. Abortion has been legal for 40 years – therefore, it must be that it is the pro-aborts who are “conservative” and the pro-lifers who are “progressive.” Traditional marriage (in which one woman and one man are bound to each other for life with a goal to rearing and educating progeny) hasn’t been the dominant social reality for well over a generation. Evidently this means that same-sex “marriage” advocates are the real “right-wingers” of these culture wars.

Words, words, words. Such magnificent abuse of them would be humorous if only there was someone with whom to share the joke.☺



Notes

1. Renee Montagne and Frank Langfitt, “Editorial Ignites Freedom Of Press Debate In China,” National Public Radio, “Morning Edition” 1-8-13
2. George Orwell’s invention of newspeak in *Brave New World* and Lewis Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty in *Alice through the Looking Glass* provide some classic explanation of the phenomenon.



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Around the Archdiocese

Tucked into the Archdiocese of Santa Fe's PMD Express, a monthly newsletter of pastoral ministry events, was a brochure for The 2013 Norbertine Library Series. First up (January 26) was Megan McKenna, addressing the question "What would a more universal church look like?" The Norbertine advertisement gives a hint of the talk's content: "diversity of expression...a shift to a foundational base of the people of God, the Body of Christ; decision-making that is shared; and a deepened appreciation of the world's religions and the extent of revelation and truth that is whispering and shouting at us everywhere in society, the earth and life."

Lest there be any ambiguity that these words reflect dissident thought, McKenna has a long history of involvement with Call to Action—a movement advocating women priests, "democratic" governance of the Church, religious syncretism, and a liberationist interpretation of theology. She was a 1998 National Call to Action Conference speaker (to take one instance). She



Dr. Megan McKenna

is aggressively engaged in evangelizing progressive dissatisfaction with the Church as is evidenced, for instance, in her participation with the *Living the Questions* curriculum for "seekers and 'church alumni/ae' convinced that Christianity still has relevance in the 21st Century."

"Church alumni/ae..." - those who have "graduated" from the Church?
Hm. ☞

February Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting
February 22, 2013
Call (505) 293-8006 for information.

Pro-life Prayer:
Planned Parenthood Abortuary
701 San Mateo Blvd.
Holy Innocents Chapel:
(505) 266-4100
Times: Monday-Friday 8 AM – 3 PM

Helpers of God's Precious Infants
Planned Parenthood Abortuary
701 San Mateo Blvd.
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays: 8 AM – 11:30 AM
Wednesdays: 12 Noon – 3:00 PM
For more information, call Phil Leahy:
(505) 440-3040

Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel
Tuesdays, Thursdays: noon, including
Eucharistic Procession to Planned
Parenthood,
Rosary, and Prayers of Exorcism.

For more information, call
(505) 266-4100



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Check out *Project Defending Life's* radio show, **Lifetalk**, which airs on 1050 AM KTBL every Saturday at 2:00 pm till 3:00 pm.

“To deplore disunity as such, instead of deploring heresies, instead of condemning these and calling them by their name, implies first of all that one would keep unity even at the cost of truth. But, of course, true unity presupposes unity in truth. Error, falsehood, can never be the basis for true unity...If we are truly concerned for unity among Christians, I submit that there is only one way to restore it, and it is the time-honored way: the anathema against all heretics. This is the way the Church has survived, kept her identity, through all centuries...True unity can be restored only by the conversion of the heretic—or at least his submission—or by his excommunication.”

- Dietrich von Hildebrand

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