

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

January 2013



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*Religious freedom, persecution, and
martyrdom are interrelated matters.*

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It's so easy...

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Cover: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

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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.

Apostolic Nuncio Foresees Persecution in US

By Mary Jo Anderson

November 4th, 2012 the Apostolic Nuncio for the USA, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, addressed a conference on Religious Liberty at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. His remarks included this statement:

As the papal nuncio to the United States, I realize that I speak from a distinguished podium at a great university. It is my intention to propose for your consideration the interrelated matters of religious freedom, persecution, and martyrdom that are, or should be, of vital concern to you – for these grave concerns exist not only abroad, but they also exist within your own homeland.

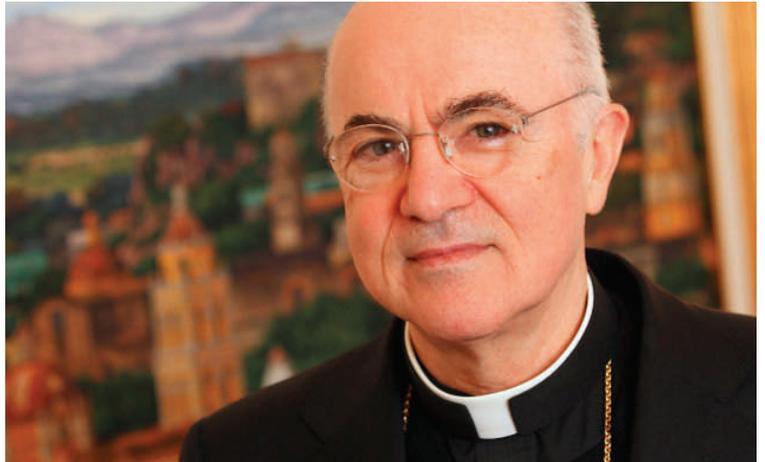
The nuncio briefly sketched the persecution and martyrdom of Christians in other nations, and then took care to define those terms:

In order to establish a framework for my presentation, several key definitions are in order. I will first address the subject of martyrdom. What is it, and why is it relevant to you today? I am sure that most if not all of us are familiar with the martyrs of the Church – both past and present – who gave of their lives because they would not compromise on the principles of faith that accompany the call to discipleship. Theirs is the experience of great suffering that often includes torture and death. Some of the early martyrs of the Church experienced this through cruelty, often by slow means, designed to bring on death. However, the intention underlying the objectives of the persecutor is important to understand: it was to eradicate the public witness to Jesus Christ and His Church. An accompanying objective can be the incapacitation of the faith by enticing people to renounce their beliefs, or at least their public manifestations, rather than undergo great hardships that will be, or can be, applied if believers persist in their resistance to apostasy. The plan is straightforward: if the faith persists, so will the hardships. In more recent times, martyrdom may not necessitate torture and death; however, the objective of those who desire to harm the faith may choose the path of ridiculing the believers so that they become outcasts from mainstream society and are marginalized from meaningful participation in public life. This brings me to the meaning of persecution.

Persecution is typically associated with the deeds preceding those necessary to make martyrs for the faith. While acts of persecution can mirror those associated with martyrdom, other elements can be directed to sustaining difficulty, annoyance, and harassment that are designed to frustrate the beliefs of the targeted person or persons rather than to eliminate these persons. It would seem, then, that the objective of persecution is to remove from the public square the beliefs themselves and the public manifestations without necessarily eliminating the persons who hold the beliefs. The victimization may not be designed to destroy the believer but only the belief and its open manifestations. From the public viewpoint, the believer remains but the faith eventually disappears.

I am struck by the objective that the nuncio gave for those who persecute Christians, “eradicate the public witness to Jesus Christ and His Church,” and “enticing people to renounce their beliefs, or at least their public manifestations, rather than undergo great hardships that will be...”

Next, he listed the maneuvers of a state to insure that enforcement of persecution is lawful:



Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, Apostolic Nuncio for the USA



St. Thomas More

In the context of martyrdom and persecution, the law enforcement branches of the state can be relied upon to achieve the desired goal. The state's enforcement mechanisms were surely employed in the campaigns that brought the deaths of the early Roman martyrs. The legal mechanisms of new legislation and its enforcement in Tudor England were relied upon in the persecution and martyrdom of Thomas More and John Fisher. As one thinks about these two heroic individuals, you can see the multiple objectives of the state. The first, in their sequential order, were words and then deeds designed to encourage through pressure More and Fisher to accept the King's and Parliament's wills to agree with the divorce of King Henry from Queen Catherine. However, when Fisher and More remained resolved in their fidelity to the Church's teachings about the validity of the marriage but discreet in how they did so, the state mechanisms designed to bring them and their views around were ratcheted up so as to increase the pressure on them. When they resisted the increased pressure, statutes were enacted and amended to make non-compliance a treasonable and, therefore, a capital offense.

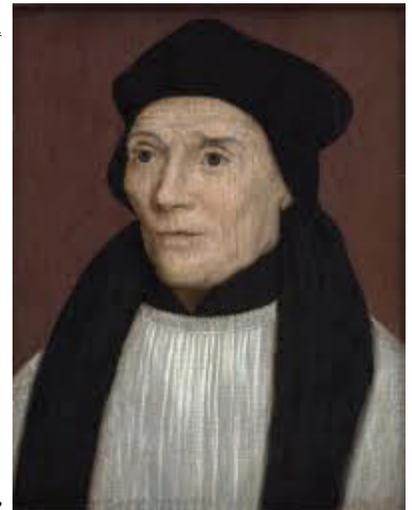
It's important to pause here and note that More and Fisher had committed no *act* against the king. They simply held to their beliefs. Their offense was fidelity to their faith. In order to appear to lawfully persecute St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, it was necessary for the state (king) to remove *religious freedom*.

Archbishop Viganò succinctly defined religious freedom:

At the core of this fidelity is the desire to be a good citizen of the two cities where we all live: the City of Man and the City of God. This kind of dual citizenship necessitates libertas Ecclesiae, i.e., the freedom of the Church. This freedom is essential to the religious freedom which properly belongs to the human person. And this freedom that belongs to the human person is simultaneously a human, civil, and natural right which is not conferred by the state because it subsists in the human person's nature. (emphasis added)

A skillful diplomat, the nuncio, after thus preparing his audience, then introduces the looming danger for American Christians:

We live in an age where most, but not all, of your fellow countrymen still share in the conviction that Americans are essentially a religious people. While current data suggests a progressive decline in religious belief across the western world including the United States, there still appears to be deference given to the importance of religion. But as I have just indicated, there are those who question whether religion or religious belief should have a role in public life and civic affairs. The problem of persecution begins with this reluctance to accept the public role of religion in these affairs, especially but not always when the protection of religious freedom involves beliefs that the powerful of the political society do not share. Thus we are presented with the pressing question about whether the devoted religious believer, let us say the Catholic, can have a right to exercise citizenship in the most robust fashion when his or her views on civic concerns are informed by the faith. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution more than suggests an affirmative answer to this question. But we should not be satisfied with this recognition. After all, important figures, some of whom hold high public office, are speaking today about the right of freedom of worship, but their discourse fails to acknowledge that there is also a complementary right about the unencumbered ability to exercise religious faith in a responsible and at the same time public manner.



St. John Fisher

There we have his clear warning to Americans – “high public office” in the United States fails to acknowledge

the exercise of religious faith in a public manner. The subtext is one our bishops have also warned about – do not mistake “freedom of worship” (confined to a church – essentially a private exercise of faith) to religious freedom (public witness and freedom of worship).

Next,

Let me address the concerns that I see about this fundamental and non-derogable right, on your home front.

Gently but explicitly Archbishop Viganò explained that even democratic nations—including the United States – are at risk. Specific to our current situation, where Catholics and others are under extreme penalty due to the HHS mandate (part of Obamacare) the Nuncio warned:

When Catholic Charities and businesses owned by faithful Catholics experience pressure to alter their cherished beliefs, the problem is experienced in other venues. In short, the menace to religious liberty is concrete on many fronts. Evidence is emerging which demonstrates that the threat to religious freedom is not solely a concern for non-democratic and totalitarian regimes. Unfortunately it is surfacing with greater regularity in what many consider the great democracies of the world. This is a tragedy for not only the believer but also for democratic society.

Furthermore, alarming assaults on religious freedom have recently occurred in other democracies. The Archbishop noted a 2010 case in England:

The decision of an English court in the case of Johns vs. Darby City Council, Queens Bench division, has essentially declared that an evangelical Christian couple is unfit to be legal guardians of foster children because of their faith which informs them that certain sexual expressions by consenting adults are sin...As a result of the court’s decision, the exercise of religious faith which is protected in theory by juridical texts is, in fact, subject to forfeit. As the judges noted in their decision, the belief of Mr. and Mrs. Johns is based on “religious precepts” which can be “divisive, capricious, and arbitrary.”



Pentecostal Christians Eunice and Owen Johns were turned down as potential foster parents after they said they would tell a child that homosexuality is sinful.

Americans, let us mark well the fate of the Johns. Their religious faith is the problem, not the good and loving care that this couple gave to special needs children. Presumably, less loving care is more tolerable when administered by persons devoid of “capricious” religious belief. The Johns refused to teach or allow their foster children to be taught that homosexual act are a “right.”

The Archbishop continues with a pointed observation:

If George Orwell were still alive today, he would certainly have material to write a sequel to his famous novel 1984 in which the totalitarian state, amongst other things, found effective means from distancing children from their parents and monopolizing the control of educational processes especially on moral issues.

Moving his illustrations back to our own shores, Archbishop Viganò related the following cases:

But we must not forget the other perils to religious liberty that your great country has experienced in recent years. Once again, we see that the rule of law, in the context of your First Amendment and important international protections for religious freedom, has been pushed aside. Let me cite some examples of these other hazards. A few years ago, the Federal courts of the United States considered the case of Parker v. Hurley in which a number of families were alarmed over the curriculum of the public schools in Lexington, Massachusetts (ironically one of your cradles of liberty!) where young children were obliged to learn about family diversity as presented in a children’s book that elevated as natural and wholesome same-sex relations in marriage. The Parker family and other families, who are Judeo-Christian believers,

wished to pursue an “opt-out” for their children from this instruction....However, the civil authorities and the Federal courts disagreed with, and thereby denied, the lawful claims of these parents who were trying to protect their children from the morally unacceptable. If these children were to remain in public schools, they had to participate in the indoctrination of what the public schools thought was proper for young children. Put simply, religious freedom was forcefully pushed aside once again.

More recently, we recall the federal court review of Proposition 8 in California. In the legal proceedings surrounding this initiative dealing with the meaning of marriage, Judge Vaughan Walker said this about religious exercise – a freedom enshrined in your Constitution: “Religious beliefs that gay and lesbian relationships are sinful or inferior to heterosexual relationships harm gays and lesbians.”⁵ This “harm” cited by the judge became the basis for devising a mechanism used to minimize if not eradicate the free exercise of religion which includes the vigorous participation of the religious believer in public and political life.”

As he began his closing statements, the papal nuncio, brought the subject home, to the heart of his Notre Dame audience when he forcefully decried so-called “Catholic” university professors whose alliance with modern liberalism against the Church was “grave,”

***If Christians
cannot assert
their right to
exist [then] they
will eventually
be pushed not
only out of
modern culture,
but out of
physical
existence...***

—Christopher Dawson

“...we have observed influential members of the national American community – especially public officials and university faculty members – who profess to be Catholic, allying with those forces that are pitted against the Church in fundamental moral teachings dealing with critical issues such as abortion, population control, the redefinition of marriage, embryonic stem cell commodification, and problematic adoptions, to name but a few. In regard to teachers, especially university and college professors, we have witnessed that some instructors who claim the moniker “Catholic” are often the sources of teachings that conflict with, rather than explain and defend, Catholic teachings in the important public policy issues of the day. While some of these faculty members are affiliated with non-Catholic institutions of higher learning, others teach at institutions that hold themselves out to be Catholic. This, my brothers and sisters, is a grave and major problem that challenges the first freedom of religious liberty and the higher purpose of the human person.”

Further into his presentation the Archbishop recalled the admonition of the historian Christopher Dawson writing in the 1950s, “if Christians cannot assert their right to exist [then] they will eventually be pushed not only out of modern culture, but out of physical existence...it will also become the issue in England and America if we do not use our opportunities while we still have them.”

The nuncio’s crescendo was surely intended to grasp even the lukewarm by the throat:

“Catholics have, in the past, experienced and weathered the storms that have threatened religious freedom. In this context, we recall that Pope Pius XI took steps to address these grave problems in his 1931 encyclical letter *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* dealing with religious persecution of the faithful by the fascists in Italy, and in his 1937

letter *Mit Brennender Sorge* addressing parallel threats initiated by the National Socialists in Germany. In the context of Germany during the reign of National Socialism, we recall that the Oxford Professor Nathaniel Micklem examined and discussed the persecution of the Catholic Church in Germany in his 1939 book entitled *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church*. The problems identified by Micklem over six decades ago that deal with the heavy grip of the state’s hand in authentic religious liberty are still with us today.”

I want to note here that the nuncio is not the first to recently warn Americans of Nazi Germany’s assault on the Church in the 1930s. Several of our bishops have done the same, including most eloquently, Archbishop

Charles Chaput.

If we Catholic faithful fail to respond to the present moment – a “clear and present danger” – our children will write a scathing history of our time. An examination of conscience in the conditions we now live in should include: Have I omitted to defend my faith in public? Have I contributed to the public understanding of religious freedom? What have I done to convert this culture, to be a witness for Jesus Christ in a world that grows dark?

The way ahead is clear – we either convert the culture or be persecuted by it. Can it be possible that after a papal nuncio and several of our own bishops have repeatedly warned us that our current situation is not unlike Nazi Germany, that we remain inactive? Lukewarm?

Beware, dear faithful, more than democratic freedoms are at stake. Though it is true that, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16), the Book Revelation 3:16 is stark “ But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, not hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.”

Mary Jo Anderson is a Catholic journalist and speaker whose articles and commentaries on politics, religion and culture have appeared in a variety of publications and radio programs, Catholic and secular. She has been a frequent guest on “Abundant Life”, an EWTN television program, and her “Global Watch” radio program is heard on EWTN radio affiliates nationwide. Some articles are archived at Inside-Catholic.com Others are found by typing “mary jo anderson” in the search window at WorldnetDaily.com. More articles and commentary can be found at Properly Scared and at www.wf-f.org/bd-mjanderson.html Mary Jo is a board member of Women for Faith and Family. With co-author Robin Bernhoft, she wrote Male and Female He Made Them: Questions and Answers about Marriage and Same-Sex Unions, published in 2005 by Catholic Answers. (Info:1-888-291-8000). In 2003 Mary Jo was invited to the Czech Republic to address parliamentarians on the Impact of Radical Feminism on Emerging Democracies. Archbishop Thomas Wenski nominated Mrs. Anderson for the USCCB’s National Advisory Council, 2010-2014. In 2011 she served on the Council’s executive committee.



The Five Stages of Religious Persecution

By Mary Ann Kreitzer

Msgr. Charles Pope has written an article about the five stages of religious persecution. It’s a sobering perspective, especially when you consider that the stages coincide in many respects with Alinsky’s strategy in *Rules for Radicals* to gain power for community organizers and Kirk and Madsen’s strategy in *After the Ball* to advance the homosexual agenda. Here are Msgr. Pope’s five stages:

- Step 1: Stereotype the targeted group
- Step 2: Vilify the targeted group for alleged crimes or misconduct
- Step 3: Marginalize the targeted group’s role in society
- Step 4: Criminalize the targeted group or its works
- Step 5: Persecute the targeted group outright

These steps fit nicely with Alinsky’s strategy for attacking particular groups. “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.” Since Alinsky also preaches that the “end justifies the means” and portrays the organizer’s goal as a “war,” any action against the “target” is justified. Stereotype it, vilify it, marginalize it, criminalize it, and persecute it fits within his “ethics of means and ends.” The only determinant of a method is the likelihood of its success. In view of the successes achieved in the attack on religion so far, Christians are right to be concerned.

Kirk and Madsen’s morality (or immorality) is similar to Alinsky’s and they were likely familiar with his work.

Their strategy included “jamming,” i.e., vilifying those who opposed homosexual behavior, and launching hate activities against them. Here’s just one quote illustrating their hate-filled tactics. “At a later stage of the media campaign for gay rights...it will be time to get tough with remaining opponents. To be blunt, they must be vilified.... Our goal here is twofold. First, we seek to replace the mainstream’s self-righteous pride about its homophobia with shame and guilt. Second, we intend to make the anti-gays look so nasty that average Americans will want to dissociate themselves from such types.” They go on to talk about contrasting images of hate-filled “homophobes” with pictures of innocent and normal looking gays. This has been the strategy of the media which used the same types of tactics to gain abortion on demand. The New Normal is just one example of TV propaganda.

In terms of “criminalizing” Catholics, the culture has accomplished this in spades. The sex abuse by a minority of priests has been magnified over and over and over, while the homosexual nature of the abuse has been almost

totally ignored. On the other hand, the homosexual abuse of children by non-clergy (like the murder of Jesse Dirkhising by two homosexuals and the homosexual nature of Jeffrey Dahmer’s murders) has been covered up by a complicit media. Apparently children abused by homosexuals in the general population is acceptable; only homosexual abuse by priests is vilified.

We are well on the way to outright persecution as Msgr. Pope points out and the HHS Mandate clearly shows. Pray for courage and continue to fight with the knowledge that persecution is likely. Serious Catholics will be restricted in employment as the culture forces cooperation with more intrinsic evils. Can a doctor be sued for refusing to prescribe contraceptives? How about a surgeon who refuses to perform sex change operations? Or a pharmacist who refuses to prescribe deadly drugs in a state where assisted suicide is legal? Pharmacists, health care workers, photographers, caterers, and B & B owners are already being sued for refusing participation in intrinsic evils on the grounds of religion. They are often losing. The doors are closing for those who love the Lord and would rather forsake income than sin against him. And only those who are blind refuse to see the blatant discrimination.

Pray for America and for our precious children and grandchildren who will suffer most as the persecution intensifies. Mary, Mother of the Americas, pray for us. ☩

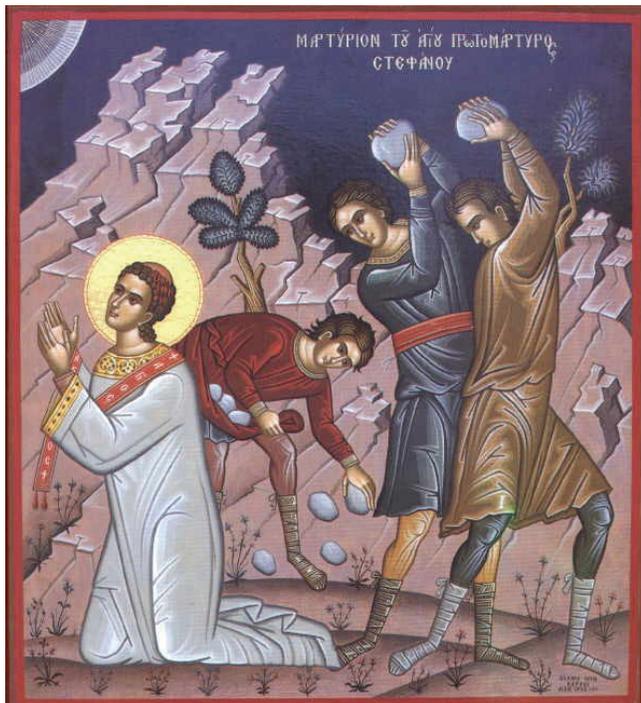
Pray for America and for our precious children and grandchildren who will suffer most as the persecution intensifies. Mary, Mother of the Americas, pray for us. ☩

Mary Ann Kreitzer is editor of *Les Femmes* and produces the *Les Femmes* blog: lesfemmes-thetruth.blogspot.com.

Prayer to St. Stephen, Protomartyr

O glorious St. Stephen, first Martyr for the Faith, filled with compassion for those who invoke you, with love for those who suffer, heavily laden with the weight of my troubles. I kneel at your feet and humbly beg you to take my present need(s) under your special protection ... (mention here). Vouchsafe to recommend it to our Lord Jesus. Cease not to intercede for me until my request is granted.

Above all, obtain for me the grace to one day meet God face to face, and with you and Mary and all the angels and saints praise Him through all eternity. O most powerful Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr, do not let me lose my soul, but obtain for me the grace of winning my way to heaven, forever and ever. Amen.



How the Message of “Contraception and Abortion are Key to Women’s Equality” Fails Women and Society

By Helen Alvare

The HHS Mandate has provoked two national conversations. The first concerns religious freedom. The federal government has imposed a mandate without exceptions for most religious institutions, or for religious individuals or private entities, requiring them to buy insurance for services which violate their conscience. Robust legislative, judicial and grass roots responses are underway.

The second debate concerns the centrality of “free” birth control and early abortifacients (the morning and week after pills) to the cause of women’s freedom. This debate was begun – likely for political/electioneering reasons – by the Executive Branch of government when it announced that anyone opposing governmental programs and efforts toward the most widely available contraception and early abortion drugs, was conducting a “War on Women.”

Since that time, it has been wonderful to witness women having the debate everyone assumed was over and done: whether women’s lives are better today in their relationship and marriage contexts, because of birth control and abortion.

This is a vast topic and cannot be handled fully in the confines of one “fact sheet.”



Dr. Helen Alvare

But Women Speak for Themselves Campaign would like to insert into this debate at least this thought:

This debate is not about women’s legal right to buy and use contraception, a legal right guaranteed in law and not the subject of the Women Speak for Themselves (WSFT) campaign. It is not about whether women should have the right and the responsibility to determine the number and spacing of their children. They should. It is rather about whether practically and culturally severing human sexual relations from the fact of their originating new, vulnerable human lives, improves the lives of women, and along with them, of men, children and society. A great deal of reliable data indicate that the answer is “no” in some important aspects. This is the question the purveyors of the “War on Women” theme steadfastly refuse to engage. WSFT would like them, and all people of good will, to engage it, to get past sound-bites and onto the hard questions for the sake of women and all society.

What the available data tell us: The right (read: “responsibility”) to use contraception with abortion as (in the words of our Supreme Court) “backup”

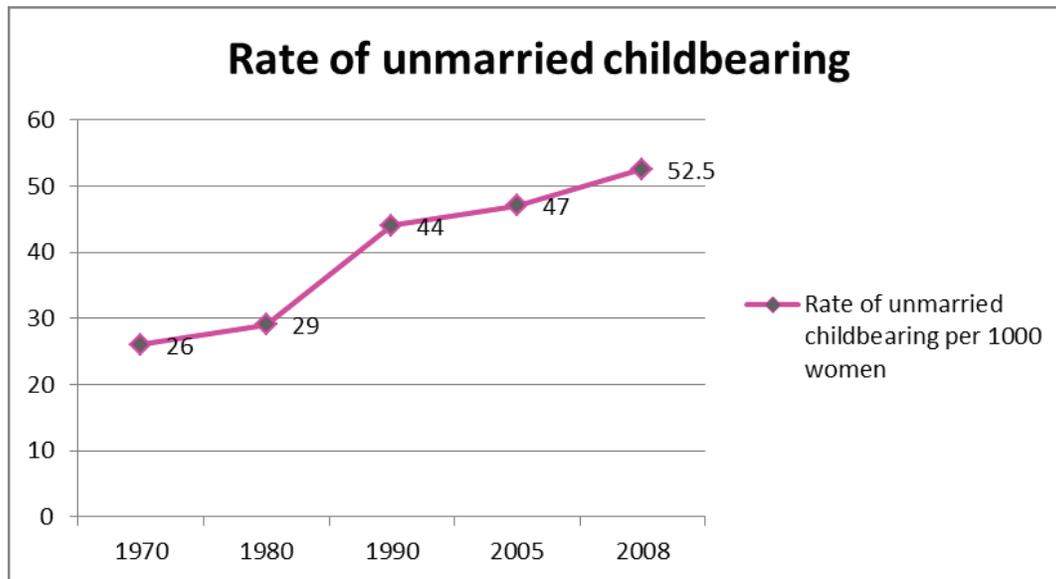
Between contraceptive method and use failures, and human nature’s “risk compensation” response when told that birth control and abortion are failsafe insurance policies – policies trumpeting the “women’s freedom” aspects of both are correlated with more non-marital sex with all its attendant consequences. Risk compensation refers to human beings’ willingness to engage in more risky behavior when they perceive that its dangers have been reduced or eliminated. Think increased speeding deaths following safety belt mandates. The same outcomes hold true not only in the U.S., but in other countries testing this hypothesis. In other words, contraceptive use is nearly universal, but rather than curbing problematic consequences, it doesn’t.

The researchers who have amassed the data are not themselves pro-life. They are simply taking economic and sociological and psychological theories to their logical conclusions. What they find, in short, is that massively available birth control and abortion have altered the sex, mating and marriage “markets” so that the very problems everyone hopes they will solve – non-marital pregnancies and births, sexually transmitted infections, high abortion rates, and yes, poverty – have worsened, instead of improved. This happens as sexual intimacy becomes the normal price of a relationship, while at the same time women are expected to ensure either that pregnancy does not occur, or that if it does occur, they will resort to abortion. “Shotgun” marriages are out. In other words, once women have the “relationships market,” it seems to fuel abortions.

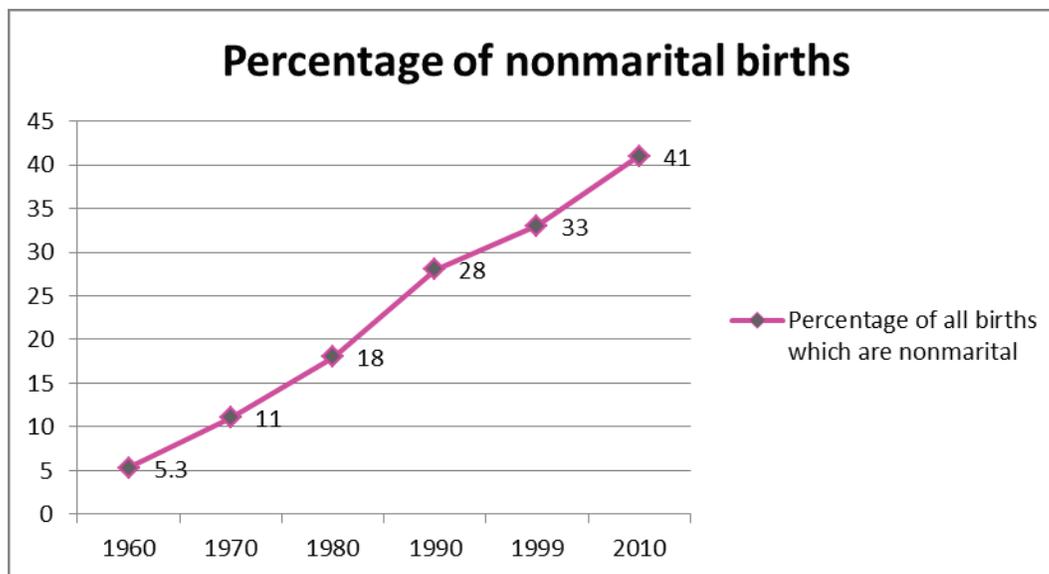
After birth control began to flood the U.S market in the 1960s and after the 1970 passage of the federal Title X program providing large-scale contraception handouts, and after the legalization of abortion in 1973, we have seen rates of all problematic outcomes shoot up. Sometimes one sees short term improvements for a few

years in one or more of these outcomes, but rates have never fallen below the levels existing before such programs went into effect. Obviously, other simultaneous events bear responsibility too for our current predicaments. But this does not change the fact that the simplistic equation -- **more contraception + more abortion = women's freedom** – is not proved out.

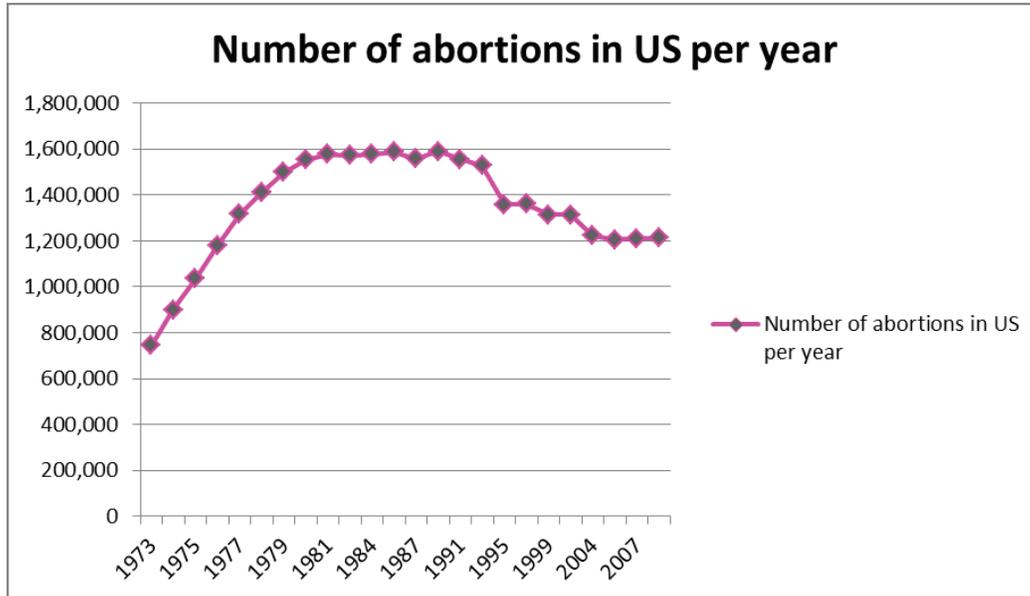
Joyce A. Martin, et al, births: Final Data for 2008, National Vital Statistics Reports (Vol. 59, no 1), December 2012



Joyce A. Martin, et al, births: Final Data for 2008, National Vital Statistics Reports (Vol. 59, no 1), December 2012



Joyce A. Martin, et al. Births: final data for 2010, National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 61, No. 1 (August, 2012) at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr61/nvsr61_01.pdf



<http://www.guttmacher.org/datacenter/trend.jsp#> (sorted by state of occurrence)*

*Data taken from Guttmacher Institute and not CDC; the CDC does not mandate that states report abortion numbers, but Guttmacher has a close relationship with Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest abortion provider, and therefore receives better data.

What researchers have to say:

- [W]hen the cost of abortion is low, or contraceptives are readily available, potential male partners can easily obtain sexual satisfaction without making...promises [to marry in the event of pregnancy] and will thus be reluctant to commit to marriage.” Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz¹
- The Pill is an outdated method because it does not work well enough; it is very difficult for ordinary women to take a pill every day” James Trussell, Princeton University²
- 48% of women with unintended pregnancies & 54% of women seeking abortions were using contraception during the month they became pregnant³
- A prisoners’ dilemma is any social setting wherein all parties have a choice between cooperating with one another and noncooperation. All parties would be better off if they chose cooperation, but — like prisoners being held for questioning in separate chambers and offered individual deals which seemingly advantage the prisoner as an individual – they accept what seems to be the best individual choice. As a result, everyone involved is worse off. A woman in a dating market confronted by a man with choosing between a sexual relationship and no relationship is in the same position. Women as a group would be better off if they cooperated with one another and refused uncommitted sex, but women individually—and in a world where contraception and abortion make sex look “consequence free”—more often agree to uncommitted sex on the understanding that if they say “no,” it is easy for the man to find another woman who will say “yes.” Consequently, all women are worse off as the price of sex spirals down.
- In the first 12 months of contraception use 16.4% of teens will become pregnant.⁴
- “[I]ncreasing access to contraception may actually increase long run pregnancy rates even though short run pregnancy rates fall.” - Economist Peter Arcidiacono⁵

- “Contraceptives like the pill, initially developed as a “foolproof” means to reduce fertility, helped spark a sexual revolution that swept the globe.” - Matthew Connelly⁶
- According to economist Timothy Reichert, the prisoners’ dilemma operates for women in the mating market as follows: sex without the “cost” of pregnancy becomes the norm, such that sexual partners don’t even have to consider the possibility of marriage.⁷

More women than men begin populating the “marriage market” at a younger age because women generally want to have children sometime during their lives, but they are biologically constrained to have them while they are younger. By their early 30s, therefore, most women have entered the marriage market. Men have no similar, inbuilt impetus to leave the sex market and enter the marriage market. Thus, women have more “power” in the sex market, where they are relatively scarce, but face more competition in the marriage market, where they are competing for fewer men. This translates into women more often striking “bad deals” at the margins in the marriage market. ☞

Notes

1 George A. Akerlof, Janet L. Yellen, and Michael L. Katz, An Analysis of Out of Wedlock Childbearing in the United States, 111 *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 277 (1996).

2 D. Rose, The Pill ‘has had its day as an effective contraceptive,’ *The Times* (UK), June 26, 2008 at timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article4215441.ece?articleid=4215441.

3 Heather D. Boonstra, Rachel Benson Gold, Cory L. Richards, and Lawrence B. Funder, Abortion in Women’s Lives, at www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/05/04AiWL.pdf at 6-7; Guttmacher Institute, Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States, July 2008, at guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html.

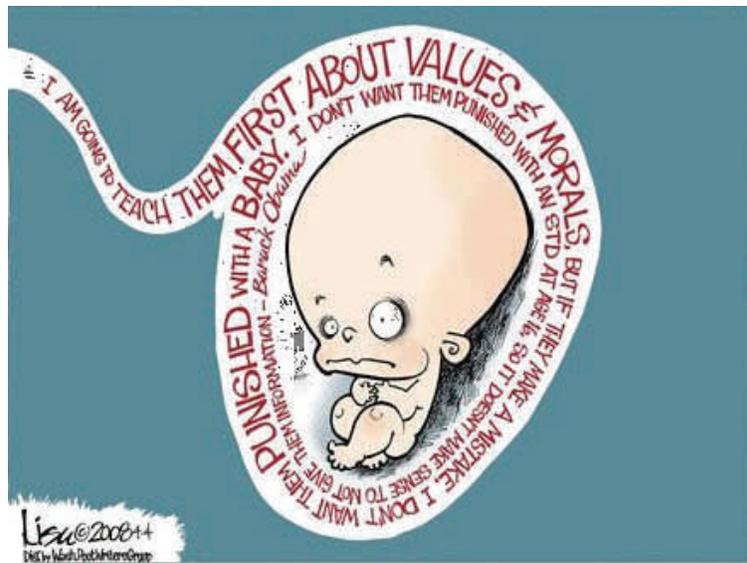
4 H.Fu et al., Contraceptive Failure Rates: New Estimates from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, 31 *Family Planning Perspectives* 31, 56-63, at 61 (1999).

5 Peter Arcidiacono et al, Habit Persistence and Teen Sex: Could Increased Access to Contraception Have Unintended Consequences for Teen Pregnancies? Working Paper, Duke University Department of Economics (Oct 3, 2005), 1-38 at 31, at www.econ.duke.edu/~psarcidi/teensex.pdf.

6 Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Harvard University Press 2008).

7 Timothy Reichert, Bitter Pill, *First Things* (May 2010), 25-34.

Dr. Helen Alvare is currently an associate professor of law at George Mason University. She is an adviser to Pope Benedict XVI’s Pontifical Council for the Laity, as well as an ABC News consultant. A well-respected speaker, she has lectured on abortion, euthanasia, and feminism on behalf of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops at more than 70 colleges, universities, and law schools. Her legal scholarship regularly treats current controversies about marriage, parenting, and the new reproductive technologies.



Of Gods and Men

A meditative film on faith in the face of violence

By Martin Barillas

Directed by Xavier Beauvois, *Des Hommes et de Dieux* “Of Gods and Men” – a meditative film based on actual gruesome events – won a prize at the Cannes film festival for works fostering inter-religious understanding. Judged by an ecumenical jury, the film recounts the lives and deaths in 1996 of a group of French monks who were massacred and beheaded in a Cistercian monastery Algeria in events that remain mysterious and controversial.

The film’s plot centers on the Catholic monks as they wrestle with whether to flee during a bloody conflict between Algeria’s army and Muslim jihadi insurgents, or to remain in their monastery from which they had ministered to their Muslim neighbors. The statement of the jury declared that “The deep humanity of the monks, their respect for Islam and their generosity towards their village neighbors make the reason for our choice.” Moreover, wrote the jury, “This movie of great artistic value benefits from a remarkable group of actors and follows the daily rhythm of work and liturgy.” The jury also commended two other films in competition for Cannes’ main prize, “Poetry” by South Korean director Lee Chang-Dong and “Another Year” by Britain’s Mike Leigh.

A fratricidal war ensued in Algeria in 1992 when it became clear that a national election would usher in an Islamist government. The army intervened and cancelled the election; the ensuing war claimed the lives of over 200,000 people in a country of 27 million people. Whole villages and families were wiped out by the army and the Islamist insurgents, with each side blaming the other for excesses. In the case of the monks, the insurgents first claimed responsibility for the massacre of the seven monks, but a later claim by a former French military attaché that the Algerian army may have been responsible has since made the tragedy much more mysterious.

The film focuses on the daily lives of the monks as they face the possibility of deadly violence. Featuring prominent French actors Lambert Wilson (*The Matrix*) and Michael Lambert, the director Beauvois said of the film, “What interested me was the story of these men, who they were, and the rest, well, we don’t really know,” at a news conference. Beauvois, who also co-wrote the script with Etienne Comar, theorized that the monks’ deaths were the result of a blunder by the Algerian military. “The monks insisted on being extremely neutral, on not taking sides,” Comar averred, “They called the terrorists ‘the brothers from the mountain’ and called the people from the army ‘the brothers from the plain.’ ... It seems totally coherent for the movie to adopt their point of view.”

Beauvois’ chief concern according to reviewers is on the monks’ own inner struggles, rather than the politics surrounding their deaths. Toronto Star reviewer Peter Howell said that *Of Gods and Men* is “a beautifully acted and directed work of uplift and inspiration.” However, Kirk Honeycutt of *The Hollywood Reporter* called the film “ponderous.”

The movie does not shy away from the violence of the conflict. Indeed, the opening scenes depict Islamist terrorists slitting the throats of Croatian construction workers - friends of the monks. The precariousness of the monks’ lives is obvious and lends poignancy to their struggles over their faith as they remain at their monastery to help local villages keep both the Algerian military and Islamist terrorists at bay.

The men debate and pray, and cry out to God to help them keep their faith to accept their eventual decision to stay in Algeria even as their fate becomes clear. Finally, the camera zooms in on their eyes, those windows of the soul where their moral dilemma plays out.

The film was shot in neighboring Morocco, and the director rebuilt a monastery near a town called Meknes to resemble the one that witnessed the murders of the monks in 1996. In Algeria, the security situation remains tense as Islamist terrorists linked to Al Qaeda remain active in the hills. “Some news stories have said that I filmed in Morocco because of security reasons, but in fact, I did not at all. I never had any intention of shooting anywhere else,” Beauvois said. Even so, just this week a roadside bomb killed two Algerian soldiers and seriously wounded 18 in an attack blamed upon the Al Qaeda terrorists.

The film conjures up the austerity and peace of the Cistercian monastery where the French monks prayed and contemplated a world that finally consumed them. So closely did Beauvois conjure the life and spirituality of the monks that he went



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on a monastic-like retreat himself in order to get closer to “the beauty of their faith.” The actors, led by Lambert Wilson and Michel Lonsdale, also went on retreats to prepare for their roles. Said Wilson, “We sang the liturgical chants, we even became united in this aspiration toward something higher; we felt together as brothers. We even had a monastic consultant.” He continued, saying that the film attempts to mirror the monastic life. “Monks live at this rhythm. It’s exhausting, and they work, too.” Wilson also plays another religious role, a 16th century Huguenot, in a second French film in competition, Bertrand Tavernier’s “La Princesse de Montpensier.”

Beauvois and Comar said they conducted extensive research into the slayings but intentionally avoided going into too much detail in the movie. “We wanted the story to be as universal as possible,” Comar said. “References to Algeria are clearly there, but we tried to open the film the most we could.” Said Comar, “I had decapitated bodies, models made, but then I knew that was ridiculous. Then unexpectedly, it snowed.” The snow provides a metaphor in the final scenes, that moved Comar to say “It happened just at the right moment. It was a state of grace.”

In 1996, following the tragedy, Pope John Paul II spoke to the Cistercians (also known as Trappists) while reflecting on the words from the Gospel – “He who loves his life will lose it, while he who hates his life in this world, will keep it for eternal life. If someone wishes to serve me let him follow me, and where I am there also will my servant be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.” (John 12:24-26). The pontiff said, at Tre Fontane in Rome, “At the end of the second millennium, the Church has become once again a Church of martyrs.” (Tertio millennio adveniente, n. 37) The witness of the Trappists of Our Lady of Atlas takes its place alongside that of the Bishop of Oran, His Excellency Pierre Lucien Caverie, and of not a few other sons and daughters on the African continent who, during this period, have given their lives for the Lord and for their brothers and sisters, beginning with those who persecuted and killed them. Their witness is the victory of the Cross, the victory of the merciful love of God, who saves the world.” ☞

Martin Barillas is religion editor for Spero News.

January Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting
January 18, 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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“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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