

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

January 2006



Worshiping the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

*Practical advice for the
faithful*

Page 4

Down in Adoration Falling

Honoring the kingship of Christ

Page 8

A Right Way of Relating

*Does a homosexual
orientation affect other moral
sensibilities?*

Page 13



*Cover: St. Agnes of Rome,
January 21*

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Volume 8, Number 1

Worshiping the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

Page 4

One priest's suggestions for KISS (Keeping it Sacred, Sweetheart)

More Kudos

Page 7

No honors for pro-aborts. Thank you!

Down in Adoration Falling

Page 8

A New Year's Meditation

Around the Globe

Page 10

Pope Benedict tackles liturgical music; Nigerian bishops take on sex-ed

Reacting to Vatican Instruction

Page 11

Of course, "taking on" the problems and getting Catholics to listen are two different things...

Letter to the Editor

Page 12

CCHD doesn't serve the poor

A Right Way of Relating

Page 13

Does a homosexual orientation affect other moral sensibilities?

On the Way to Jesus Christ

Page 15

A review of a book by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

January Calendar

Page 15

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.

Worshiping the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

Some common sense for Catholics

By Fr. Jay Scott Newman

I was baptized in the Episcopal Church, and there I learned to worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. When I became a Catholic, one of the most difficult adjustments for me was learning to accept the generally wretched state of the sacred liturgy in most parishes: banal language, casual atmosphere, mediocre secular music, ugly buildings badly decorated. In all too many places, the result is simply unspeakable. But this need not be.

The Catholic Church gave us Chartres and Canterbury; she gave us plainchant and Palestrina. The Catholic Church saved the language of Cicero, and gave birth to the Christian poetry of the West. The cultural and artistic riches of the Western Church are still in our storehouse; we need only deploy them in a way adapted to the present structure of the Roman Rite.

I have been a priest for more than twelve years, and in that time I have served four parishes, one college chaplaincy, and one seminary. In all of those posts, the following characteristics were observed (*mutatis mutandis*), and the results were splendid. I offer these suggestions for those who seek to “re-enchanted” the sacred liturgy for the purpose of leading those who worship more deeply into the Paschal Mystery.

For the building and its contents

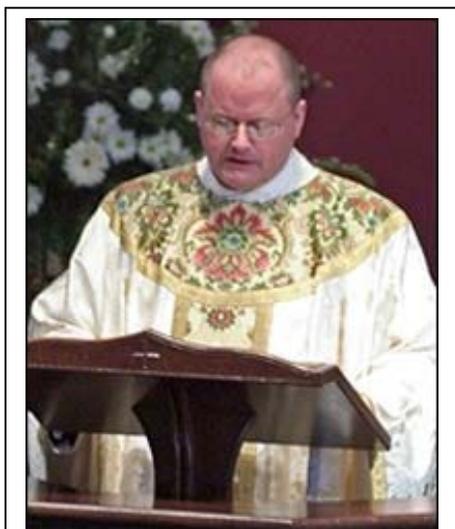
1. The tabernacle MUST be on the rear wall of the chancel and on the central axis of the church. Putting the LORD anywhere else turns everything else on an angle, and no ideological justification will change the way in which this simple fact destabilizes the liturgy.

2. The priest’s chair should face the ambo, not the congregation, and it should ideally be located on the opposite side of the altar from the ambo. When he is seated, the celebrant (like the congregation) should be facing the proclamation of the Word of God; to have him face the people from his chair makes him the focus of attention and invites him to behave like a talk show host.

3. Right angles are preferable to oblique ones. The eye senses rest when it follows one line to a 90 degree angle with another line; it senses motion when any other angle is present. One of the reasons many of our churches do not feel like peaceful houses of prayer to most folk is that the entire building and all of its furnishings are constantly “in motion”.

4. The altar candles should rest on the mensa, not on the floor around the altar. The passion for the “naked altar” is bizarre, pagan, and antiquarian for its own sake. Yes, the rubrics do allow for the candles to be on or near the altar, but I believe that placing them on the mensa has an immediate effect towards the re-enchancement of the liturgy.

5. Avoid kitsch in all its forms, including most especially the trendy and sentimental, in decorating the church. Most churches look like someone’s Italian or Irish grandmother has just finished sprucing up the place. Is it any wonder we have such trouble convincing our men that religion is not women’s work? The sanctuary is the home of the Son of Man; let’s make it look like a place in which most men would be comfortable spending a little time.



Fr. Jay Scott Newman, pastor of St. Mary’s Church - Greenville, South Carolina

For the sacred music

1. Stop balkanizing the Mass schedule with different types of music. This trick comes from Protestant church growth strategies, and it teaches our people that divine worship is just a matter of personal taste. Yes, progressive solemnity can distinguish one Mass from another in a large parish (low Mass, sung Mass, solemn Mass, etc.), but the basic approach to matters musical should remain essentially the same.

2. If the choir is visible to the congregation, move them to a place where they will not be. This is absolutely essential to celebrating liturgy as worship rather than liturgy as entertainment. Yes, Anglicans more or less successfully replaced priests with lay choirs in the chancel, but for several different reasons, that simply does not work in the contemporary Roman Rite. The ideal place, of course, is a loft for organ and choir at the rear of the church. Failing that, at least move them to the back of the church.

3. Sing only sacred music. Much of what is now marketed as “liturgical music” is not sacred at all, and congregations addicted to that pablum are not capable of entering the liturgy as a participation in the worship of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Sacred music is a happy marriage of text and music, and both halves are necessary to re-enchant the liturgy.

4. If you sing hymns, sing the whole hymn. Stopping after the second verse because Father is at his chair makes as little sense as reciting half the Creed. And no “closing hymn” is needed. “The Mass is ended, go in peace” means what it says. Where possible, the priest and ministers should depart the sanctuary to an organ postlude or something comparable.

5. The Anglican, Methodist, and Lutheran traditions have given us an extraordinary treasury of hymnody, most of which can be used in the Catholic liturgy with very little adaptation. This music has proven itself to be durable, effective, and sacred. Do not be afraid of using hymns from this patrimony because they are “Protestant”. In truth, these texts are far more orthodox and “Catholic” than most of the tripe published by Catholics in the past two generations.

6. Plainchant was, is, and ever shall be the music best suited to the Roman Rite. Teach your musicians and your people some simple chants, and sing them well. Even those who struggle with Latin grammar will not need to be taught that this is sacred music.

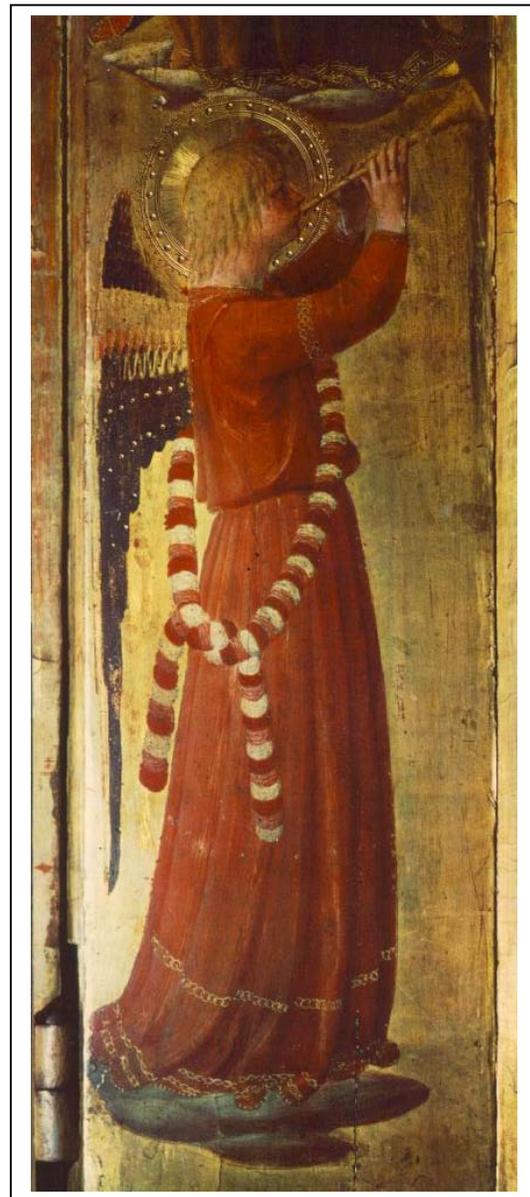
For the congregation

1. Silence is indispensable. No talking before Mass. Teach them to be comfortable with prolonged sacred silences during the liturgy by explaining that we’re not just waiting for the next thing to happen; we’re waiting together for the LORD.

2. Teach them all the gestures proper to them, e.g. profound bow in the Creed, striking the breast at the Confiteor, kneeling at all appropriate times, etc. If the liturgy is just talking, talking, talking, then half the human person is left out of worship.

3. Emphasize coming early and stigmatize leaving early. Being casual about being on time renders the entire activity casual. Ditto for clothing. Same for the eucharistic fast.

4. Give constant, clear, and firm instruction about who should and who should not receive Holy Communion. Nothing desecralizes the sacred liturgy more than sacrilegious Communion, and the people need to be told this regularly. If you are not in full communion with the Church, if you are married outside of the Church, if you are in serious sin (including missing Mass on a



Sunday or a Holy Day) and have not yet been to Confession: DO NOT EAT AND DRINK YOUR OWN CONDEMNATION. Reasserting that the Most Holy Eucharist is the most sacred reality on earth and not to be profaned by unclean lips will go a long way towards sorting out the McChurch atmosphere that poisons our souls.

For the priest

1. Say Mass as though the people were not present. This means that the priest is thinking about, speaking to, and turned towards the Most High God. Paradoxically, it is this benign neglect of the people that gets the person of the priest out of the way and invites the people into the most intimate participation in the sacred mysteries. This is now counter-intuitive to most priests, who were taught that their first, last and constant job is make the people “feel welcome”, but it is absolutely and unconditionally true: say Mass as though they are not there, and they will start to say things like, “That’s the first time in 40 years I feel like I’ve been to Mass.” Guaranteed.

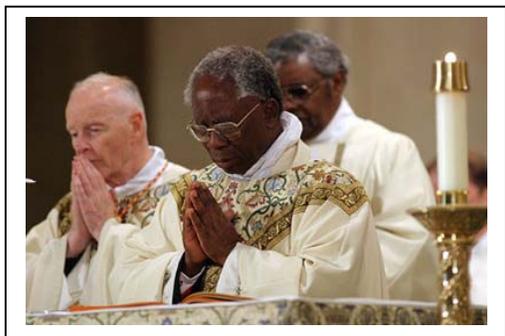
2. Naturally, when speaking to the people, the priest must look at them. But except when speaking directly to the people, the priest’s entire attention (shown by posture, direction of eyes, etc.) must be directed away from the people and towards the Throne of Grace. For example, the Collect is not addressed to the congregation. Why face the people when you are speaking to the great I AM? And in the Eucharistic Prayer, the words “Take this all of you” are NOT directed to the congregation, so when you say those words, Father, DO NOT look at the people. The entire Anaphora is directed to God the Father, so do not look at your congregation when you are speaking to the Ancient of Days.

3. Eliminate the words of introduction in the entrance rite. Simply cut them out completely. This little interlude is one of the worst mistakes in the 1970 Missal; it’s like pulling the emergency brake on a train moving at 80 mph: the whole thing comes crashing to a disturbing halt. Give one homily, and give it when you should ... in the homily. No off the cuff remarks, no improvisation after Holy Communion.

4. To the maximum extent possible, hide your personality under the chasuble. Who the celebrant is ought to be as nearly insignificant as possible. The priest’s job is to pull back the veil between God and man and hide himself in the folds, and this task is made nearly impossible by the ever expanding personality of “The Presider” who feels compelled to intrude his personality into every part of the sacred liturgy. The people aren’t there to see us, Father, and if they like our jokes, then we can let loose at cocktail parties. But not in the liturgy.

5. Sing the liturgy. Most parishes sing around the liturgy, but the liturgy is meant to be sung. Unless a priest is truly tone deaf (and even then he can learn to sing *recto tono*), he should sing, at least at Solemn Masses, nearly every word out of his mouth. From “In the Name of” to “The Mass is ended” and including most especially the Eucharistic Prayer (in whole or at least the words of the institution narrative), the priest should sing the liturgy. In the Christian East, it was once clear that a man who could not sing had no priestly vocation. I wouldn’t go that far, but singing the priestly prayers is an essential part of the sacred liturgy, and when it is done well, the re-enchantment of the liturgy is literally at hand.

6. Remember that every liturgy leaves chronological time and enters kairotic time. In chronos we say Good Morning; in liturgical kairos we say *Dominus vobiscum*. If we do not depart from the texts of the Church, then we stand a fair chance of taking the people with us into the never ending liturgy of



the New Jerusalem. This is also why SLOW walking, talking and gestures are important. Same with hiding street clothes under sacred vesture. Ditto for the athletic shoes of the altar boys.

7. Yes, that's altar boys, not androgynous altar servers. Want to encourage young men in the parish to think about the priesthood and all the men to take seriously their responsibilities for masculine headship? Then restrict the service of the altar to boys and young men.

What's This About?

Remember that the cult of the ugly and the mundane was forced upon the Church in the service of an ideology. And if 40 years ago there was any doubt that this ideology is the enemy of the Gospel of Christ, there can be no doubt now. A bare, ruined choir is all that is left in many corners of the vineyard, but even (and sometimes especially) in the ruins, God can make all things new. In the service of this renewal, or re-enchantment:

1. Take Cardinal Mahony's pastoral letter on the celebration of parochial liturgy and throw it on the fire. Watch it burn. Now go take a hot shower.

2. Reject the ideology that got us here. Root and branch, cut it out of yourself. Empty seminaries, despoiled religious orders, plummeting Mass attendance, and wholesale immorality among clergy and laity alike are probably pretty good clues that the vocation to holiness which is our baptismal second birthright is getting obscured along the way.

3. Read good books that will help you understand the real nature and purpose of the sacred liturgy.

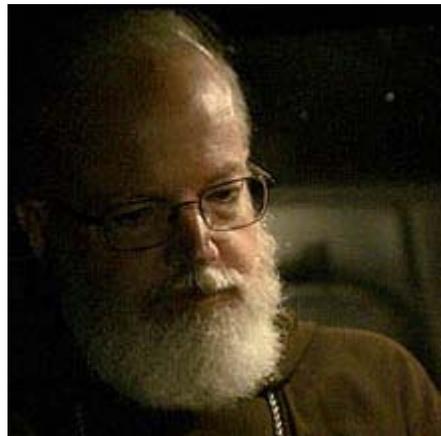
Two excellent places to start are *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Joseph Ratzinger (who now goes by a new nom de plume) and *Looking at the Liturgy* by Aidan Nichols, O.P.

For the mechanics of celebration, start with Peter Elliott's *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*

4. Now approach the altar in spirit and truth, and worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. +

More Kudos

Another encouraging story: Boston Catholic **Archbishop Sean O'Malley** says he won't attend a dinner sponsored by Catholic Charities because the group is honoring Boston Mayor Tom Menino, who backs abortion. O'Malley's decision comes on the heels of a call by the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts to boycott the event because of Menino's pro-abortion position. The group points to documents approved by the nation's Catholic bishops, saying Catholic groups should not honor pro-abortion politicians with speaking engagements or honorary degrees. "In light of the Mayor's past statements concerning abortion ... the Archbishop regrets that he cannot attend the dinner," said a statement by Catholic Charities. "In doing this he acts in accord with the US Catholic Bishops policy regarding public officials who are in conflict with Catholic teaching on specific issues, a policy formulated at a plenary session of the Bishops' conference in June of 2004." +



Archbishop Sean O'Malley

DOWN IN ADORATION FALLING

By Marie P. Loehr

*God called out to him from the bush and said: "Moses, Moses."
...Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

- Exodus, 3:4-7

In his last temptation of Christ in the desert Satan asks Christ to fall down and worship him. He offers Christ all the kingdoms of the world, if Christ will adore him. What does it truly mean to fall down and worship, to adore?

In Exodus 3, Moses sees the burning bush, and is consumed by curiosity. The bush is burning, on fire, but the bush is not consumed. The footnotes to this episode in the Hebrew Tanakh (Stone Edition) explain that God thus appears to Moses in three progressive stages: first as fire, second as angel, third as God Himself. In this way he prepares Moses to bear the weight of revelation and glory.

In McKenzie's *Dictionary of the Bible* glory is defined as "kabod" or "hevod," which signifies weight, an apt description of man's experience of God. But it also means light, the radiance of God. Confronted with the light and weight of God's glory, unveiled, men fall down and worship. We see in Isaiah 6:1-4 that even the angels in heaven veil their faces, as Moses hid his face, before the glory of God, crying in adoration, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts...all the earth is filled with his glory!" Isaiah, like Moses, is shaken at this sight, and sighs, "Woe is me, I am doomed!" In the Apocalypse, when St. John faces the Lamb of God, he falls to the ground in humility. Wherever men fall down in adoration before God, it is an experience of light piercing their own darkness and weight crushing their sinful beings.

In the Christmas season we discover three examples of true adoration, stirred by the birth of Christ and his presence in human flesh among us.

The first conscious adoration Scripture reveals is that of the angels. As in Job, all the sons of God and the morning stars sing together, glorifying God and praising. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." They adore the Child in their light and song. They send the shepherds to seek the Child, and adore him also.

This is the second adoration. The shepherds do hasten to find this Child and fall on their knees in astonished adoration. Luke tells us: "...the shepherds were saying to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger....And all who heard marveled at the things told them by the shepherds."

It is meet and just that the angels should be the first to adore the Child, as they are the first-born of God's Creation. Moreover, they are shepherds in their own right. Thus, it is equally meet and just that they appear to human shepherds, sending them to fall down and worship the Child, as well. Abel is a shepherd, whose offerings find favor with God. Abraham is a shepherd, the nomad who surrenders himself entirely to God. Moses is a shepherd when he encounters the burning bush and YHWH. David is a



shepherd when God sends Samuel to anoint him king of Israel.

Christ himself is a shepherd before he is a king.

Last, but by no means least, the three kings, the Magi from the East, come to adore the newborn King of kings. They follow the light of the Star. They risk the weight of Herod's tyranny. Above all, they come to adore and they bring kingly gifts, signifying the stages of every king's life, but most particularly this king's life and work. These worshippers are both wise men and kings. Their wisdom and their fitness to rule as kings are seen in their humility before God and man.

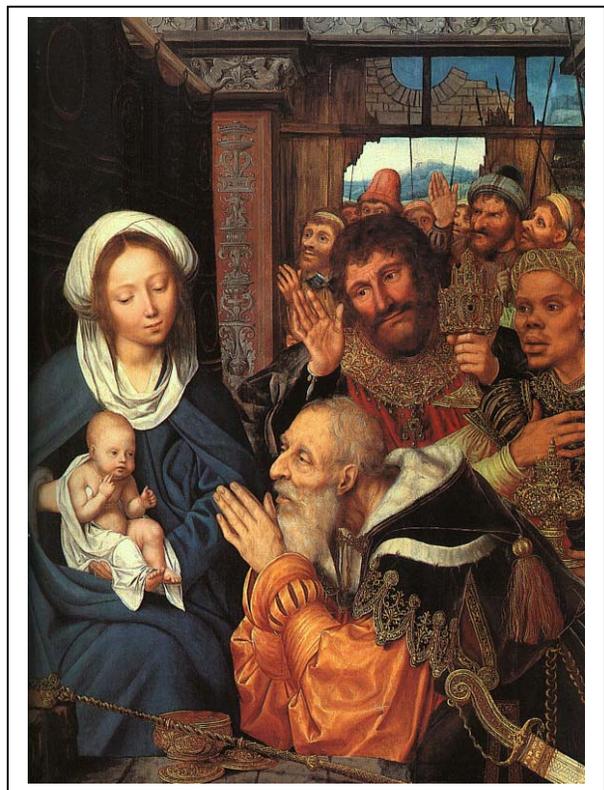
Matthew says: "...they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down, they worshipped him. And opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

The gold signifies kingship, its glory and power, light and weight, energy and mass. The frankincense signals both purification and worship, the king's need to be purified from all trace of sin and pride, his work as mediator between God and the people, the reverence and honor due him. The myrrh signifies death and the preservation of both the body and the memory of the king's works. It also signifies the pains of kingship, its service even unto death.

The ritual prostration so common in the worship of the Orthodox Church strikes Western Catholics as outmoded, outdated, a throwback to the coercive demands of ancient tyrants for total abject reverence on the part of their subjects. Yet that prostration grew out of man's initial response to God. Those who have encountered God directly know how exigent the need is to fall down and worship, to fall flat on one's face before God's Otherness and our own emptiness.

We should also note that all three categories of persons who adore the Child at Christmas are examples of humility in ministering service - whether angels, shepherds, or wise kings. All three are represented in the satanic temptations - shepherd and flock in the temptation to provide food; ministering angels in the temptation to leap from the Temple pinnacle and let the angels protect Christ; kingship in the temptation to adore Satan and be adored in turn by all the rulers of the world.

If all these temptations are answered and conquered in the Mass, so are all these adorations present in the Mass. We'll examine that truth in the next issue of the *Pepper*. ✚



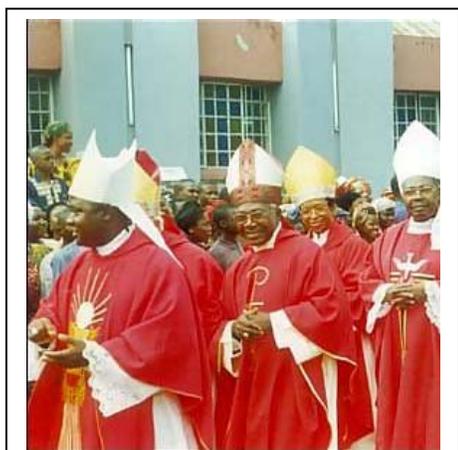
Around the globe...

Speaking of Holy Worship...

Pope Benedict XVI speaks about liturgical music

Cardinal Arinze opened a congress on “Sacred Music: A Liturgical and Pastoral Challenge” by saying: “Sacred music must be in accord with the grandeur of the liturgical act that celebrates the mysteries of Christ; it must be characterized by a sense of prayer, beauty and dignity.”

Pope Benedict XVI, in a message sent to the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, called for greater attention to sacred liturgical music: “... I would like to encourage those who cultivate sacred music to continue this journey.” He urged the dicastery to reflect “on the relationship between music and liturgy, while remaining attentive to practical applications and experimentation, and maintaining constant understanding and collaboration with national episcopal conferences....In no way must [liturgical music] give way to shallowness, superficiality or theatricality.”



The Nigerian Bishops

Nigerian Roman Catholic Bishops Assail Sex-Education Curriculum

“We are concerned at the recent move by the Federal Government of Nigeria to introduce at the Junior and Senior Secondary School levels, a Curriculum for Sex Education which is harmful to the ethical and moral development of the young,” reads the episcopate’s text, signed by Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Abuja, president of the episcopal conference, and by the conference’s secretary, Bishop Lucius Ugorji of Umuahia.

“We wish to point out that sexuality education is to be preferred to mere sex education, and that such education cannot be dissociated from moral principles,” says the statement. “Sexuality education treats sex within the context of genuine human love, the family and respect for life.”

“Parents are the first teachers of their children in matters of sexuality,” and the home “provides the context of dialogue, trust, openness and respect suitable for such education,” the prelates state. Therefore, “[t]he function of the school is to support and complement this effort.”

Priests to Preach on Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Archbishop Raymond Burke instructed priests in his St. Louis archdiocese to preach on Sunday about why human embryonic stem cell research cannot be allowed and to instruct the Catholic faithful not to support it. The direction is in response to a petition about to circulate that would amend the state constitution to protect this immoral research. Archbishop Burke also issued a pastoral letter on the topic.

Nuncio Says “No” to Homosexual Adoptions

The US papal nuncio, Gabriel Montalvo Higuera, has reportedly sent a letter to Archbishop Sean O'Malley of Boston asking that the diocesan Catholic Charities discontinue its practice of cooperating in adoptions by homosexual couples. The Boston Herald reveals the news from an unnamed source. In response the Archdiocese says it could not comment specifically on the letter but did admit that the controversial practice is under review and that a decision on the matter is expected “early in the New Year.” +

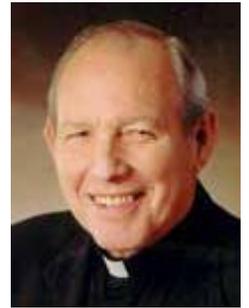
Reacting to Vatican Instruction

Congregation for Catholic Education document *On Priesthood and Those With Homosexual Tendencies*

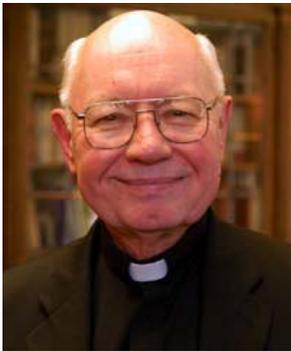
It's a short, straightforward document from the Vatican, doing little more than confirm centuries of Church policy. It has generated quite a lot of *chatter*, however.

The *National Catholic Reporter* (December 9, 2005), for example, felt it necessary to express editorial condolences "to all those in positions of leadership in the Roman Catholic Church who also happen to be homosexual...that once again you have been forced to hear your sexuality, an element intrinsic to your humanity, described as an objective disorder."

Rochester, NY Bishop Matthew Clark, a former international leader of the Dominican Order, felt that he needed to reassure prospective priest candidates that he will do as he has always done and ignore Church directives. In the Rochester diocesan newspaper (November 12), Bishop Clark writes that: "The fundamental concern of formation for a life of celibate chastity is for sexual maturity, not sexual orientation. Good seminary formation needs to provide an environment in which both heterosexual and homosexual candidates can grow to commit themselves wholeheartedly, even joyfully, to chaste and faithful celibacy....We try to treat all inquiries fairly. You will be no exception."



**Bishop Matthew Clark,
Rochester, NY**



**Bishop Skylstad of
Spokane, WA**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB), Bishop Skylstad of Spokane, WA, released a USCCB Press Statement that, while acknowledging that the *Instruction* refuses ordination to men with "deep-seated" homosexual tendencies, ignored that candidates must be free from any tendency toward homosexuality or support of the gay culture. In several interviews, he further remarked that the ban on men with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" applies to men with deep-seated heterosexual impulses. "Absolutely, it cuts both ways. . . . I think if the orientation dominates one's personality, whether that be homosexual or heterosexual," then the candidate cannot be ordained. Fellow bishop, John M. D'Arcy of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese, roundly rejected such an interpretation.

A more accurate reflection of the document's intent came from the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, which interviewed the French psychologist Msgr. Tony Anatrella, SJ. Msgr. Anatrella said experience has shown that when even chaste homosexual men become priests, "pastoral relations are very much complicated, and sometimes the teaching of the Church is neglected." Although the *Instruction* may provoke protests, Msgr. Anatrella said, particularly from homosexual men already serving in the priesthood, such protests reflect the fact that "they have already put themselves in an uncomfortable situation." Accusations of "homophobia," he believed, are a tactic of intimidation. ✚

Letters to the Editor

....You turn efforts of the American Bishops for the poor such as the Catholic Campaign for Human Development into something bad. - MS

The editor responds:

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is already bad. I am reporting about its badness, not causing it.

Most CCHD grant money does NOT help the poor. If I thought that it did, we would not be having this discussion.

Let's look at the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, which – as I pointed out in the November 2005 Pepper - does better than the national CCHD. In our Archdiocese, an average of 34% over the last decade goes toward economic development. That's where the poor are really being helped.

Which leaves, in our archdiocese, 66% going someplace else.

New Mexico ACORN (one of the Archdiocese's CCHD grantees) doesn't help the poor. It's a highly political group that pushes the election of pro-abortion politicians. That's about as anti-poor as you can get.

Other grantees in the Archdiocese are Albuquerque Interfaith and New Mexico Organizing Project, both Industrial Areas Foundation locals. There are two primary problems with them, one ideological and one practical. Practically, they both back a failed educational reform that is crippling New Mexico. We are breeding a generation of semi-literates who, should they graduate from high school, can't navigate a typical college textbook. Ideologically, they are liberationist – twisting prayers and scripture to fit their own, worldly projects. Ever read the IAF's "magnificat?"

Somos Un Pueblo Unido and Enlace Comunitario engage in homosexual political activism (never mind their problematic immigrant policies that use vulnerable people as political pawns). While the Archdiocese claims to oppose same sex marriages, the Catholic CCHD – which the Archdiocese supports – is funding organizations that during the 2005 legislative session were working for same-sex domestic partnership "rights." What's going on? Explain how this helps the poor.

These organizations receive 66% of CCHD funding to the archdiocese. They are NOT economic development. They HURT the poor. They oppose the Church in a number of fundamental ways, while using Her resources.

We will continue to expose these problems for as long as they remain.

While the Archdiocese claims to oppose same sex marriages, the Catholic CCHD – which the Archdiocese supports – is funding organizations that during the 2005 legislative session were working for same-sex domestic partnership "rights." Is the Archdiocese lying? Is it such an unwieldy bureaucracy that its moral arm has no idea what its "social justice" arm is doing?



A RIGHT WAY OF RELATING

What's so hard about defending Church teaching?

By Cecilia H. Martin

For over twenty years many Catholics have expressed puzzlement over two situations in the Catholic Church: Why pro-life Catholics are unable to get most priests and bishops involved in combating abortion and why, year in and year out, bishops remain so zealously and publicly focused on eliminating capital punishment.

Aside from a few bold leaders, the hierarchical response to thirty-four years of legal abortion is a weary, repetitive annual statement from the NCCB/USCCB and a dramatic appearance at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception's Mass on the eve of Roe vs. Wade's anniversary. Anyone who has ever attended the Mass that precedes the March for Life, witnesses first hand the spirit and power of the people "terrible as an army set in battle array," waging spiritual warfare on behalf of the sanctity of life. But when the valiant warriors return home they find the same old apathy among the majority of their priests and bishops. Sadly, Cardinal Law's once inspiring voice ringing out, "Tomorrow, we march!" is now a tarnished reality.

When staunchly pro-abortion Catholic John Kerry became a presidential candidate, the long-awaited teaching moment arrived. The world's eyes watched while Kerry simultaneously trashed Church teaching and received Holy Communion. It could have been the bishops' finest hour. They dissembled; millions were misled.

At this year's United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) November conference in Washington, D.C., Cardinal McCarrick said he would meet with Catholic politicians who reject Church teaching to seek their opinions on the abortion issue. Another Catholic bishop is telling us that publicly pro-abortion Catholic congressmen "don't understand their faith." Just what exactly about killing a child in the womb do these well-educated, adult senators not understand, Your Excellency?

On the flip side of the coin one finds the US Bishops in a near frenzy to find ways to eliminate capital punishment. Nearly one-third of their time in Washington was spent on this all-consuming issue. Following their deliberations they issued an eleven-page statement calling for a campaign to eliminate the death penalty (once and for all) in the United States.

In a November 18th article, *News from the US Bishops – Whoever they are*, Dr. Jeffrey Mirus, founder and president of CatholicCulture.org, calls the bishops' position and the launching of their campaign "a usurpation of a role proper to the laity." Agreeing or disagreeing on capital punishment is a prudential judgment, not a tenet of the Church. Regarding issues, Mirus writes: "Yet the bishops clearly have no clue how to handle any of them, apparently because they don't understand their own identity. Who are the bishops, anyway?"



***Are
homosexual/gay
priests unable to
connect
emotionally with
the reproductive
act that produces
a child who may
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Most right-thinking Catholics simply can't understand the bishops' fixation with the lives of perhaps two hundred persons on death row (worthy of consideration as they are), and the near total unconcern for the four thousand lives of the unborn snuffed out in the womb each day. There is something intrinsically wrong here and it is not just the numbers.

Back in 2002 when the sexual abuse crisis erupted, even Catholics who were knowledgeable regarding the troubles in the Church were blindsided. Subsequent reports informed Catholics of the influx of homosexuals into seminaries to replace the huge number of priests who left the priesthood to marry. Some of these homosexual men became bishops. In the last several years, no fewer than six bishops resigned their posts when their homosexual activity became public knowledge. Today, it would be hopelessly naïve and irresponsible not to recognize that some U.S. bishops are homosexual/gay persons; that the priesthood contains many men who share a similar inclination. Laying aside these men's celibate conduct (whether observed or ignored), Dr. Mirus may have hit on just the right word; identity. He suggests the bishops perhaps see themselves as laymen.

Is there is a different understanding of identity for the gay priest or gay bishop? As human beings, we resonate psychologically with what we know, feel, and understand – that to which we relate. Are homosexual/gay priests unable to connect emotionally with the reproductive act that produces a child who may become an abortion statistic? By the same token, would a gay man more readily relate to a convicted criminal since they too suffered isolation, ostracism, denigration and guilt in their lifetimes?

In other words, is there a connection between the bishops' and priests' apathy for the pro-life cause and their passion to end capital punishment tied up in their perceived identity?

Far-fetched? Maybe not. A sentence in the Vatican document barring gays from the seminary reads: "The above persons find themselves, in fact, in a situation that gravely obstructs a right way of relating with men and women." Could the absence of a "right way of relating" be the reason bishops give pro-life concerns lip service, work eagerly for prisoners and adopt sexually explicit child protection programs administered by staffers with pro-abortion connections such as Teresa Kettlecamp, Head of the Office of Child and Youth at the USCCB? Answers to the puzzle may be emerging after all. +

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On the Way to Jesus Christ

By Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

A Book Review By Jorge de La Mancha

On the Way to Jesus Christ is a series of nine meditations written between 1997 and 2003 by then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) while he was Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. These articles, developed in response to various occasions, have the common purpose of approaching Jesus through a search for his authentic, undiminished figure. They identify the Jesus of the Gospels as demanding and bold in contradistinction to his representation as an unreal, teddy-bear, phantom, and dream-like figure playing the role of a bland philanthropist.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, deals with the image of God encountered in Scripture, beauty and culture and is the basis for the title of the book. Part Two, *The Figure of the Redeemer*, develops the concept of seeking the face of God under the aspects of the uniqueness and universality of the Redeemer and his Church. It then looks at the figure of Christ as reflected in the Gospel account of his temptation and the Eucharist. In the final chapter of this part the author discusses Christ active in the Blessed Sacrament in terms of Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity. Part Three, *Epilogue*, treats of the catholicity of the Church and offers insightful reflections on the role of the new Catechism in the life of the Church ten years after its publication.

The general argument of this small but beautifully penetrating, insightful, and inspiring book is that it is only the inconvenient Jesus of the total Gospel who can answer the deepest questions of our existence and lead us on the difficult path in search for the ecstatic joy in the infinity of God. Cardinal Ratzinger contends that Christianity is losing its Christology because of efforts to discover the man Jesus behind the background of dogma by means of a humanistic perspective of a Christ who cannot adequately be framed in merely human dimensions. The Jesus of the Gospel is not a Jesus "who demands nothing, never scolds, who accepts everyone and everything, and who does nothing but affirm us." (p.8)

"The crisis of faith in Christ in recent times began with a modified way of reading Sacred Scripture - seemingly the sole scientific way." (p.9) The reading of Scripture requires an understanding of Christ founded in faith and developed through prayer. True Christology must begin by addressing Christ in respectful terms which reflect his sovereignty instead of egalitarian terms which stress his solidarity with mankind and transform his role of Lord into that of a mere advocate.

Especially enlightening is the final chapter dealing with the reception and implementation of the Catechism. As one who was intimately associated with its development, the Cardinal's understanding of issues regarding its relevance to the contemporary Church and society are particularly instructive and provide the reader with a deep appreciation of the profundity of thought and pastoral concern which it represents.

Few books have left this reviewer with a more edifying, deeper understanding and appreciation of what is involved in becoming a true follower of Christ. ✚

January Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting
Friday, January 20, 2005:

6:30 PM – 9:00 PM.

Call (505) 293-8006 for information.
All members welcome.

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



*Please consider a
donation to Los
Pequeños.*