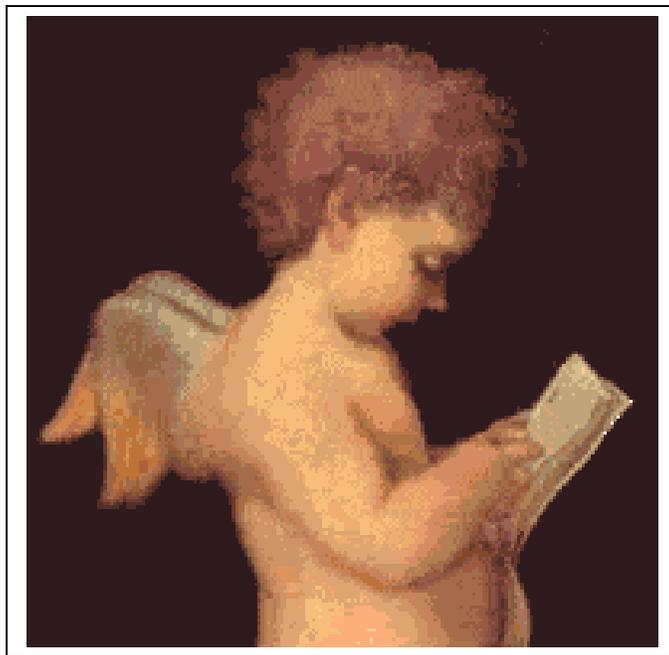


# Los Pequeños Pepper

*Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo*

July 2003



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*The Free Press*

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# *Los Pequeños Pepper*

*Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo*

*July 2003*

*Volume 5, Number 7*

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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 independently alter the substance of the gospel message or moral truths which have been inerrantly and infallibly held by the Catholic Church since Her founding.*



*"Nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good," Pope Leo XIII*

## **The Archbishop and the Priest**

*Is Archbishop Michael Sheehan oblivious or indifferent to Call to Action activity under his nose?*

By Stephanie Block

Before he cleans up Phoenix, Archbishop Michael Sheehan has several matters at home to address. In response to an inquiry this spring about Fr. Richard Rohr from the Diocese of Allentown, Archbishop Sheehan wrote:

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, has been invited to give a presentation at the National Young Adult Conference to be held in Albuquerque from Friday, June 13 through Sunday, June 15. Father Rohr is a very popular writer and presenter and is much in demand, not only in the United States but also other parts of the world, for his presentations.

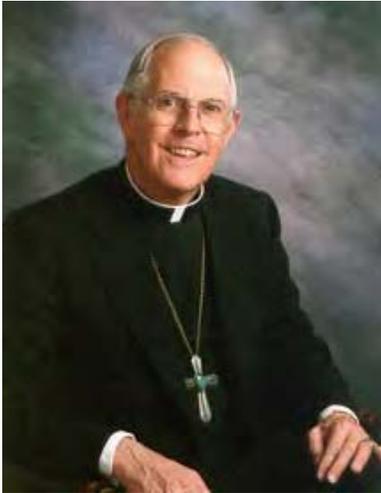
Father Rohr sometimes can be controversial and has liberal views on different aspects of the Church; but at the same time he is also quite capable of very traditional and inspiring talks. Several years ago I had to meet with him to have a frank talk, as Bishop, on several matters that concerned me. He pledged that he would write articles that are faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church and that his presentations would also carefully reflect sound Catholic teaching.

Since our discussion, Father Rohr has shown a positive response to the concerns that I raised regarding sensitivity to sound teaching. I have personally heard him give very solid presentations regarding the Catholic faith. I believe that he will be quite loyal to the Church in his presentation to the young adults at the National Conference in June.

[May 2, 2003]

One salient point of Archbishop Sheehan's letter – that Fr. Rohr has pledged to write articles and give presentations that are faithful to the teachings of the Church since the time ("several years ago") of the Archbishop's frank talk with him – bears examination.

Without knowing how far back the Archbishop's frank talk was, it seems fair to look at some of Rohr's writings and actions over the past three years.



**Archbishop Michael Sheehan**

SOME EXAMPLES: Church teaching is straightforward. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and contrary to the natural law. “Homosexual persons are called to chastity.” (CCC #2357-8)

Fr. Rohr has challenged this teaching – and done so recently.

In 2000, Rohr wrote a letter of support for the Soulforce-Dignity/USA protest at the November National Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting in Washington DC. The protest was organized against “the exclusionary policies of the Catholic Church toward GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender] Catholics, to ask the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to STOP SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE against sexual and gender minorities, and support the inclusion of GLBT Catholics into all aspects of church life.” [Soulforce-Dignity/USA Press Release, October 19, 2000, emphasis in original]

Rohr’s October 8, 2000 letter of support for this activity says, in part:

At last we have a group of dedicated Christians who are willing to use disciplined and Christian means of nonviolent protest against the church’s failure to live the gospel...

SOULFORCE must take the role of John the Beloved who runs swiftly to the tomb because that is what love always does....Our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered brothers and sisters have been left outside of his realm of grace for far too long. We can do so much better, and we will. I thank SOULFORCE for its courage, dedication and proclamation of Christian nonviolence in the pursuit of justice and truth.

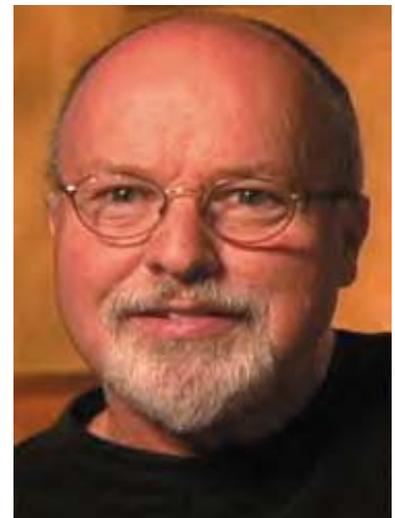
In 2001, Rohr wrote in *Radical Grace*, the periodical of the Center for Action and Contemplation that he founded, a defense of same-sex “marriage,” written four years after he performed a same-sex “commitment ceremony” at the Center. It was written after Archbishop Sheehan had spoken to him about the matter and had been assured that Rohr would mend his ways:

Without wanting to take sides here on this immensely divisive issue, one must admit that the mainline Christian position held by most of the churches against same sex marriage, with the exception of the United Church of Christ, creates a situation that in effect encourages the very promiscuity that it rightly condemns. (“On the Horns of a Dilemma: Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality,” *Radical Grace*, 10-12/01)

Clever bit, this. It presents Church teaching by questioning it. It disingenuously claims to have taken no side on the issue of Church blessings for same-sex unions, while presenting Church teaching concerning chastity as impossible – encouraging promiscuity rather than fostering virtue.

And the 2003 Albuquerque Annual GLBT Pride program book not only identifies Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation as its 2001 Pride Parade winner in the “Banner Group,” but lists it among those organizations that “Over the years...have been supportive of the GLBT community overall or Pride directly.” (pp. 23, 50, 34) The Pridefest is one aspect of the “fight against homophobia and ...the struggle for acceptance of who we are.” (p. 14)

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms the value of freely chosen, consecrated celibacy. (CCC # 915-6)



**Rev. Richard Rohr**

Rohr, however, feels this is a “myth.” According to a piece published by *Sojourners* July-August 2002, “Beyond Crime and Punishment,” he writes:

Celibacy, at least in the male, is a most rare gift. ...Many who have ostensibly “succeeded” at it have often, by the second half of life, actually not succeeded in the sense of becoming a God lover, a human lover, and a happy man besides.

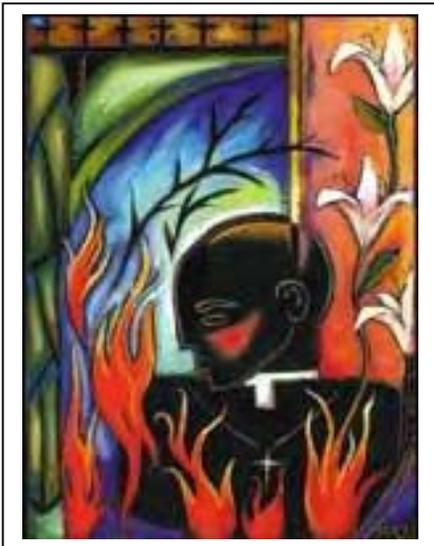
Practically, however, the demand for celibacy as a prerequisite for ministry is a set-up for so many false takers. Not bad men, just men who are still on a journey: young men who need identity; insecure or ambitious men who need status; passionate men who need containment for their passions; men who are pleasing their pious mothers or earning their Catholic father’s approval; men who think “the sacred” will prevent their feared homosexuality, their wild heterosexual hormones, or their paedophilia; men with arrested human development who seek to overcompensate by identification with a strong group; men who do not know how to relate to other people and to women in particular.

.... Many of us stay in not because we believe the official ideology of celibacy anymore, but because we believe in our work, we love the people, and we also know God’s mercy. But that loss of belief in the very ideology is at the heart of the whole problem now. We cannot prop up with law and social pressure what the Spirit does not appear to be sustaining. The substructure has collapsed.

....In general, I think healthy male celibacy is rare, and it probably is most healthy as an “initiation” stage to attain boundaries, discipline, integrity, depth, and surrender to God. In the long run, most men, as the Buddha statues illustrate, need to have one hand touching the earth, the concrete, the physical, the material, the sexual. If they do not, the other hand usually points nowhere.

.... We Catholics should also see celibacy as primarily an intense initiation course of limited (one to 10) years, much like the monks in many Asian countries

....Male sexuality does not go away. It is not easily sublimated or integrated. It is either expressed healthily or it goes underground in a thousand different ways. Sex is and probably always will be a central issue for most males, and it can never develop honestly inside of a “hothouse” of prearranged final conclusions.



**NATIONAL YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE:** There is a second salient point in Archbishop Sheehan’s letter to the Diocese of Allentown and that is his assurance that Rohr’s talk would be “loyal to the Church.” By inference, the reader assumes that the Conference itself will be loyal to the Church.

The Archbishop is, after all, the Episcopal Moderator for the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association, which sponsored the Young Adult Conference in June. His was the hosting diocese. The Archbishop was also present for some of the conference, mingling among the young people.

Nevertheless, Call to Action (and also the CTA affiliate, Pax Christi) was listed in the conference program booklet as one of its “Exhibitors, Sponsors, and Friends.” This was prearranged, deliberate sponsorship – not the work of some enthusiast who left literature on a table and ran.

Call to Action literature was also made prominently available to conference participants. On the exhibit tables, participants could pick up:

- Call to Action *Join the Movement* brochure: explaining that CTA works in solidarity with Pax Christi, Women's Ordination Conference, CORPUS, and Dignity, among others.
- Call to Action brochure for Summer 2003 Retreat, ages 18-42,
- Call to Action information about 2003 National Conference, advertising speakers who believe that
  - the Church must accept homosexual relationships as morally good (Marianne Duddy with Dignity, USA; Sr. Jeannine Grammick and Francis DeBernardo with the New Ways Ministry; Paul Morrissey with CMI, a ministry for gay and lesbian priests and religious),
  - that the Church must ordain women (Genevieve Chavez with Women's Ordination Conference),
  - the Church must accept married priests (Anthony Padovano, former president of CORPUS),
  - liberation theology is a viable alternative to classical theology (Jeannette Rodriguez, CTA Board; George "Tink" Tinker),
  - the Church must re-image the Divine (Mary Kingsley author of *The Prayers and Seven Contemplations of the Sacred Mother*; Edwina Gateley author of *A Warm, Moist, Salty God*; Rosemary Ruether author of *Women-Church and Sexism and God-Talk*),
  - Catholic laity must determine the conditions for divorce and remarriage, contraception, and the election of clerical positions (Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church).
- Samples of the April 2003 *Call to Action News* and the Jan-Feb 2003 *CTA Spirituality Justice*. The *CTA News* carried articles about FutureChurch/CTA prayer services that depicted God in feminine imagery, a play about one woman's "call to the priesthood," a book project titled "Women of the Word," a collection of "homilies" written by Roman Catholic women, and a photo of Denise Donato, who "presides at Eucharist after her ordination..."
- Fliers advertising Call to Action and FutureChurch materials, including *Future of Priestly Ministry*, a resource that prepares readers to "begin a dialogue" on issues of "celibacy in the church, women's ordination," and "infallibility."

Whatever the quality of Fr. Rohr's talk, the open, intentional presence of Call to Action literature at the conference stood in flagrant contradiction to the Archbishop's assurances that Rohr's talk would be "loyal to the Church." This is every bit as devastating as if Rohr had given an openly dissenting talk. What has been "said" by such actions is that Rohr, his Center for Action and Contemplation, and Call to Action are entities to be trusted as reflective of the mind of the Church. After all, the Archbishop was there and he gave his word. ☛

*Call to Action... was listed in the conference program booklet as one of its "Exhibitors, Sponsors, and Friends." This was prearranged, deliberate sponsorship – not the work of some enthusiast who left literature on a table and ran.*

# Interview with Rev. Christopher Zugger

*Author of The Forgotten, scheduled speaker for September Conference on "The Persecuted Church," Fr. Christopher Zugger speaks about his work*

**Q: Your book, *The Forgotten*, is filled with hundreds of stories about Catholics who were persecuted under the Soviets. How did you find these stories?**

A: Most of my research on this book was pre-Internet. By that, I mean I spent a great deal of time writing to people, talking personally, and presenting my case for the preservation of their history or the stories of martyrs they had known. One person would lead to me to another, and there is a long link of connections that had to be directed by the hand of God. I could never have found so many stories on my own!

**Q: The opening chapters of your book provide the background for your history of Catholicism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Soviet Union, explaining something of the East/West split in Christendom – or, actually, the East/West/Russian split. It seemed to me that understanding that history would go a long way towards assisting reunification of the Church. Did you have this in mind as you wrote those chapters?**

A: I hope, like the Pope, for reunification. But reunification can only come with complete

honesty and humility on all sides. So, I gave the "propaganda" lines, and then the history as best as I can see it objectively. And the complexities of the story of those Orthodox who collaborated with the suppression of Catholics, and Catholics who were against Orthodox, and so on, couldn't really be understood in the latter part of the book without



**Rev. Christopher  
Zugger**

giving that kind of background. Too much time is spent still rehashing old hatreds instead of seeking the common truth and reconciliation in Christ, as the Pope pointed out so profoundly in L'viv, Ukraine.

**Q: *The Forgotten* is history from an ecclesial perspective (as opposed to an economic or social perspective, say) and you are very persuasive that, at least for this part of the world, the fortunes of the Church and the fortunes of those peoples caught in the Soviet Union's orbit are inextricably bound. Aside from the fact that you're a priest, and Church affairs are interesting to you, how do you understand this rather unique outlook to accurately and broadly convey the incredibly complex changes that went on in Eastern Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> century?**

A: In Eastern Europe, the fortunes of Church and People have generally been intertwined. There is an old joke from Nowa Huta, where the Pope was able to construct the magnificent parish church in the face of Communist opposition, about a man standing during the Consecration of the Mass. People around him nudge him to kneel down, and he says "I'm an atheist, I can't kneel down for this." Then people ask him, well why are you at Mass? And he replies "Because I'm against Communism." So even unbelievers expected the Churches to take stands in favor of the people.

But aside from this, the drive of Soviet expansion deliberately worked at not only promoting an economic system based on Marxism, and a political system based on the dictatorship of the Party, but also at the deliberate extinction of human dignity. The only force that stood in its way, the only force that would defend the rights of Man and the unique beauty of each individual against the power of the Party, was religion. And religion therefore had to be obliterated. So, even an unbeliever would realize that the loss of church bells ringing on Sunday, of roadside crosses, of sisters in habits and priests in clerical clothes on the streets, meant a steady de-sacralizing of life. All those "small" losses were part of a much bigger, cosmic battle - one that even Communists called "a battle for men's souls." And those souls were meant to be snatched by atheism and Marxism, and nothing else mattered.

**Q: What was the reaction of your indexer when he read the book?**

A: He wrote to the publisher that I had accomplished my goal in telling the story of these forgotten people, since he himself had been forced to re-examine a lifetime of leftist beliefs and his rejection of stories of persecution as groundless or exaggerated. He was floored by the amount of documentation I had, and that all this was indeed real. That's something I hoped people would understand - all of this was very real, and has been ignored by so much of the mainstream media.

**Q: *The Forgotten* ends just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. You mention in the book's preface "the uncertain future" of Soviet Catholics. Why do you say that? Can you speak a bit about the situation for Catholics in Eastern Europe and Russia in particular over the past ten years?**

A: On my pilgrimage to eastern Europe this year, I was struck by the fact that many Catholics feel like they are walking on very thin ice when it comes to certain governments of republics founded after 1991. Church registration is still necessary in most places; there are still old Communists in authority; an anti-Catholic Orthodox priest can wield enormous pressure in a district to refuse registration to a Catholic parish by civil authorities, just as a pro-Catholic Orthodox priest can eliminate obstacles. In the homeland of the Byzantine-Ruthenian Catholic Church, all of the old churches are owned by the government still, just like in Communist days. They are given over to Greek-Catholic use, but they are not the property of the parishes or the diocese, and only 100 out of

nearly 400 churches have been returned. So for many people, in a broad range of territory, while they remain firmly devoted to the Church and to Christ, they are not so sure what their future will be in, say, ten years. This is particularly true for isolated parishes in the Russian interior and some Islamic republics.

**Q: You're Chaplain to the National Board of the Mission Society of Our Lady of Boronyavo and were instrumental in the Society's founding. How do you see this organization as responding to the circumstances in which Eastern European and Russian Catholics find themselves?**

A: The Mission Society is named after a little shrine in the Carpathian Mountains, Boronyavo, where Our Lady appeared to a monk who had remained faithful to his vows after the government closed his monastery. It has been a monastic center for 800 years, and a place of miracles since the 1700s. Like the shrine, the Society is a small group right now, but then Our Lord began with only 12 apostles! We want to publicize the situations of Catholics in Russia and Ukraine and elsewhere in the CIS using our web site and newsletter, and conferences. Above all, I hope to continue to establish good links with the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia and Trans-

Carpathia and to provide direct aid to needy projects and persons. Finally, I want to see continued prayer for vocations, and to Our Lady for the healing of the division of the churches and the spread of the Gospel through our work and prayers.

There is a LOT of work to be done. Parishes have no churches. Children have no parents. Young people are seeking religious answers. Priests are poor and overwhelmed. Our American Church is desperately short of men to prepare for holy priesthood in the Byzantine Catholic Church. But it can all be resolved by turning to Christ Jesus and trusting in Him and in the promises given by His Mother in Fatima. ☩

Fr. Zegger will be speaking at the September 13, 2003 Regional Conference on "The Persecuted Church." Other speakers are Tim Staples, full-time evangelist and Director of Evangelization at the Catholic Resource Center and Geraldine Hemmings, Director of Communication for *Aid to the Church in Need*, an international organization under the authority of the Holy See and devoted to the assistance of the Church in places where She suffers persecution.

These dynamic speakers will address New Mexico Catholics at the Albuquerque Convention Center – East from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. The cost at the door will be \$20.00/person, \$30.00/couple, and \$10/student. Pre-Registration discounts (prior to August 15) are 15/person, \$25/couple, and \$7.00/student. Group rates are available and there is no charge for clergy or religious. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be celebrated before lunch.

To register and for additional information phone (505) 293-8006 or visit [www.lospequenos.org](http://www.lospequenos.org). Checks and registrations may be mailed to P.O. Box 16117; Albuquerque, NM 87191.

*Catholics  
feel like  
they are  
walking on  
very thin  
ice...*

# “TEACH US HOW TO PRAY...”

*The Prayer of Quiet vs. Centering Prayer*

Pray always . . .

- St. Paul, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

By Marie P. Loehr

We hear a lot about prayer these days. What is prayer?

It can be defined as “the lifting of the mind and heart to God.” When the Apostles ask Christ to teach them how to pray, He gives them the “Our Father,” a perfect summation of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication. Christ Himself goes up into the mountains or out into the desert to pray. For Christ, prayer is a total abandonment and surrender of Himself to His Father and His Father’s will in the Holy Spirit. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls prayer “perseverance in love” (#2742 and following). Prayer is emphatically essential in our lives--vocal prayer, mental prayer, prayer united to works, acts of faith, hope, love and contrition, liturgical prayer of all sorts, Eucharistic prayer above all.

Although the Vatican paper on New Age does not include centering prayer in its glossary of New Age techniques, many New Age practitioners often invoke meditation, as transcendental meditation or centering prayer, as a spiritual technique.

What is centering prayer? Despite its promotion by Fr. Basil Pennington and Fr. Richard Rohr, is it truly Catholic, the true prayer of the City of God, or is it a New Age counterfeit, the contemplative prayer of the City of Man, in Augustine’s terms? Its adherents define it as a method of prayer that facilitates the movement “from more active modes of prayer--verbal, mental, or affective prayer--into a receptive “prayer of resting in God.” So says the website of the Contemplative Outreach. It claims to base its methods on ancient practices of the desert Fathers, the medieval *Cloud of Unknowing* by Richard Rolle, the use of *Lectio Divina* or Scripture readings, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila.

Its primary goal and purpose is to empty self of all activity -- physical, emotional, mental, even spiritual. No thinking, no feeling, just BE-ing.

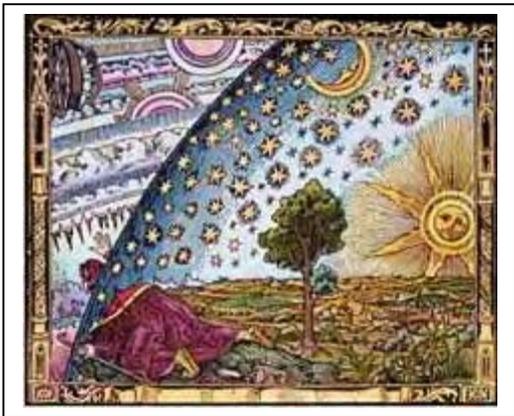
It sounds too good to be true. And it is.

At its best, it imitates what we called “recollection” in our college retreats way back in the late 1950s! Recollection removed mind and heart and body from the ordinary routine to be with God, to focus only on God. For most, centering prayer is McPrayer, interior life as fast food or instantaneous theo-technology. At its worst, it is RC Lite’s homage to Eastern meditation and practice. In other words, it is Eastern nihilism--self-emptying to nothingness, masquerading as Catholic abandonment to Divine Providence. It is New Age quietism. It is heretical.

French Quietism taught that man can be perfect only if he becomes passive, annihilates his will entirely, and abandons himself to God to the point that he cares about neither heaven nor hell, nor his own salvation. In Quietism, the person practices a mental prayer that *denies* all discursive meditation, all acts of virtue, acts of love, denies even adoration of the Divine Persons. Like centering prayer, in this prayer, a distortion of Teresa of Avila’s prayer of quiet, the person simply rests in the presence of God by human will or willfulness. [*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*] At the peak of Quietism, Quietists believed all outward acts were superfluous--even confession, almsgiving, fasting. They even claimed sin was impossible for them, because *all* one did or thought was a work of God!

This was condemned formally as a heresy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In Eastern practice, meditation intends to empty the self of itself. All Creation is illusion. There is no Godhead. There is only the god within that one re-discovers by stripping oneself of all illusion, including the illusion of intellect and will. In a



sense all Buddhism is nihilistic. Reality is nothingness. God is an impersonal force. We are all dissolved into impersonal, insensate mindlessness, absolute nothingness.

The techniques of centering prayer are very close to or taken from Eastern forms. One sits under a teacher, often in a group, but also alone. One focuses on a single flame from a candle or a single tone from a bell, a simple method of self-inducing light trance. One meditates on one's mantra, a sacred word. In Eastern meditation this is given to one by the master. In centering prayer it is supplied by Scripture. One does not use this word to understand or love more deeply. One uses this word as a hypnotic tool to block all external distraction, all interior activity.

What does Teresa of Avila say about this Pelagian practice?

In her *Autobiography*, Teresa describes the four stages of contemplative prayer. This begins with a discussion of the work the person must do; to prepare the soil for the coming of the Sower, as it were. This does involve Scripture reading, discursive meditation on that reading, acts of love in response to God's revealed goodness in the reading, acts of sorrow for the individual's sins, consideration of Christ's Incarnation, Passion and Death, and acts of mortification and reparation.

Only after discussing the necessary preparation of the person for prayer, Teresa examines the prayer of quiet. "What I say about not ascending to God unless He raises one up is language of the spirit... ***Taking it upon oneself to stop and suspend thought... should not be done;*** nor should we cease to work with the intellect, because otherwise we would be left like cold simpletons and be doing neither one thing nor the other. ***WHEN THE LORD SUSPENDS THE INTELLECT AND CAUSES IT TO STOP, HE HIMSELF GIVES IT THAT WHICH HOLDS ITS ATTENTION AND MAKES IT MARVEL;*** and without reflection it understands more in the space of a Creed than we can understand with all our earthly diligence in many years. Trying to keep the soul's faculties busy and ***THINKING YOU CAN MAKE THEM BE QUIET IS FOOLISH.***"

The prayer of quiet is a gift from God, after the soul has cooperated with God by its external acts, discursive or intellectual meditation, and acts of love and adoration. God Himself bestows this quiet and rest, whether the soul wills it or not. The soul cannot call this down by its own attempt to still mind or heart, no matter how hard it tries.

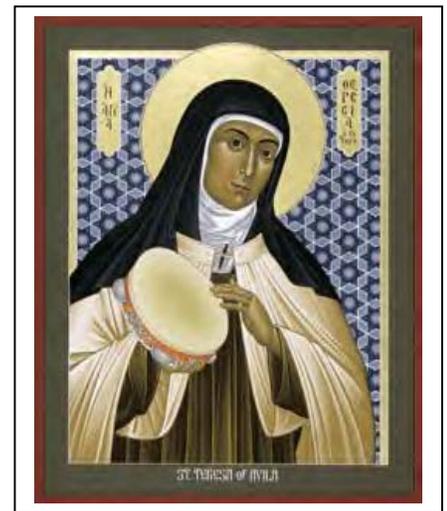
This is the distinctive difference between New Age centering prayer for all its apparently Catholic trappings, and the true Catholic prayer of quiet.

In centering prayer, as in Eastern meditation, the person praying does all the work. It is a bootstrap operation. By emptying one's soul, mind, and heart of all content and activity, one tries to manipulate God. It is like many occult magic techniques. The human person seeks interior Nirvana by his own inactivity. This self-created vacuum also opens the person to danger from the seven devils worse than the first!

In the prayer of quiet, on the other hand, although the person praying has prepared the way for God's work in the soul by exterior works, by the practice of humility, by intellectual meditation and loving adoration, it is God Himself who enters the soul and quiets it. God takes over and does what He wills in the soul, and the soul cannot do anything to help or to hinder God at that point. Teresa deems such attempts at intellectual and spiritual self-emptying found in centering prayer "a kind of pride to desire of ourselves to ascend higher . . . I say again, even though it may not be understood, this effort to suspend the intellect is not very humble."

We are obliged to give Teresa, the master, that final word!

The prayer of quiet is orthodox. It is of the City of God. Centering prayer, for all its trappings, is not. It is of the fallen City of Man. If we seek to deepen our prayer life, we must follow Teresa's *Way of Perfection* or John of the Cross' *Dark Night* or Thérèse of Lisieux's *Little Way*, rather than follow modern misinterpretations and distortions. Neither Richard Rolle nor Basil Pennington nor Richard Rohr are yet canonized saints. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Thérèse of Lisieux are. That's all we need to know.☛



# Summer Reading...

*Looking for a few worthwhile books with which to share a golden summer afternoon?*

By Stephanie Block

So many books...so little time. Clearly, this is what long summer days were intended to remedy. Let me recommend several:

***Catholics for a Free Choice Exposed***, by Brian Clowes, PhD [Human Life International, 2001, 239 pp]. \$9.95: Human Life International, 4 Family Life, Front Royal, VA 22630; 540-635-7884

This past spring, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) gave an interfaith presentation at Albuquerque's Temple Albert, during which the organization's vice president, Jon O'Brien, fabricated stories about saintly support for abortion. It was a stunning example of big, bold, outrageous mendacity [see *Pepper*, April 2003].

Who are these people?

*Catholics for a Free Choice Exposed*, by Brian Clowes, answers that question. Over the years, Human Life International demonstrated how dissident voices in the Church have affected the pro-life movement. Brian Clowes' earlier work, *Call to Action or Call to Apostasy* [Human Life International, 1997, 128 pp.], is particularly insightful. This second volume, concentrating on the work of a single organization, picks up where the first left off.

Clowes' book has three distinct sections, each extremely valuable.

The first provides an historical account of CFFC and details its current activities. CFFC is a member of Call to Action's COR (Catholic Organizations for Renewal) organizations and has, since its founding in the 1970s, worked hand in glove with Planned Parenthood, attempting to change Church teaching on abortion. One is amazed at the rapidity with which CFFC has expanded around the world, the resources it has garnered, and the profound distortions of Catholic teaching that it has promoted to accomplish its expansion.

Clowes writes: "On May 10, 2000, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops used exceptionally strong language to condemn CFFC, calling it an 'arm of the abortion lobby' and publicizing the fact that 'It is funded by a number of wealthy private foundations, mostly American, to promote abortion as a method of population control.' The statement concluded by saying that 'Catholics for a Free Choice merits no recognition or support as a Catholic organization.'" (p. 16)

The second section is particularly useful as it presents a dozen of CFFC's most pervasive and widespread misconceptions, among them: "You are not guilty of sin if you follow your conscience;" "The Bible says nothing about abortion;" and "The Church's teaching on abortion has changed many times over the centuries." Clowes responds to each of these key misconceptions in small, separate chapters, noting that "Like all pro-abortion arguments, CFFC's are designed primarily to distract the listener and divert attention from the subject of abortion." (p. 55) Clowes teaches pro-lifers to bring the argument back to reality.

Lastly, in several appendices, the book provides Catholic action tools tailored to address the presence of CFFC in a local area. Some of these are informational – statements from Catholic bishops condemning the organization and excerpts from early Church teachings about abortion – and some are tactical. This latter information is applicable to a broader range of issues than just CFFC and might be read with great profit by any Catholic activist defending Church teaching. Clowes writes, "You can either confront the dissenters directly, or, if for some reason you cannot do this, you can support those who are battling on the



front lines...These proposals are only a starting point; anything you can do to blunt or lessen the baleful influence of the Modernist dissenters is precious in the eyes of God and Holy Mother Church.”

***The Free Press: An Essay on the Manipulation of News and Opinion and How to Counter It***, by Hilaire Belloc [IHS Press, 2002, 95 pp.] Publisher direct discounted list price \$8.95: IHS Press, 222 W 21<sup>st</sup> St., Suite F-122, Norfolk, VA 23517; 757-423-0324

IHS has been republishing some of the classic works of Catholic social commentary, including the authors Belloc, Chesterton, and Ousset (see *Pepper*, February 2003).

One of these titles, Belloc’s *The Free Press*, was first published in 1918, while he was involved with a small London-based “alternative” paper. Belloc compares the natural propagation of public information and opinion by word of mouth to the development of “the press” (though his concerns are applicable to other media). Technology’s ability to rapidly spread a single point of view, capitalism’s tendency to exploit that quality, and modern man’s profound intellectual poverty deeply concern him. He rails against establishment organs that have become self-serving rather than truth-serving.

Belloc details the particular dangers of mingling the work of journalism with paid advertising. News and opinion become vehicles through which customers are delivered to advertisers – the media product becomes “bait” used by advertisers to snag consumers. In other words, the political and commercial self-interest of the advertisers dictates what is reported and discussed, how it is presented and what information is suppressed.

In Belloc’s words, the newspaper owner is “compelled then to respect his advertisers as his paymasters. To that extent, therefore, his power of giving true news and of printing sound opinion ...[is] limited, even though his own inclinations should lean towards such news and such opinion.” (p. 34)

Of course, the matter is complex. Media, by virtue of its wide circulation, exerts great influence, politically as well as culturally. “The newspaper owner controls the professional politician because he can and does blackmail the professional politician, especially upon his private life” (p. 44). What Belloc has described are economic self-interests, controlling the way information comes to the public, being what in the final analysis governs the State. Rather than the aristocracy of another age, contemporary man lives under a plutocracy – under the control of a few wealthy interests.

The response to these inherent tendencies, Belloc insists, is to be found in small, diverse, “alternative” publications – the “free” presses. They are free on several scores. In the first place, they are independent of advertisement, existing solely on revenue from their subscription base (or, as is sometimes the case with Internet sites, subsidized by a single individual). This, in turn, leaves them at liberty to express the views of their owners, subject only to the human limitations of intelligence.

They provide an invaluable outlet for discussions that institutionalized media stoutly avoid, particularly religious and moral debate. They disseminate information that argues against the self-interest of “the establishment.” They opine against irresponsible governance, in fierce “determination to be rid of such a secret monopoly of power.” (p. 61) They also tend to cultivate audiences who, though small, follow them attentively. “Look narrowly at History and you will find that all great *reforms* have started thus: not through widespread control acting downwards, but through spontaneous energy, local and intensive, acting upwards.” (p. 74)

And they are, therefore, highly eccentric. Belloc delightfully describes



**Hilaire Belloc**

searching for these periodicals in his travels. “I know that wherever I get hold of such an organ it will be very strongly colored with the opinion, or even fanaticism, of some minority. The Free Press as a whole, if you add it all up and cancel out one exaggerated statement after another, does give you a true view of the state of society in which you live. The Official Press today gives you an absurdly false one everywhere.” (pp. 58-59)

Belloc is not blind to the “disabilities” of the Free Press. They tend to have “cranky” reputations, often well deserved. In Belloc’s day, they also suffered meager budgets and insufficient information resources, complaints that have been greatly ameliorated by modern technology, with its capacity to network and access firsthand information for minimal expense and effort.

Nevertheless, producing alternative media remains a labor of love, often a Quixotic tilting at windmills. Why do people continue to produce them? Belloc’s response is classic: “[M]erely in weakening an evil you soon may be, you ultimately will surely be, creating a good: *secondly*, because self-respect and honor demand it. No man who has the truth to tell and the power to tell it can long remain hiding it from fear or even from despair with ignominy. To release the truth against whatever odds, even if doing so can no longer help...is a necessity for the soul.”

And, he adds, with prophetic poignancy: “They with their enormous modern audiences are the hacks doomed to oblivion. We...are the inheritors of those who built up the political greatness of England upon a foundation of free speech, and of the prose which it begets. Those who prefer to sell themselves or to be cowed, gain, as a rule, not even that ephemeral security for which they betrayed their fellows; meanwhile they leave to us the only solid and permanent form of political power, which is the gift of mastery through persuasion.” After all, we’re still reading Belloc, aren’t we?

***The Courage to Be Catholic: Crisis Reform and the Future of the Church***, by George Weigel [Basic Books: 2002, 246 pp.] \$22.00

One would have to be deaf and blind to be unaware that there is a crisis in the American Catholic Church. News reports about predatory priests and irresponsible bishops are unremitting.

Weigel’s *The Courage to Be Catholic* was written in an attempt to understand the situation and to suggest concrete actions to address it. He describes the historical developments leading to our current “culture of dissent” and the subsequent moral breakdown in certain sectors of the Church. For example, Weigel mentions that many seminarians “were expected to adhere publicly to Church’s teaching, but their theological training and spiritual formation had taught them that this teaching, especially on sexual morality, was dubious if not utterly wrongheaded.” (p. 78)

Weigel also attempts to explain the failures of the US bishops. Unwieldy bureaucracies, too much delegated responsibility, and misplaced reliance on psychological and legal “experts” created men with compromised moral courage. “Authority is conferred by ordination, leadership is earned by performance – and earned, and earned again, in a process of trust built up over time with colleagues and subordinates.” (pp. 101-2) Only bishops with “a passion for fidelity to the fullness of Catholic truth” will be in a position to reclaim the pastoral *headship* of their dioceses.

The book is particularly interesting for its explanation of Rome’s response to the US sexual scandal, putting that response into perspective and giving the reader insight into the mind of the Vatican as it labored to understand and react during the spring of 2002. Weigel’s “agenda for reform” includes improved seminary and ongoing priestly formation, honest remedies for clerical malfeasance, and, most seriously, a selection process for priests and bishops that is more concerned about spiritual gifts than managerial skills. Lastly, Weigel includes a challenge to the laity that includes courageous fidelity to the full teaching of the Church, resistance to Modernism’s empty promises, great hope, and utter rejection of “Lite approaches to doctrine and morals.” He ends with a thought from Dorothy Day: “Let us thank God that He makes us live among the present problems. It is no longer permitted to anyone to be mediocre.”



## Last but Not Least....

Pius High School's summer reading list was published in its recent issue of *Parent Link*, a newsletter for parents of the school's students.

One of the books listed is *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn, required reading for incoming seniors in Advanced Placement English. Parents were told that Pius has no choice about the books to be read by the AP classes because colleges and the AP Board designate the titles. Parents called the AP Board and found that no titles are mandatory – there is only a list of recommended authors and the author Daniel Quinn is not among them.

The book opens with a personals ad: "Teacher seeks pupil. Must have an earnest desire to save the world." A young man answers the ad and is startled to find that the teacher is a lowland gorilla named Ishmael.

Ishmael has a particular worldview. He sees the agricultural revolution in terms of its moral relevance, "a rebellion against an ethical structure inherent in the community of life since its foundation four billion years ago. Having escaped the restraints of this ethical structure, humankind made itself a global tyrant, wielding deadly force over all other species while lacking the wisdom to make its tyranny a beneficial one or even a sustainable one." <http://www.ishmael.com/Origins/Ishmael/>

Parents found the philosophical conclusions of *Ishmael* disturbing and wondered why the school was insisting that their children read this particular book rather than one that argues for Catholic values. Among the conclusions that disturbed parents were:

- Abortion and birth control are not wrong.
- Creation is a myth.
- Jesus is only one of many prophets created by us to tell us 'how to live.'
- Moral truths cannot be known; the 10 commandments and the Bible are human inventions.
- It is wrong to have a large family because they use too many resources.
- It is wrong to give food to areas of famine because they should be allowed to die out.☹

## July Calendar

### LPC Meeting

July 19, 2003

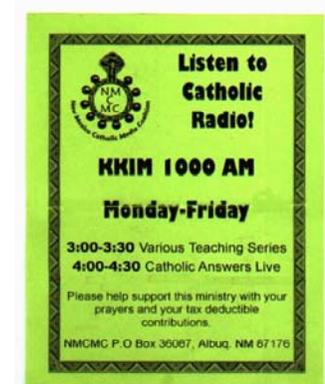
All welcome

Call (505) 293-8006 for more information

### Mark Your Calendars:

*September 13:*

"The Persecuted Church" with Tim Staples, Rev. Chris Zugger, & Geraldine Hemmings. Call (505) 293-8006



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