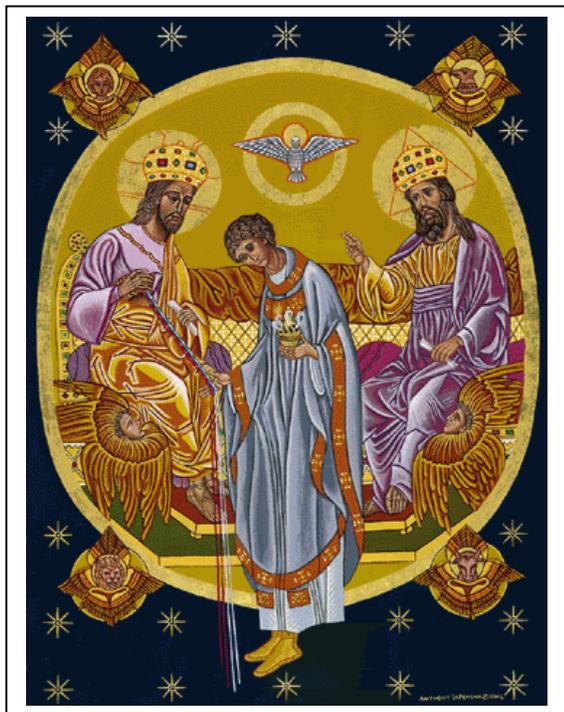


Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

June 2004



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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.

2004 National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

Amid same, old (and quite expensive!) failed reforms, there are some rays of hope.

By Stephanie Block

Under the theme of "Catechesis: Spirit of Life in the Desert," the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) held its 68th annual conference in Albuquerque, NM, April 25-29, 2004.

From the opening pre-conference workshop to the closing plenary speech, about 800 catechists were invited to serious soul-searching about the current state of Catholic "spiritual illiteracy" and offered various strategies in response.

That honest admission of catechetical failure was a satisfying aspect of the conference. **Archbishop Michael Sheehan**, ordinary of the hosting Archdiocese of Santa Fe and homilist at one conference Mass, not only acknowledged great catechetical ignorance but exhorted catechists to recognize that the faithful need "faith facts" as well as experiential development.

This remark by Archbishop Sheehan refers to the history of catechetical theory over the past 40 years in which knowledge-based materials, such as the *Baltimore Catechism*, have been eschewed in favor of "faith-sharing" or "disciple-building" programs. Emphases on moral right and wrong or traditional mnemonic tools (10 commandments, 8 beatitudes, 7 works of corporal mercy, 3 theological virtues, question and answer, etc.) were totally abandoned. Instead, Catholics were asked to reflect on their own faith journeys, often without reference to dogma – as if the two entities are unrelated.

LOOKING AT THE NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF CATECHESIS

Dr. Michael Horan's pre-conference workshop on the draft document of the *National Directory of Catechesis* ("Noting Its Context, Developing Its Potential, Considering Its Boundaries") explored this history and its ramifications.

Horan is an associate professor of religious education and pastoral theology at Loyola Marymount University (Los

Angeles, CA) and a member of NCCL's representative council. He is a contributing author of *Blest Are We* (Silver Burdett Ginn catechetical textbook) and has written two monographs on the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

Horan's "story" of catechetical development began with Vatican I's approval of a "universal small catechism," which in the United States was the *Baltimore Catechism* (and which Horan found "chilling").

Vatican II "needed a new genre," a directory that would provide an overarching vision "looking at the human situation of the Church, including the best ecclesiology of Vatican II." The result was the *General Directory of Catechesis* (GDC), published in 1971. The United States' adaptation of the GDC was *Sharing the Light of Faith*, the

National Catechetical Directory (SLF), published in 1979.

Reflective of the shift away from knowledge-based catechesis, SLF understood that "faith is relational." More than what it said, however, Horan believed that the gift of SLF was in the process that produced it. It was, he said, a "peak experience for catechesis."

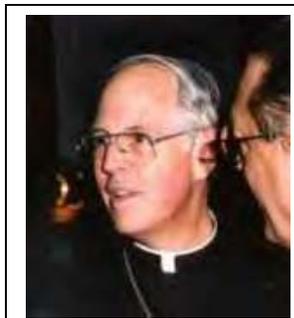
The process began in 1971 and was developed in stages. The first consultation invited public response to the commission's preparatory work and received 17,400 replies from 113 dioceses.

The second consultation brought in 76,000 recommendations. Another draft was then submitted to the American bishops at their plenary session in 1977. Finally, early in 1978, the fourth draft was sent to

Rome for approval.

Horan found the process exciting, as did others at the workshop who had been part of that process. One person reflected on her experiences in 1971, feeling there was great openness. The Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) was just beginning and she recalled the "room swathed in newsprint." Reflective of the open dialogue, she and Horan recalled bishops having "people in their suites for drinks" and discussion. "It was a whole different world."

Horan described Richard Reichert's take on catechetical development, shifting from the



Archbishop Michael Sheehan

pre-Vatican II goal of “teaching faith” to the post Vatican II goal of “creating disciples” and building relationships. Reichert has written:

Prior to the council the goal of catechesis was to help children become loyal, obedient, and conscientious members of the institutional church by providing them with a solid education in the truths of the faith. The council, on the other hand, initiated a shift toward understanding the goal of catechesis as one of forming disciples of Jesus who would be both willing and capable of participating in a community committed to proclaiming and promoting the reign of God in today’s society (Renewing Catechetical Ministry: A Future Agenda. Paulist Press, 2002, p. 3).

That was, to Horan, the “good news.” Time moves on, however. In 1997, John Paul II approved a new *General Directory for Catechesis* and the United States bishops are in the process of preparing a new *National Directory of*

Catechesis. It was this new, developing NDC about which he and many of the catechists at the workshop had reservations.

Horan held up the draft (which he joked had come to him surreptitiously, in brown paper wrapping) to show that a third of the document – 210 pages worth – is amendments.

He did an analysis of the first 215 amendments and discovered that two bishops – Burke and Bruskewitz – had submitted sixty-four of them. Four other bishops accounted for most of the others, a fact Horan found extremely disheartening. Bishop Burke, for example, brings back a paragraph that had been struck

from the national consultation process. He can do this because any amendment from any bishop is accepted (unless it repeats an earlier amendment).

Horan looked at some of the amendments with which he was most unhappy. The term “ecclesial community” is changed to “church.” “Lay ecclesial ministers” is changed to “seminarians.” Burke changes the expression “the Holy Spirit working through the people” to “magisterial truth.” Horan presumed that Rome will accept these amendments and was unhappy about what these amendments are saying about contemporary catechesis. This is “the moment to tell the story afresh,” about a multi-cultural, contemporary US approach to catechesis, and he complained that the consultative process of the first directory has been lost in the second.

However, neither Horan nor the other catechists were defeated. The miracle of catechesis today,

he said, is the modern catechetical movement. The NDC provides a way to speak about catechesis – and a way to evangelize “We have this movement – this trajectory of a movement – on which to build.”

The catechists took up that theme as they were asked for their own comments about the NDC. One said that catechetical directors need to put a positive spin on the more negative elements of the document and Horan added that the Church is “at this time and place in a desert.”

Another reminded workshop participants that the process is more important than the product.

One can take the document as a tool, and use it to tell a story to people, but the document is not an end in itself. Furthermore, there are ways to make the *process* important. As an example, Horan pointed out that because the NDC comes from the GDC, it opens up the possibility of telling people the story about Vatican II and the history of catechesis.

Most ominously, one catechist noted that “We are the ones to do the translation,” to bring the document to the people, and to raise the issues to people’s minds. Does a given translation support people’s experience or not? The document comes through *us*, the catechists. Horan then added that the task of all adult learning is in interpreting. Another amended term in the NDC was the word “interpret.” One bishop had changed the word to “understand.” Horan shook his head: “That’s an ideological struggle we will have for many years.”

IN BETWEEN

Along with conviction and pedagogical theory, big business was out in force, with publishing houses hawking the latest catechetical products and their authors running conference workshops.

Bill Huebsch (writer and senior advisor on total parish catechesis for Harcourt Religion Publishers, where he is helping shape their new religious education K-6 textbook series, *Call to Faith*) and **John Roberto** (founder and coordinator of the *Generations of Faith Project*) ran a Diocesan Forum to introduce “whole community catechesis.” They are quite forthright that their respective programs have been developed in response to the widespread



Dr. Michael Horan

spiritual ignorance of American Catholics.

The selling point, which has merit, is the need to expand catechetical education to *everybody* in the parish – parents, kids, singles, elderly. Whole community catechesis programs ask everyone to attend an “assembly.” There, participants enjoy a meal, attend a prayer service, listen to a presentation tying together the liturgical year, scripture, and service, then break out into peer groups for more on the topic (including art projects, singing – whatever), close with more prayer, and take home packets of related material. The church community has been drawn together for fellowship, fun, and learning. What’s not to like?

The devil, of course, is in the details. The depth and catholicity of the program needs more examination than was provided in a workshop. Huebsch told participants that the only way for them to go forward was through the whole community catechesis model, which respects the shift from the schooling paradigm to the faith-sharing paradigm.

Huebsch (like other conference speakers) is among those who led the post Vatican II catechetical shift away from knowledge-based learning. At least some of the blame for the ensuing spiritual ignorance must rest squarely on this mistaken pedagogy. Therefore, it’s difficult to fathom why well-intentioned religious educators would turn to programs, whatever their virtues, that seem to also bear the same flaws.

Another “insight” discussed at the 2004 NCCL conference is that the individual worshiper tends to get lost in a large modern parish. Therefore it’s not surprising that bible studies and prayer groups (such as those

fostered by RENEW, Crusillo, and the charismatic renewal) are popular.

The question is not whether small faith groups can support authentic Catholic faith – they can and often do – but rather, how reformers eye the movement and wish to use it.

Fr. Bernard Lee, who spoke about “The Small Community as a Formational Headquarters,” is a member of the Call to Action Speakers Bureau and himself a participant in a socially progressive “small community” in New Orleans. For Lee, the small community is not only a place to bring fellow Catholics into a more personal contact with one another, but is the formation ground for building a collective identity that will, in time, change ideas about God, Church, and social justice. Lee said:

When I grew up, we didn't eat meat on Friday, we committed mortal sin – we'd go to Hell – if we missed Mass on Sunday, we gave spiritual bouquets, we said the rosary, all of those cultural identifiers. Most of them don't operate very much any more. And until we've lived long enough with some of the new dispensations – Vatican II asked for just incredible changes in the Church. After most of the reform councils, there was a period of great excitement, and then, when the institution begins to realize what's asked of it, there's always a back response to it. Until the backlash is out of your system, you can't really get on with the reforms.... We haven't found a lot of the replacements yet. We will, but we haven't yet. Different forms of community, some issues around social justice, are going to be, I think, far more defining of what emerges...

Lee had hard things to say about that so-called “backlash.” Asked if Rome wasn’t confusing things by constantly changing directives, he responded: “Most of the new liturgical directives have nothing to do with good liturgy. They’re all about power.”

The small community, however, under the “right” leadership, forms a lay voice that can

Asked if Rome wasn't confusing things by constantly changing directives, [Lee] responded: "Most of the new liturgical directives have nothing to do with good liturgy. They're all about power."

respond to the “male, celibate hierarchy of the current church.” Just as ministry and community belong to the church and must stay connected to the bishop, so too must the bishop stay connected to the lay movement, understanding that “wherever two or three are gathered together, there will be power issues.”

CLOSING THE CONFERENCE:
CATECHISTS IN THE SECOND
STAGE OF LIFE

Rev. Richard Rohr gave the keynote plenary talk, which he titled: “The Catechetical Challenge: Two Halves of Life.” These two halves – or stages – were presented to the catechists in the conviction that understanding them would address “a lot of catechetical problems.”

The two stages, which Rohr warned had been simplified for the sake of clarity, are the younger, less mature stage of “baby’s milk,” in which law predominates – where “we frame everything in terms of win/lose, either/or, right/wrong, black/white” – and the meaty and more spiritually developed stage of prophetic wisdom.

Rohr has true insights: that one must grow and mature in spiritual life; that suffering is a necessary part of that process; that pride (arrogance, self-centeredness) are serious impediments to spiritual development; and that religious people aren’t immune from pride.

However, he uses liberationist techniques to make scripture say what he wants it to say, turning it into mythology that will support his two-stage thesis. Rohr severed the absolute God from His own revealed truths (such as those doctrinally expressed by the Church), relegated belief in doctrinal truth – which he called “an idol” – to the spiritually immature, and erected an impenetrable wall around his intellectual constructions.

Liberationism: As an example liberationism, which distorts the meaning of scripture to give it other meanings, is Rohr’s interpretation of John 21, concerning Jesus’

prophesy about Peter:

“When you’re young, you will dress yourself...” [That’s] marvelous imagery for creating, concocting your own identity, your own persona, your own boundaries, your own significance and importance. You will dress yourself and go where you want to go.

“...But, Peter, I warn you in the second half of life, you will put out your arms like a little 3-year old, ...and someone else will dress you and lead you where you’d probably rather not go.” ...In the first half of life, the issue is almost always about self-control, and that’s an appropriate issue, the creating of identity and boundaries. In the second half of life, the issue is giving up control (and that’s much harder).

The absolute God has been severed from revealed truth:

Rohr had much to say about the second stage of life “work,” which involves giving up the security and surety of the first stage. Rohr said:

We’re ready for a second Copernican Revolution... the Church/the self is not the center of the universe; it’s not the reference point – the Biblical tradition is

First of all, you’re going to feel a primal shame, when all your early voices of authority – obedience, parents, about being a good boy – and at that moment you don’t feel right. If you want to immediately feel right again, get rid of the pain before you’ve learned what it has to teach you, you won’t learn very much.

-- Richard Rohr

that only God is absolute. If anything else is put at the center, it’s idolatry, making things god that are not God, and that includes the structures of the Church itself. They are a gift, they are a container.... ironically, it’s the values and the criteria that the Church and the gospel taught me that allow me to critique the Church by its own criteria, from within. That’s the only way you can unlock anything, from inside.... once you’re outside, throwing your rocks, somehow you lose the authority, you haven’t paid the dues....

Rohr teaches that doctrinal truth is only for the spiritually immature: Rohr understands that the “container” of the law has value:

...[A]nyone formed then [during the late 60s] didn’t have that container – we have to know that. We live in a deconstructed, post-modern society where there is no order, no authorityjust universal cynicism, just waiting for the next bishop or politician to show his dark side. Don’t trust or surrender to anything because it will disappoint you. The cross prepares us for the darkness. But the cross should have prepared us for the great disappointment. But if you haven’t walked through the cross, you aren’t prepared for that. When the darkness shows itself, without that understanding of the cross, one becomes very bitter and cynical. That’s much of America today.

But the “container” of the law must eventually be abandoned if one is to grow (according to Rohr):

Not many people let go of ego structures until and unless they have to. As long as one can look good, superior, correct, or orthodox, there’s no reason to progress on the journey; suffering in some form – something has to deconstruct, fall apart, somewhere your intellect and the will must fail

you, something has to happen that you can't make sense of with first half of life logic, with conventional wisdom. Two plus two don't work out; you fail; your daughter comes home a lesbian, your glib understandings of who's right and who's wrong

Erecting a wall against

correction: Rohr protects himself and those who ascribe to his theses with a wall against self-examination. He describes what he calls "the demons that will attack you when you are tempted to move into the second half of life consciousness; if you're not forewarned, you'll run back to first half of life again."

First of all, you're going to feel a primal shame, when all your early voices of authority – obedience, parents, about being a good boy – and at that moment you don't feel right. If you want to immediately feel right again, get rid of the pain before you've learned what it has to teach you, you won't learn very much. If you don't learn to recognize that primal shame, that infantile voice of shame that comes up – it still comes up in me – that stuff's deep stuff. That's probably why most people jump back.

You'll face guilt, now because you have to bear, for a while at least, the burden of your own conscience. For a day or two, you're not sure – maybe a week or a month – if you're right, you understand? You're not absolutely sure if you're right. Now if you're not taught how to live with ambiguity, if you have no tolerance for recognizing fear and anxiety, and its early voices, which often take the form of guilt, which tell you "You might be wrong. You could be wrong! Get right. Be certain again, real quick." You will run back. Now

that's precisely the work of a spiritual director, to hold you up and to sustain you, to lead you into what I call liminal space and then to say, "It's OK to be here.

Rohr's analysis leads him to devalue Confession:

I remember my training as a little Catholic boy, and again, it was a good way to start. We were all lined up, outside the Confessional, to get – to settle the question again – to get pure, perfect and worthy again. Like our whole lives were just jumping: worthy/unworthy; worthy/unworthy, worthy/

you're filled with your absolutes....

Therefore, in liminal space, where you're betwixt and between, the great, teachable space, you're going to experience a deep and non-rational fear. Now, if you've given in to your fears all your life, I want to tell you something: you don't even recognize it as fear – you call it prudence, or you call it obedience, or you call it – I don't know – righteousness, clarity, orthodoxy – some attractive name (Thomas Aquinas said the only way anybody can do evil is they've got to describe it to themselves as good; angels of darkness always describe themselves as angels of



unworthy. Talk about an inorganic journey, you know? As if the ego can manufacture worthiness. As if we're changing the mind of God about us when the scriptures have clearly said that the covenant has said that the love of God is unconditional, absolute, given and forever and nothing you can do – nothing you can do! – can make God change God's mind! All God can do is change your mind about God! That's all. Everything, everything in the spiritual life is about changing you; not about changing God or manipulating God or making God hear our petitions.

Rohr's analysis leads him to view certitude, orthodoxy and dogmas as ways to avoid coming face to face with God:

You can avoid God behind your orthodoxies and your certitudes and your unwillingness to walk the dark journey of faith because

light) so you have to be trained. Gee, this is work! To recognize the demons of fear. Well, you're just scared! That's why I tell you, to not get rid of it too soon. You've got to remain with your anxiety, with your voices, with your guilt, with your shame. Feel its texture. Feel its shape. Feel its voice – where's it coming from? Where's it going? What does it want? Again, that's what a good confessor should be helping you do. Then you can often see what is really happening. It's not a love of God at work but simply I'm afraid of God; I'm afraid of being wrong.

The tragedy of Rohr's views is that they ironically place him in a position of aloof superiority, at an unreachable height, far above his critics: "You will find that you're not supported by authority and key friends and allies because they're not in the second half of life consciousness."

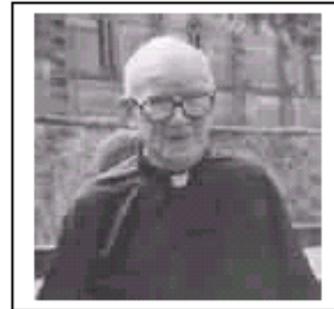
HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

For all the old guard present at the 2004 National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, upholding their failed ideological theories of the past 40 years, there were plenty of young catechists with fresh ideas. One thirty-five year-old diocesan DRE said confidently that she'd outlive the nonsense and oversee the restoration of the Church. Another pulled out a rosary and smiled. Quite a number of religious sisters wore habits. Intermingled among the liberationists and modernists were those who took the conference with a grain of salt, amused by the fierce post-Vatican II mythology, and eager to move forward.

The winds are changing. »

Take Courage!

*Rev. John Harvey coming to San Clemente
July 16-18, 2004*



Fr. John Harvey is the founder and director of Courage, a spiritual support ministry for homosexually oriented Catholics who are striving to live the common call to chastity proclaimed by Christ and the natural moral law.

"Courage is about the practice of interior chastity, not about therapy. For us, the most important change of all is from lust to chastity, not from a homosexual orientation to a heterosexual one," Fr. Harvey has been quoted as saying. Courage is the only organization within the Church that facilitates support groups for people with same sex attraction guided by the principles of Church teaching. "Homosexual people who want to remain true to the Catholic faith must live a life of chastity - it is not just an imposition placed on them but something that we are all called to anyway," says Fr John.

"You need good friends if you want to maintain a life of chastity. We are body and soul; we need the help and support of people around us," Father says. Courage preaches interior chastity (an attitude or "prayer of the heart") over mere exterior chastity, or what he calls 'whiteknuckle chastity.' "People struggling with chastity need first take their difficulties to prayer," he says. "There you begin to realize that you can have a relationship with Christ and begin to form good friendships with people who feel the same way and want to come close to Christ."

Infidelity, sexual activity outside of marriage, and the absence of a moral and spiritual vision of the marriage covenant are depicted uncritically, while positive support is at times given to divorce, contraception, abortion and homosexuality. Such portrayals, by promoting causes inimical to marriage and the family, are detrimental to the common good of society. – John Paul II



What Do We Do with Catholic Pro-abortion Politicians?

In late April, Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, was quoted as stating that politicians who support abortion must not go to Communion and priests must deny them the sacrament.

On May 5, Archbishop John Myers of the Archdiocese of Newark, NJ, issued the pastoral statement "A Time for Honesty." He says that receiving the Eucharist is not an absolute right and those who are pro-abortion should honestly admit they are not in communion with the Church.

A number of other bishops have concurred with this position and in recent months have also said that pro-abortion politicians will be denied Communion in their dioceses, among them are: Archbishop Raymond Burke - St. Louis; Archbishop Alfred Hughes - New Orleans; Bishop Joseph Galante - Camden; Bishop Weigand - Sacramento; Bishop Olmstead - Phoenix, Bishop Robert Molino - Madison; Bishop Robert McManus - Worcester; Bishop Robert Mulver - Providence; Bishop Michael Sheridan - Colorado Springs; and Bishop John Smith - Trenton.

By contrast, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of the Archdiocese of Washington has been quoted as saying: "I would find it hard to use the Eucharist as a sanction... You don't know what's in anyone's heart when they come before you."

As Archbishop of Newark, McCarrick allowed his Cathedral church to be used by pro-abortion Governor Christine Todd Whitman for an interfaith prayer service as part of her inaugural events. He also has allowed AFL-CIO head John Sweeney, a radical pro-abort, to be honored and feted at more than one Catholic function in D.C.

Cardinal McCarrick now heads the bishops' task force on how to deal with pro-abortion Catholics who hold public office.

Canon 915, which denies Communion to people who "obstinately persist in manifest [public] grave sin," says nothing about "malicious intent." Kerry has been admonished and yet persists in his pro-abortion stand. To give him Communion sacrilegiously is condemned by the Church. It is also a serious public scandal that may lead others into sin. ☹



Pro-Abortion March on the Capitol

Warning: This article contains graphic sexual material.

You won't hear or read about this in the mainstream media. While pro-aborts stormed Washington D.C. in April, a number of Catholic college students joined *Silent No More*, a women's pro-life group, in a counter-protest.

Phillip Campbell, from Ave Maria College in Michigan, writes: "The signs we bore were relatively mild. None of them had pictures of aborted babies on them or anything like that. Our job was to be a prayerful witness to the healing love of Christ.

"We were only standing on the curb for about twenty minutes when we heard a commotion down towards the Mall. Faintly I heard the deep sound of drums coming from a block away, gradually getting louder. We looked down the street and saw an enormous black horde advancing towards us. As they marched closer, we saw they were all clad in filthy black clothes and wore combat boots. Some wore bandanas over their faces, like the Muslim extremists we always see in the news broadcasts. We took a deep breath and began to sing, "Holy God We Praise Thy Name", just before the horde reached us.

"They finally passed us on the street. They were all kids, under thirty all of them. They held banners with anarchy and pagan signs on them and carried other signs with the filthiest slogans. Many of them beat on drums, creating a primitive rhythmic beat to which they all danced to in front of us. They were absolutely vile; some of them were barely clothed. One girl had no shirt on but two flower petals over her nipples. Three or four men without shirts clung to each other and licked one another's nipples, just to offend us. They shouted at us with the utmost hatred and spite. We just stood there silently, holding our signs. They were frightening, but we were not intimidated. The police, however, were unnerved by the rowdy crowd and formed a barrier with their bicycles between them and us. The anarchists jeered the police and us.

"Girls came up to the barrier and made lewd gestures towards us. Some girls pulled their shirts up and wrote pro-abort messages on their bellies with magic marker. All in all, they were the most filthy, vile and frightening of all the marchers. After several minutes of enduring their gruesome jeers, the cops moved them on and they marched on down the street.

"After this rowdy group left, we took up a new position on the sidewalk. Several of us said a rosary and then a Divine Mercy Chaplet, all the while getting jeered at by passers-by who scoffed at us or just wagged their heads, as if writing us off as complete wackos.

"A little while later and the main march started. The body of the march was made up of normal people – men, women, older people, and even some kids – unfortunately – but by large the biggest chunk were middle-aged women. Everyone was wearing these ugly purple pro-Choice stickers and many had John Kerry stickers as well.

"We simply stood on the curb and tried to be a silent witness. But that did not stop them from railing at us. They hurled every possible insult they could. When they saw some of us with rosaries, they blasphemed God just to offend us. They may have looked like normal people, but they were just as foul as the first group. They chanted a variety of slogans, some of them went like: 'Suck my t*t! Lick my Cl*t! Pro-Life is full of Sh*t!' 'Pro-Life, that's a lie; you don't care if women die!' 'Not the Church, not the State, women will decide our fate!' 'Keep your rosaries off our ovaries!' 'What do we want? Choice! When do we want it? Now!' (this one didn't make much sense since abortion has been legal for 30 years!)

"Sometimes they would just shout out phrases like, 'Separation of Church and State!' or, 'I talked to God and she is pro-choice!' Some were real stupid, like



Pro-abortion marchers and the pro-life protest

'Say no to sex with pro-lifers' and the vulgar 'Pro-life men don't masturbate enough.' The most disturbing cry was one they uttered at their most frenzied moments; they would chant, 'This is what democracy looks like!'

"One pro-abort woman came up to the girl next to me and said indignantly, 'I hope you get raped!' She only replied, 'God bless you,' to which the angry pro-abort yelled, 'Shut up!'

"This went on for hours upon hours. I stood there until my knees felt like water. I wanted to collapse and go to sleep, but I couldn't; I made myself stand there like a statue until the march was over.

"This March opened my eyes in a lot of ways. In one way, it demonstrated to me what a vile and intellectually bankrupt movement the pro-choice group is. Did I mention the woman dressed up in a gigantic rubber vagina outfit? Girls wore shirts that said 'Screw abstinence' and 'I love my [insert vulgar word for women's vagina here].'"

ANNIE'S STORY

Other organizations joined the march, including a number of homosexual advocacy groups. Steve Miller writes: "On a weekend that brings a large pro-choice march to the streets of Washington, Matt Foreman, head of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) issued a statement declaring his group's support for abortion without restrictions. "First, the obvious: we march because like everyone else, LGBT people need, deserve, and demand the fundamental right to control our bodies without the interference of government." [Steve Miller, "Abortion as a Gay Right?" *CultureWatch*, April 24, 2004]

These were among the groups encountered by pro-life advocates, including Annie, who carried an "I Regret My Abortion" sign to the march, as part of the counter-protesting *Silent No More* group. Annie considered herself fairly far along in the healing process and stood in total silence as planned for over five hours, not replying to anything that was said or done.

"But nothing prepared me for literally mobs of livid people screaming the most hateful vicious snide things at me personally," Annie writes. "We were spit on, and had an egg hurled at us from the marchers. There were two groups of Satanists. And the signs. Like the guy who held a handmade sign, "BABY KILLER" with an arrow pointed downward at himself. If not for the riot police, we would have been mobbed. There was that much viciousness. People broke through the riot police's invisible line just to come up in my face and hurl insulting words. There were not enough police to form a complete line, so they would run up to me, shout out their abuse, and run back before the policeman or woman got to stop him/her. And I said nothing to anyone, just held my sign.

There were victories, through. "One woman came over to us, said, 'What the hell am I doing out here?' and asked us to exchange her NARAL sign for one of ours."

AND MARCHING FROM NEW MEXICO

According to the University of New Mexico's *Daily Lobo*, the New Mexico delegation of pro-abortion supporters to the April 15 march, included the professed Catholics Atty. Gen. Patricia Madrid, and First Lady Barbara Richardson. Governor Bill Richardson launched a \$25 million fund raising effort for NARAL, an abortion rights organization, in February. ♡



Missing Mass, and the “Fundamental Option”

Pius X High School has begun a long, hard process to respond to independent review recommendations of this past spring. Principal Mary McLeod has resigned and several theology teachers will not be rehired next term.

The reaction of students and parents has done more to underscore problems that Pius faces than anything the school’s critics might say.

On May 4, 2004, a letter from the *Faculty and Staff Association of St. Pius X* was mailed to school parents, angry about the decision to release Michael Fitzgerald, a teacher at Pius for the past 33 years.

The letter describes an encounter between Fitzgerald and Archbishop Michael Sheehan that, along with findings cited in the independent review, appear to have been the motive in withholding Fitzgerald’s contract: “After Mass for Catholic Schools Week, the seniors in Michael’s two “Man and Woman” classes expressed confusion regarding the Archbishop’s statements relating to Sunday Mass obligation. They asked if it were true that they were committing a mortal sin if they missed Sunday Mass. Michael said he did not hear the context of the Archbishop’s words but he thought that the Archbishop was trying to impress upon them the importance of Sunday obligation. One student asked if it were true that he was in danger of going to hell if he missed one Sunday Mass. Michael answered that no single act would send a person to hell; God looks at the fundamental orientation of a person’s life. However, Michael was quick to add that a person can cut himself off from God by continuing to choose evil over good.”

If Fitzgerald did in fact respond, as reported by the *Faculty and Staff Association of St. Pius X*, that “no single act would send a person to hell; God looks at the fundamental orientation of a person’s life,” he’s not being let go a moment too soon. The Vatican, in the document *Persona Humana*, condemned fundamental option theories in 1975.

“There are those,” the document says, “who go so far as to affirm that mortal sin, which causes separation from God, only exists in the formal refusal directly opposed to God’s call, or in that selfishness which completely and deliberately closes itself to the love of neighbor. They say that it is only then that there comes into play the ‘fundamental option,’ that is to say, the decision which totally commits the person and which is necessary if mortal sin is to exist.” A person’s moral disposition “can be completely changed by particular acts, especially as when often happens, these have been prepared for by previous more superficial acts. Whatever the case, it is wrong to say that particular acts are not enough to constitute a mortal sin.”

Pope John Paul II’s 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth) reiterates condemnation of this heresy. According to fundamental option theory, an individual could remain faithful to God while still making immoral choices and committing immoral acts.

The Holy Father examines the writings of St. Paul, who, after writing “You were called to freedom, brethren” (Gal 5:13), continues “Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh.” Using this and other examples, the pope demonstrates that a fundamental option or orientation toward God cannot be separated from the choice of particular acts. Such a notion is contrary to the teaching of Scripture and Tradition.

Fr. Stephen F. Torracco writes: “Man does not suffer perdition only by being unfaithful to that fundamental option whereby he has made ‘a free self-commitment to God.’ With every freely committed mortal sin, he offends God as the giver of the law and as a result becomes guilty with regard to the entire law (cf. Jas 2:8-11); even if he perseveres in faith, he loses ‘sanctifying grace,’ ‘charity’ and ‘eternal happiness.’ The Council of Trent teaches, “the grace of justification once received is lost not only by apostasy, by which faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin.” [EWTN Q & A Board] ✎

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Rev. Charles Stoeber, SF

Requisat in Pacem

By Valerie Lubitz

Los Pequeños de Cristo has lost a dear friend and advisor in Fr. Charles Stoeber. Fr. Stoeber was the first priest from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe to speak at a Pope Teaches Conference, teaching on *Ad Tuendam Fidem, In Defense of the Catholic Faith*. He articulated the truth with clarity and we who were privileged to be his students learned much from him.



Until Fr. Stoeber entered the hospital, four months before his death, he kept a close watch on the Holy See, reading every document that His Holiness, John Paul II had ever written. And what he read was generously shared. We have lost one of the most brilliant minds in this area.

Fr. Stoeber was born in Dalnort, Colorado, on September 1, 1932, to Halda Schilling and Gerhart Stoeber. He was one of 21 children and very proud of his family. At the age of 10, young Charles was sent to Spain to become a priest of the Sons of the Holy Family. He once relayed that he had entered the seminary with five other men but that, sadly, he was the only one to remain in the priesthood.

Father was instrumental in the conversion of many to the Catholic faith. (*Los Pequeños* would love to hear from anyone with a story.) There was a time that he was invited to teach the Corpus Christi Youth Group, speaking about "Vocation." He came on five different occasions to teach about Jesus and His call, explaining that no one is here by accident. Only God creates Life, which is why life is so sacred. The youth who heard Father's series expressed deep gratitude for these reflections.

Father had a humorous way of dealing with those of us who became impatient or harried. "Don't get so disturbed," Father would say sympathetically. "Things will get *much* worse."

Father not only avidly read church documents, but was a great fan of G. K Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and other Catholics. People who attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass when Fr. Stoeber was the celebrant were always in for a treat because his homilies were so thoughtfully prepared and richly accomplished.

Toward the end of his life, although in great suffering and pain, those privileged to be with him experienced tremendous moments of holiness and humor. ☺

June Calendar

Friday, June 18, 2004:

LPC monthly meeting.
Call (505) 293-8006 for information.
All welcome.

Pro-life Prayer Each Tuesday:

- from 8:30 am – 9:30 am, join Fr. Pio O'Conner for prayer at the Planned Parenthood Abortuary at 701 San Mateo Blvd.
 - from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., join Fr. David Phillipson for prayer at the Planned Parenthood Abortuary at 701 San Mateo Blvd.
- Call (505) 286-1655 for more information.

Consider a gift subscription of The Pepper for your children, friends and relatives - still only \$10 annually.

Alternative "Catholic" Calendar

- Warning! **Sr. Joan Brown's** column in the May issue of *People of God*, (in which sister teaches about the "Word present in the earth), is an environmental hazard. Several priests reading the column were overcome with apoplectic fits and sever twitching. Anyone know the number for the EPA?
- **Centering Prayer** training was offered at the Canossian Center and at Sangre de Cristo Catholic Community in April. Keep your mantra simple: according to Christina Spahn, speaking at the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, words like "Jesus" and "love" may be too distracting.
- **Megan McKenna** and **Fr. John Dear**, two Call to Action speakers, addressed the St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center, UNM, Pax Christi weekend retreat April 30-May 2. Megan has reportedly called St. John the Divine a c - - k sucker and amid other salty expletives teaches that Jesus is only a prophet, the ten commandments are passé, and the Bible is "just" literature.
- On May 4, the Call to Action's **Pax Christi** held a retreat at the Spiritual Renewal Center. Pax Christi USA teaches non-violence with a preferential option for poor, oppressed Marxists. No kidding.

Keep “Touching” Programs Off Our Children

Excerpts from a Catholic Media Coalition letter to US Catholic bishops

Many dioceses have in place or are planning “safe environment” classroom programs for children from kindergarten through sixth grade. Parents oppose this for good reason. As you may know, criticism of *Good Touch Bad Touch* (GTBT) in the Diocese of Arlington and *Talking About Touching* (TAT) in the Archdiocese of Boston addressed not only problems in program content which are significant, but the fact that *classroom* curricula on sensitive sexual issues violate both parental rights and Church teachings. “Touching” programs introduce graphic and upsetting ideas and images to little ones during the latency period, what our Holy Father calls the “years of innocence” from about age five until puberty. Having a facilitator (often a stranger) present sexual information in a mixed sex classroom is seriously problematic and potentially damaging.

Under the definition of sexual abuse in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, “A child is abused whether or not this activity involves explicit force, whether or not it involves genital or physical contact, whether or not it is initiated by the child, and whether or not there is discernible harmful outcome.” Many of the elements of “touching” programs qualify as sex abuse by this definition. Since the bishops excluded themselves from the Charter’s coverage, pastors, principals, and teachers will be the ones facing any charges of abuse related to these programs.

The Vatican document, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (TMHS) clearly warns against giving explicit sexual information to young children....How will introducing sexual issues during the latency period in a classroom setting affect children’s attitudes toward sexuality? Will placing sexuality in a context of abuse and distrust affect children to fear? Will they see sex as dirty? Will they question every touch? Will they “act out” disturbing ideas and images by inflicting “bad touches” on younger children? These are serious questions. To say, as some bishops have, that materials selected will be “age-appropriate” begs the question. By whose standard? Surely not the secular sex-educators who developed these “touching” programs in the first place.

According to some bishops, the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People approved by the bishops at their 2002 meeting in Dallas mandates “safe environment” programs for children. That is true. However, the Charter says nothing about implementation. It does NOT require *classroom* programs and is silent on who should present the material. Church teaching, on the other hand, is crystal clear.

...[M]any dioceses seem to be approaching the issue of “safe environments” from the bias of secular child protection agencies which presume that parents abuse their children. In fact, some chancery officials have said those outside the family should teach these programs because “parents might be abusers.” What an offensive premise! There isn’t a single case in the Jay report of parental abuse. On the contrary, the report documents abuse by clergy, the overwhelming majority of which is homosexual in nature. ...

The safest environment for children is an intact family. Studies indicate that “Children of divorced or never-married mothers are six to 30 times more likely to suffer from serious child abuse than are children raised by both biological parents in marriage.” (Patrick Fagan, *The Child Abuse Crisis: the Disintegration of Marriage, Family and the American Community*, Heritage Foundation) An intact family with a dad in the home is a proven deterrent to all types of abuse. Most of the cases in the Church sex scandals involved vulnerable families whose children were easy targets for predators. There is no evidence that “safe environment” programs would have prevented or interrupted the abuse. Efforts to strengthen the family are the surest way to protect children.

In closing, we respectfully ask you to abandon implementation of any classroom program addressing the sensitive issues of sexual abuse. Instead, a home-based program for use by parents with their own children should be developed, one that is sensitive to the needs and temperament of the individual child. Parents are those most concerned about the safety of their children and are the natural teachers of this delicate subject. Every diocese is blessed with many well-educated and qualified parents who would welcome the opportunity to assist in developing a program for use in the home. We look forward to the opportunity to serve Holy Mother Church and assist you in your most challenging task. ☛

The entire CMC release can be read at www.catholicmediacoalition.org

