

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

March 2008



In This Issue...

The Cautionary End of the “Spirit of Vatican II”

Here I am, Lord!

Page 4

Abortion Politics

Politics 2008

Page 8

Albuquerque Interfaith 2007... and On, and On...

More Politics 2008

Page 14



Cover: *The Annunciation*
by Jan van Eyck
Flemish; c. 1395-1441

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Volume 10, Number 3

The Cautionary End of the “Spirit of Vatican II”

Page 4

By Dr. Jeff Mirus

“Priests of Faith calculate the odds differently”

Abortion Politics

Page 8

Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and Emily’s List are spending big money this year.

Annunciation

Page 9

By Marie P. Loehr

Part I in a series about the Holy Family

Around the World

Page 11

Praying Ad Orientem and an Exhortation to the Jesuits

Around the Nation

Page 12

“Civility” as a weapon to crush Catholic values; Bishops Sheridan and Chaput will have none of it.

Around New Mexico

Page 13

Call to Action in the pulpit; Americans United for Life

March Calendar

Page 14

Albuquerque Interfaith 2007... and On, and On...

Page 14

By Stephanie Block

No, they aren’t in a recession...exactly

Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo
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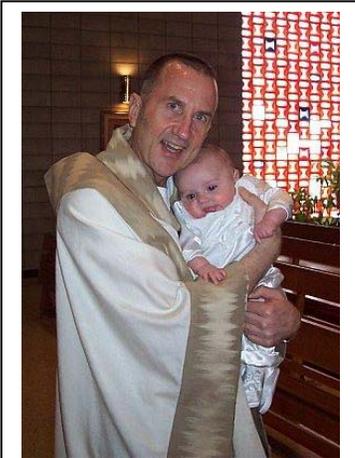
We are an Archdiocesan-wide Catholic lay organization committed to a charitable defense of the Catholic Faith by means of education, communication, and prayer. We are devoted to the Roman Catholic Magisterium, the Holy Father, and to the bishops and clergy in union with him. Our members believe what 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.

The Cautionary End of the “Spirit of Vatican II”

By Dr. Jeff Mirus

A priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Fr. Paul Stanosz, has written a fascinating article for *Commonweal* on clerical morale, but it is fascinating only because it reveals far more than the author intends (see [The Other Health Crisis: Why Priests Are Coping Poorly](#), 11/23/2007). As *Commonweal* was one of the first magazines to join the counter-magisterium of Catholic intellectuals in the 1960’s, I haven’t paid much attention to it for a very long time. But this article unintentionally demonstrates an extremely important spiritual point.

“The Other Health Crisis” begins by documenting the problems afflicting the author’s own archdiocese, along with the impact of these problems on priestly morale, emotional stability and physical health. The assumption is that these problems are universal, but the article ignores the special character of the Milwaukee archdiocese which, during the long critical period leading up to the present crisis, was shaped and staffed by the most prominent of episcopal dissenters, Rembert Weakland, a bishop who was also reportedly an active homosexual who misused diocesan funds in a vain attempt to permanently conceal his extra-curricular activities. It is therefore no surprise that Milwaukee is laboring under the impact of a severe decline in vocations, a confused spirituality, and monumental sex abuse damages; one is tempted to believe the church in Milwaukee has reaped what it has sown. But though extreme, Milwaukee is hardly alone in its problems, and I don’t want to be too quick to dismiss the article’s thesis. That thesis is clear and simple: There is far more that is responsible for the decline of Catholicism in America than poor doctrinal, moral and spiritual leadership on the part of bishops and priests.



Rev. Fr. Paul Stanosz

Unstoppable Trends

The argument runs like this: Catholicism has been adversely affected by the larger social trends characteristic of the vast cultural shift in America beginning in the 1960’s. There has been a general trend toward secularization, a declining interest in religion, reduced rates of church attendance, and a failure to learn the basis of traditional beliefs and values—all large cultural factors which the Church cannot be said to have caused, but with which her ministers must daily attempt to cope. The author is surely correct to note this larger cultural aspect of our religious problems, and he is also correct to observe that, starting in the 1960’s, Catholics took advantage of their rapidly expanding opportunities to enter the mainstream, often at the cost of their spiritual identity.

But by “Catholics” in this context, the article seems to mean only the laity, and entirely on their own. In fact bishops and priests, who should have known better, also often rushed into the mainstream at the cost of their Catholic identity, shepherding many others to do the same. And what is curious about Fr. Stanosz’ analysis is not its identification of these large cultural factors, but its failure to envision any possible alternative response on the part of the Church. For Stanosz both implicitly and explicitly assumes that there is nothing the Church could have done to deal more effectively with the cultural crisis, and that there is nothing the Church can possibly do now to make things any better. Thus he rapidly dismisses the “alleged dilution of Catholicism” during this same period (note the term *alleged*), and he carelessly exhorts us to “stop blaming Vatican II or the bumbling bishops who shielded pedophiles and failed to protect children” (note the assumption that most critics blame Vatican II rather than those who distorted it; note also how the subject of episcopal bumbling is neatly exhausted by the shielding of pedophiles). Finally, he insists “we should avoid blithely scapegoating ‘the culture of death’ and the evil of the secular world” (I love the use of the words *blithely* and *scapegoating*).

My point is not to damn the author’s outrageous prose with faint praise. Rather, I wish to note his deep conviction that there is quite simply nothing to be done. After all, he has already written off the following: an undiluted presentation of the Faith, a proper implementation of

the vision of the Second Vatican Council, insistence on strong and competent bishops, and any sort of deep opposition to secularization in general and the culture of death in particular. So what is left? Failure is the only remaining possibility, and the article is explicit on this point. There are “large social, cultural, and economic forces” at work in the decline of Catholicism, and “that decline is not about to reverse itself”. Priests can never be happy and whole again until they recognize this inescapable fact and so cut themselves some slack. “I’m not advocating apathy,” says Fr. Stanosz, “I’m merely recognizing that the decline began before me and will continue after me.” And so on to the inevitable conclusion: “To restore health to our pastoral function, we priests first need to admit our own pain and disorientation in a foundering church.”

Wisdom and Foolishness

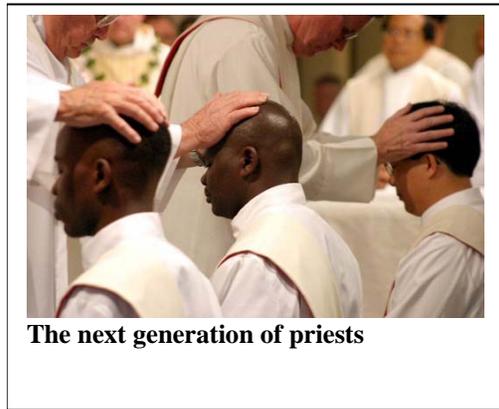
Don’t get me wrong. Being a priest must certainly intensify the struggle and frequent disappointment of being a Christian. But a proper spirituality includes the important understanding that the economy of salvation is more complex than we ourselves can ever imagine. Sometimes one person sows—and sows very well indeed—but it is still another who reaps. On the human level, this is disappointing. If Fr. Stanosz were offering advice to younger priests and seminarians in a faithful journal such as *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, we might consider him wise indeed to restrain the impetuosity of the young by reminding them that they will neither always see the fruits of their labors nor always understand how and when the graces they merit are applied. But even so, they must remain confident that through conformity with Christ their lives will bear great fruit. What ultimately matters is not measurable results but conformity with Christ.

This is wisdom indeed, but Fr. Stanosz is instead writing for a bastion of dissidence called *Commonweal*, and he in fact concludes that there is nothing to be done. I said at the outset that this article was fascinating precisely because it reveals more than it intends. In exploring its thesis, I have already hinted at what is being revealed, partly through my parenthetical comments on some of the alternative ideas the author so “blithely” discounts or rejects. What is really going on here is the working out to its inevitable conclusion of a bankrupt but widespread mindset which we might justly call the Milwaukee mindset, because it is so well symbolized by the story of the Church in Milwaukee. But this is really just another name for the false “spirit of Vatican II.” What I mean will become clear as we examine an important thread that runs throughout “The Other Health Crisis”.

The beginning of the thread is the author’s observation, in describing the current failure of priestly morale, that there is a growing polarization between recently-ordained and long-time priests, “what some call JP II priests and Vatican II priests, respectively.” Now every active Catholic who has lived above ground for the past generation knows that these two terms are codes. John Paul II waged a long and uphill battle to reclaim the true meaning of the Second Vatican Council from those who used the so-called “spirit of Vatican II” as an excuse for deliberately fostering within the Church precisely what Fr. Stanosz describes as an insurmountable external cultural and social trend: The dilution of the spirit of Catholicism to accommodate the spirit of the times.

Speaking in Code

Thus, for a “Vatican II” priest like Fr. Stanosz, the term “JP II priest” is code for a priest who is a throwback to the pre-conciliar age, a cultural misfit who rejects the “spirit of Vatican II” which must necessarily guide our lives, and a deeply flawed man who cannot possibly relate positively to anybody. But the real decoded difference between a “Vatican II” priest and a “John Paul II” priest is actually the



The next generation of priests

difference between those who have never taken the letter of Vatican II to heart and those who have. Instead of mining the Council documents for the serious spiritual challenge they proposed, the so-called Vatican II priest too often served the spirit of the age under the Council's name. This provided an exhilarating opportunity to profess Christ without being flushed out of the mainstream and to put faith in programs and processes instead of spiritual growth and holiness, or, putting it more simply, to attempt to have one's cake and eat it too. In contrast, the so-called John Paul II priest has followed the vicar of Christ in seeking to implement what the Council actually said, which was centered not on the transformation of Christ to suit the self and the world, but on the transformation of both the self and the world to suit Christ.

For a generation and more, "Vatican II" bishops and "Vatican II" priests called for ever more accommodation with the mainstream, ever increasing bureaucratic programs, and ever less prayer, devotion, and sacrifice. Whenever anyone called for what we might call good old Catholic muscle (traditional understandings of sin and grace restated and developed to face contemporary challenges), their suggestions were rejected and ridiculed as products of a bygone age. It is this vision of a sophisticated, secularized and thoroughly "up-to-date" Church and priesthood that is symbolized by Milwaukee, and which constitutes the unfortunate Milwaukee mindset that permeates the entire article.

Do you think I am too quick to judge? Consider how consistent the "coded" language is throughout. The author begins with the same psychological canards (also code phrases) which have been used frequently during the post-Conciliar period to force men of traditional Catholic spirituality out of our seminaries. Noting the recent influx of "JP II" priests, he immediately asserts that simply ordaining more priests will not solve the problem. Here's why:

Bishops in recent years have been too quick to fill seminaries with fervent men who may or may not have genuine vocations. As a result, our seminaries now house a new breed of unsuitable candidates, men with poor relational and leadership skills. Ordained into a U.S. church that is losing its vitality, these men often seek to turn back the clock by embracing disciplines and devotional practices that flourished in the middle of the last century.

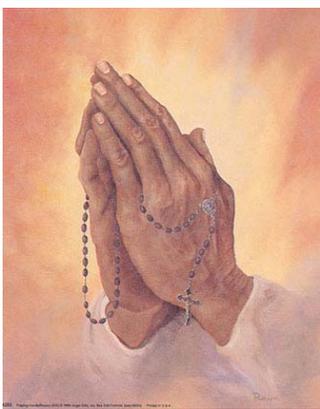
A strong vertical spirituality is a confirmed horizontalist's nightmare, and so it is invariably dismissed in Modernist psychobabble as indicating "poor relational and leadership skills."

Caricatures and False Opposites

Next, the author cites his own sociological work (another academic discipline which, in the wrong hands, has been used to redefine the Faith to suit common patterns established by the lukewarm). He recalls as a sort of overwhelming statistical trend the many priestly candidates he has interviewed "who see the priesthood as a refuge" where "their personal limitations and modest abilities are no obstacle". These men are too often "filled with a sense of their own sacred status, and are prone to conflict with the laity and fellow priests." His research suggests that such men are likely to become unhappy and disgruntled. This too is code. For example, the phrase "prone to conflict with" most often really means "prone to challenge".

We may all readily grant that some few candidates lack spiritual depth and wish to "escape" into the priesthood because they can't make it anywhere else, or that a few others have an unhealthy (*i.e.*, purely artistic or sentimental) attachment to older forms of spirituality. May we not assume, however, that the author is very likely objecting to such relics of devotional practice as Benediction, Eucharistic adoration, the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, prayers to the saints, or even older liturgical forms, all of which are still supposed to be a vibrant part of the life of the Church? Indeed, Fr. Stanosz wields a very broad brush. Is it necessarily (or even probably) true that a seminarian with a strong sense of the sacred character of the priesthood must have a false sense of his own self-worth? Is it not possible that he understands that his very identity will be changed by ordination, that he will be empowered through his priestly identification with Christ to bring great grace to others without expecting better treatment than his Master?

To his credit, Fr. Stanosz is "not convinced" that the current progressive agenda of women's ordination, married clergy, same-sex unions and permissible abortion will be able to revive the Church, but instead of understanding this as the last tortured gasp of the Milwaukee mindset, he



"Pre-conciliar" worship



"Post-conciliar" worship

can only contrast it with what he regards as an equally doomed opposite, a “return to pre-conciliar practices,” as if this is the essence of the John Paul II priest (and as if, even were it so, it is just as bad as abortion and same-sex marriage offered under the Catholic name).

Repentance or Despair?

What are we to make of an article which, in the process of concluding that there is nothing to be done, displays such an animus against precisely those spiritual solutions which have ever been at the heart of a vibrant Catholicism? What does it all mean? That’s the question which makes the article so fascinating, the question to which it is critical to understand the answer. For what it all means is that the Milwaukee mindset is so far gone in its sins that the only way open is despair. The so-called “spirit of Vatican II” which has wielded such a terrible power for the past forty years was nothing more than a euphoric baptism of secular utopianism. After such a long and continuous demonstration of its bankruptcy, many of its proponents have prudently stopped calling for more of the same. One might now hope for self-understanding, repentance and true renewal. But if our *Commonweal* article is any guide—and I believe it is—what we are witnessing instead is the only result consistent with a lack of repentance, that is, despair.

I want to pause here to emphasize that what makes Fr. Stanosz’ article so important is not that one can completely understand and pigeon-hole the author from a single article, as if authors have no more personal complexity than appears in any one thing they write. Rather, what is important is that the article itself brilliantly illustrates the inevitable unfolding of the false “spirit of Vatican II,” the completely predictable devolution of that spirit into the only thing ever promised by its ultimate author. This is the reason I have gone on at three times the length of what is normally a brief column. We have here a lesson that every Christian who is still standing must learn if he hopes to escape the same dreadful consequence. Again, I say it: this is the lesson of despair.

Fr. Stanosz may be right to see that “an aging presbyterate should not exhaust itself in implementing new programs that are at best only Band-Aids” (indeed, such programs are often based on the substitution of managed processes for spiritual challenges). But that is all he sees. If all the precious vision statements and bureaucratic programs to which he has committed his life are bankrupt, then we are not surprised to find he now has a personal interest in proving every other path to be even worse. If the Milwaukee mindset couldn’t super-charge priests and fill churches, then nothing can. This is the full argument to which we are treated in “The Other Health Crisis”. There is no hope; there can be no hope; any priest who has hope is in denial, and “the greatest threat to a priest’s well-being is denial.” Who is it then who poses the real danger for our author? Unsurprisingly, the target is the same as it always was in the Milwaukee mindset: “We priests know we are in trouble...and the forced optimism of those afraid of appearing insufficiently orthodox—or disloyal to Rome—strikes me as a failure of perception, honesty, and faith.”

After all, what explanation other than fear could there be for fidelity to Rome and the positive spiritual outlook that goes with it? This too is Milwaukee mindset code, this too is the common parlance of the “spirit of Vatican II.” And for any who still doubt, consider Fr. Stanosz’ final advice to priests as they all wait for a brighter day when the inexorable cultural and social processes will be more favorable:

In the meantime, we must learn to be a different kind of church. We’ve made progress in overcoming our pretensions to being a triumphal, all-knowing, sinless church. But more progress remains to be made; and paradoxically, it begins with acknowledging—and in a certain sense accepting—the decline of U.S. Catholicism.

A strong vertical spirituality is a confirmed horizontalist’s nightmare, and so it is invariably dismissed in Modernist psychobabble as indicating “poor relational and leadership skills.”

Abortion Politics

Planned Parenthood Federation of America and *NARAL Pro-Choice America* intend to spend \$10 million each, feathering pro-abortion political action. *Emily's List*, a group that supports pro-abortion female Democrats, hopes to exceed the \$46 million it raised for the 2006 election.

These organizations feel they must become more actively involved in politics because "reproductive rights are under assault by Republicans," according to a *Wall Street Journal* article (1/22/08). *Planned Parenthood Federation of America*, the largest abortion provider in the US, has largely avoided electoral politics until endorsing presidential candidate John Kerry in 2004 and a handful of Democratic gubernatorial candidates. "To keep our doors open," said *Planned Parenthood's* president Cecile Richards, "it's clear that we need to step into the electoral arena."

In addition, *Planned Parenthood* has an *Action Fund* that functions "in educational and electoral activity, including legislative advocacy, voter education, and grassroots organizing... supporting pro-choice, pro-family planning candidates for federal office." In 2006, the *Planned Parenthood Action Fund* and local *Planned Parenthood* organizations targeted various races around the country, in a focused strategy to unseat a Republican-dominated federal legislature.

Furthermore, *Planned Parenthood's* "One Million Strong" campaign hopes to persuade 1 million people to vote for pro-abortion candidates. Its tactics will include political ads, paid campaign staffers and volunteers for door-to-door vote canvassing.

Planned Parenthood's long-range goal is to:

- elect a pro-choice president,
- build a "supermajority of pro-choice U.S. senators to ensure that the U.S. Supreme Court will safeguard the constitutional right to privacy,"
- expand "the pro-choice caucus in the U.S. House," and
- elect pro-choice allies in state legislatures

Specifically, *Planned Parenthood* worries that a Republican victory in 2008 could mean pro-life Supreme Court Justice replacements. With only five of the nine current Supreme Court justices supportive of abortion "rights" and two nearing retirement age, *Planned Parenthood* fears the country is "just one vote away from overturning...the Roe v. Wade decision of 1973." N



Cecile Richards, President

***Planned Parenthood Action Fund* and
Formerly deputy chief of staff for Democrat leader Nancy Pelosi**

Hope in Christ

I suppose we have effectively overcome perceptions of a sinless church by sinning, and we ought to do more of the same. But let it go. See how the de-triumphalizing of the Church (which is yet more code) is now a key to a different lock. The abolition of "triumphalism" was originally sold as the key to the Church's broader appeal and influence; now it is hawked as the key to reducing our aspirations so we can be content with failure. On this reading, all aspirations are triumphal. After all, as Fr. Stanosz points out in a passage more decisive than he knows, not even John Paul II could fill the churches, and "the new evangelization he called for remains to be undertaken." We have already been told that the "decline is not about to reverse itself"—it "began before me and will continue after me." The new evangelization cannot even be contemplated until the insurmountable cultural and social forces change, at which time "Catholicism will evolve."

Paradoxically, this is the most revealing point of all, and it may serve as a fitting conclusion. For the most important difference between the priests of the Milwaukee mindset and the "fervent men" with whom the bishops are now "too quick to fill seminaries" is that the old guard believes successful evangelization must be the product of the cultural shifts and social trends in which they have always put their trust. But priests of Faith calculate the odds differently, for they do not doubt that the one they serve has overcome the world—and all its social trends, and all its empty promises. So when priests of Faith consider this impossible work of evangelization, they hear the Master asking: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Is 6:8) And to this they give an answer which makes dust and ashes of the Milwaukee mindset, an answer so simple, direct and daring that it bypasses argument and cannot be rationalized away, an answer by which they cast themselves into the deep for no other reason than to obey the will of God: Here I am! Send me. N

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Annunciation

By Marie P. Loehr

...there I gave myself to him, keeping nothing back; there I promised to be his bride.
- John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, st. B27

In what does the marital union of Mary and Joseph consist?

The Church teaches that Mary was perpetually virgin, and Joseph continent and chaste in their marriage. How is this possible?

With God all things are possible. Adam and Eve were created free and chaste. Their intellects ruled their wills. The glory of God illuminated them, body and soul. Spirit and body were thus in perfect harmony with one another and God. It is only after the Fall that concupiscence, especially sexual carnality -- which is eros divorced from agape -- becomes a problem for fallen man. But Genesis and the Church teach that was not always so, nor intended by God.

In Mary's Immaculate Conception, we see this purity and harmony restored, in the fullness of grace undamaged by Original Sin, and brought to fruition. Mary is pre-redeemed by her Son's will and work. Joseph steadily grows in uprightness and holiness, by inference, before and after he appears in the Gospels. We may wonder if all trace of sin vanished in him the first moment he held the newborn Messiah in his arms, and rejoiced. Mary and Joseph are the first fruits of Christ's salvific work and recapitulation of all Creation in himself.

We must understand that Mary was free in ways we are not. We are bound by sin, which darkens the mind and weakens the will. She did not have that millstone around her neck. Nevertheless, her freedom made her choices more decisive, her joys more intense, her suffering piercing beyond our experience. Nor did it make her interior journey in the "darkness of faith," as John Paul II calls it, any easier. If anything, it might have been darker and more confusing for an unfallen person in a fallen world.

In response to Gabriel's statement that she has found favor with God, and she will conceive and bear a son, Mary asks, "How can this be, since I know not man?" This is not doubt, as Zachariah scoffed at the possibility of Elizabeth's conceiving. Mary simply makes sure she is entirely open with the angel, that there is no misunderstanding on either side. She expresses her concern to fulfill God's will exactly. When Gabriel opens God's will further to her, her "fiat mihi" is given without hesitation.

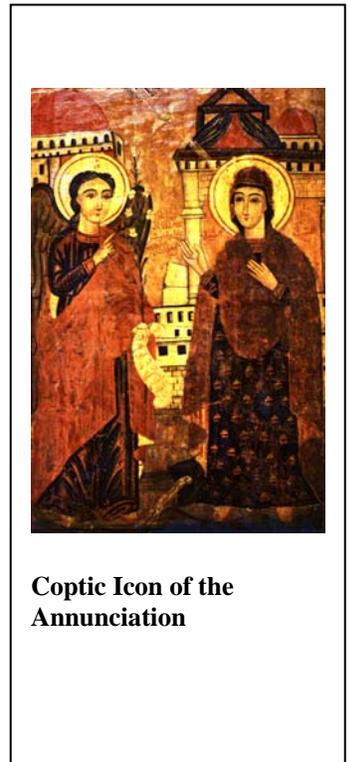
When the angel appears to Joseph in a dream, the angel is responding to Joseph's concern over Mary's pregnancy.

Many commentators suggest Mary always intended to remain a virgin, and had discussed this with Joseph before their betrothal, receiving his agreement. They would then have entered betrothal in mutual accord to give themselves entirely to God, living marriage outwardly in all ways, except for bodily conjugal union. This was not a concept entirely unknown to the Chosen People. However, their desire was to honor the Genesis command to "be fruitful and multiply," as part of their image and likeness to a God whose fruitfulness is unstinting. Also, each woman hoped she would be the chosen mother of the promised Messiah, and desired marriage and children..

If Joseph did indeed agree to a mutual contract of chastity and continence with Mary, why would he do so?

Some have suggested he was already aged; the fires of his flesh were safely extinguished. This image of Joseph is often conveyed by the apocryphal gospels, the painters who used the apocrypha in their artworks, and those Scriptural commentators who feared scandal and confusion over the nature of this marriage -- and its purity. After the Infancy narratives, our last glimpse of Joseph is with Mary, finding the twelve-year-old Christ debating in the Temple. Joseph is not seen again. This suggests he died in the course of Jesus' hidden life, leading many to think he was elderly when he took Mary into his home.

There are better reasons to believe Joseph was a young man in his prime, settled in his chosen work as "tekton"- a maker, more than a carpenter working in wood. A *tekton* worked in all materials, building homes as well as furniture. He would have contracted for jobs large and small in the local region. He was, in short, a craftsman, engaged in physically and creatively demanding



**Coptic Icon of the
Annunciation**

work. Beyond the demands of his work, he had to be strong and able to protect Mary and the Son of God. This was no small thing.

Moreover, the Holy Family could not depend on police for protection from the ruffians they might encounter. They could not call on the army to shield them from Herod. They had no travel agent or tour guide for their numerous travels. These were grueling journeys through mountains and desert, still formidable even today, on their own. They had to be tough and prudent.

In *The Wanderer*, December 20, 2007, Fr. Robert Altier notes in his "Sunday Sermons":

This extraordinary man was called by God and entrusted with the two greatest treasures in history: Jesus and Mary. For obvious reasons, God would call someone who is not only competent and trustworthy, but above all, someone who is holy.

That Joseph loved Mary greatly is implicit in the tale of their two annunciations.

Confronted with her pregnancy and her almost certain transparency with him -- for surely she told him of Gabriel's visitation to her -- he is overwhelmed. We often mistake his concern over her pregnancy for his presumption of sin on her part. That is how **we** think, creeping toward holiness as we do.

However, Fr. Altier says:

St. Joseph, being humble and holy, understood that if God chose our Lady for Himself, it did not make sense that St. Joseph should marry her. It needs to be pointed out that St. Joseph did not think our Lady had sinned with another man. He knew her holiness . . . she certainly would not be violating her resolve with someone else.

He would know her holiness. Surely, it was her holiness that so attracted this upright man in the first place. Just and holy himself, her humility and transparency, the simplicity holiness worked in her, would be magnetic for him. His own holiness would have the same effect on her. This is the bedrock of their commitment, communion and creativity for and with one another. Their holiness and its focus on God is the primary union in their marriage.

Giorgio Buccellati suggests in "The Prophetic Dimension of Joseph" in *Communio*, Spring 2006 that it is:

... the extraordinary nature of this conception that would have jolted Mary and Joseph into the type of incarnational virginity I have been describing. If so, virginity would not be for them an ascetical choice derived from a pre-existing human commitment to austere self-denial, but rather the result of their prophetic apprehension and proclamation of mystery -- the unfathomable mystery of the historical incarnation of Jesus, understood in their daily experience, with the perfectly clear dimness of faith, as the Incarnation of God.

In other words, Joseph reacts to this as all men do, confronted with the immediate presence of God. He is overwhelmed. He falls to his knees, as Peter recognizes the meaning of his miraculous catch of fish and falls to his knees before Christ, as Moses falls prostrate before the burning bush and its revelation of YHWH's "I AM." He knows himself unworthy to be singled out by God for this singular encounter and its responsibility. Yet, like Mary, in his humility he is immediately obedient to the call of God. When the angel says to take Mary to wife without fear, Joseph takes her into his home. They will journey through the mountains and desert of the external world, and in the "darkness of faith" and obedience, together.

Adam and Eve refused God, and plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree in Eden; they are expelled from that paradisaic home. Joseph and Mary respond to God without reservation, and receive the Eucharistic fruit who is Jesus Christ into their hearts and home, which then becomes -- in simplicity and secret -- Paradise, not without pain and hardship. Paradise nevertheless! Where there is Christ, there are the courts of heaven, however veiled to our sight.

In *Jesus of Nazareth*, 6, Benedict XVI says of Jesus: "He lives before the face of God, not just as a friend, but as a Son; he lives in the most intimate unity with the Father." We can turn this around, and say with equal truth, Jesus lives before the faces of Mary and Joseph, not just as a friend - although certainly that. But he also lives before them as son. He lives in the most intimate unity with Mary as the son of her flesh, and with Joseph as human surrogate for the Father. He is truly union and communion, the seal of their union and community. N

-To be continued-



**The Dream of St. Joseph,
Georges de la Tour,
1640**

Around the World

Pope Prays *Ad Orientem* This past January 13, on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Pope celebrated Mass, as is customary, in the Sistine Chapel and baptized newborn infants...as he and his congregation “looked together at the Lord”.

Rather than celebrating the Mass at a moveable altar-table, “facing the people” (*versus populum*), which has been common practice since the liturgical changes after Vatican II, the Holy Father went up to the original altar of the Sistine Chapel, beneath Michelangelo’s painting of the *Last Judgment*, and celebrated “facing East” (*ad orientem*), that is, in the same direction as all those present.

Observers say this has nothing at all to do with the Pope’s decision to make the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass more generously available, as he was celebrating according to the modern Missal of Paul VI, in Italian. Rather, they say, he has reclaimed the symbolism of all worshippers, both people and priest, facing towards the liturgical “East”, towards the cross, in continuity with generations of faithful.

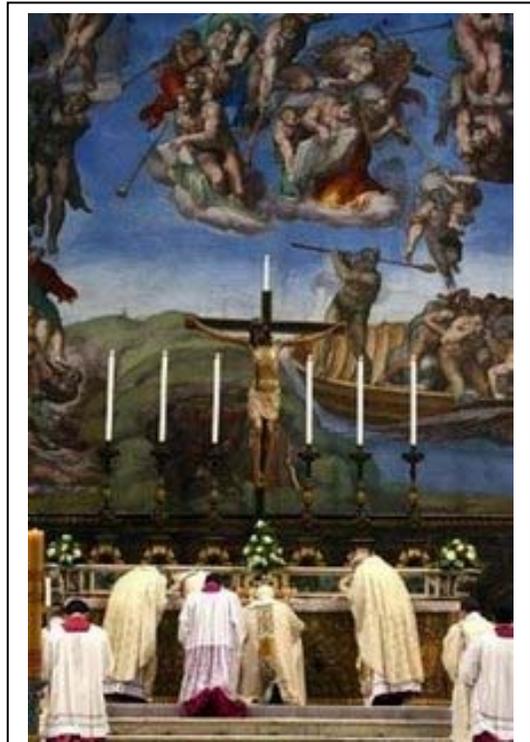
One commentator writes, “[I]n this silent gesture, Pope Benedict stated once and for all that there is nothing at all wrong with using the older altars in our churches. For as he wrote in his preface to Fr Michael Lang’s book *Turning Towards the Lord*: ‘there is nothing in the [Second Vatican] Council text about turning altars towards the people.’”

Another writes: “This is not a case of accidentals, but of essentials. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord.”

Jesuits Told to Reaffirm Commitment to Catholic Doctrine Pope Benedict XVI sent a letter to the 35th General Congregation Assembly of the Jesuits in January, exhorting them to reaffirm their “total adhesion to Catholic doctrine” particularly about “sexual morality”.

The letter followed a homily given by the Pope’s representative at the opening of the Assembly that identified instances of infidelity on the part of some in the order. Embroiled in dissident controversies for the past 40 years, and too well represented in the homosexual priest scandals, the Holy Father called the order to renewed faithfulness. The Pope wrote:

...[S]o as to offer the entire Society of Jesus a clear orientation which might be a support for generous and faithful apostolic dedication, it could prove extremely useful that the General Congregation reaffirm, in the spirit of Saint Ignatius, its own total adhesion to Catholic doctrine, in particular on those neuralgic points which today are strongly attacked by secular culture, as for example the relationship between Christ and religions; some aspects of the theology of liberation; and various points of sexual morality, especially as regards the indissolubility of marriage and the pastoral care of homosexual persons.”



Pope Benedict XVI, celebrating Mass at the original altar of the Sistine Chapel, on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord



Around the Nation

Bishop Sheridan and Planned Parenthood Colorado Springs Catholics participated in a pro-life prayer vigil with their bishop, Michael Sheridan, on January 19 in front of a Planned Parenthood abortuary.

No More Mr. Nice Guy In 2007, a number of pro-abortion Catholics active in political affairs issued “A Catholic Call to Observe Civility in Political Debate.” “Civility should be a guiding principle in our public life,” they wrote.

Another group of Catholics countered with a statement called “A Catholic Response,” believing the “Call” would have the effect of silencing the pro-life movement and criticism of pro-abortion Catholic politicians.

The statement says:

All men and women of good will value civility, but civility is not the highest - or the only - civic virtue. Rather, justice is. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us in *Deus Caritas Est*, “Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics.”

...If Catholic politicians advocated segregation or - even worse - slavery, would there be a call for civility towards them? If Catholic politicians said the poor are poor because of their bad behavior and we are not obliged to help them in any way, wouldn't we say they are heartless and even un-Christian? Some ask for civility now for one reason, abortion.

The lack of public civility comes not from pro-lifers but from those Catholic politicians who support the right to kill innocent life in the womb and those who support defining man-woman marriage out of existence. But, some want to treat these politicians differently because they agree with them on important but purely prudential questions like health care, and the minimum wage.

...Though not all of its signers intend it, we believe the effect of the “Call for Civility” would be to silence the pro-life and pro-family movements. We oppose this effort root and branch.

In short, we will feel free even strongly to condemn the public policy positions of Catholic politicians who support abortion, embryo-destructive research, and homosexual marriage. They stand against the teachings of the Church and in favor of morally repugnant practices that are counter to the common good and that should be unwelcome in a just or even polite society.

Archbishop Chaput Threatens to Close Catholic Charities In the face of a state law that would require Catholic Charities in Colorado to accept non-discriminatory hiring practices, Denver's Archbishop Charles Chaput threatened to shut down the charitable organization.

The bill would add “sexual orientation” to the list of protected classes against which an organization receiving federal or state funding is forbidden to discriminate in employment. The bill provides no religious exemption. Archbishop Chaput said the bill, “would greatly hinder any Catholic entity which receives state money from hiring or firing employees based on the religious beliefs of the Catholic Church.” Though non-Catholics work for Catholic Charities,” said Chaput, the organization's “key leadership positions ... obviously do require a practicing and faithful Catholic, and for very good reasons. Catholic Charities is exactly what the name implies: a service to the public offered by the Catholic community *as part of the religious mission of the Catholic Church.*” Though Colorado Catholic Charities “does not proselytize,” said Chaput, it also “has *no interest at all* in generic do-goodism; on the contrary, it's an arm of Catholic social ministry. When it can no longer have the freedom it needs to be ‘Catholic,’ it will end its services. This is not idle talk. I am very serious.”



Bishop Michael Sheridan, Colorado Springs at a pro-life prayer vigil



Archbishop Charles Chaput

Around New Mexico

Call to Action Speaker Takes the Pulpit February 2008's *People of God*, a publication of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, carried the information that **Sr. Jamie T. Phelps, O.P.**, an Adrian Dominican, delivered the January 20, 2008 Sunday noon homily at St. Joseph on the Rio Grande, a Catholic parish in Albuquerque.

As questionable as the use of the pulpit was – canon law restricts homilies to Catholic clergy, though a bishop may grant permission for a layperson “to preach...in churches” provided “necessity requires it ... or it seems useful in particular cases” – more disturbing was the fact that Phelps is a *Call to Action* speaker. Her keynote address opened the 2007 annual *Call to Action* (CTA) Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Phelps has been a longtime member of CTA. She was one of the signatories of the 1994 “WE Are the Church” ad that demanded women priests, acceptance of homosexuality, freedom of conscience to dissent from Church teaching – particularly birth control – and promotion of liberation theology, among other things.

Besides holding a “womanist” variation of liberationism, Phelps has been active in the *Women's Ordination Conference* (WOC) – an organizational member of CTA – serving on WOC's Core Commission and Advisory Board as far back as 1979-80.

WOC was established in 1974 “to tie the issue of women's ordination to International Women's Year,” according to organizational literature. Although it has also had members who wanted to be priests, the thrust of its organizers from the beginning has been “toward reinterpreting both priesthood and sacraments as expressions of community power.” At its first general meeting, held in Detroit in November 1975, 1200 people, about ninety percent of whom were women religious, heard Rosemary Ruether ask them whether they really wanted ordination in the present “demonic” Church. Instead, she said, they “must demystify in their minds the false idea that priests possess sacramental ‘power’ which the community does not have.”

WOC's “greatest success” was in obtaining the agreement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) of the United States to engage in dialogue with them. Formal dialogue sessions were conducted from December 1979 to December 1981 between representatives of the NCCB and such representatives of WOC as Rosemary Ruether, Sister Anne Carr, Barbara Zanotti, Sister Marjorie Tuite, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, **Sister Jamie Phelps**, Rita Bowen, and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

Americans United for Life (AUL), “committed to defending human life through vigorous judicial, legislative, and educational efforts at both the federal and state levels since 1971,” issues an annual assessment of the 10 best and 10 worst states for legislation that protects human life. New Mexico, it probably comes as little surprise, made the 10 *worst* list.

AUL summarizes New Mexico's situation: “New Mexico lacks many common sense laws and protective regulations. For example, New Mexico does not adequately protect the health and safety of women seeking abortions because it lacks an informed consent law, an enforceable parental involvement law, or comprehensive regulation of facilities performing abortions. In addition, New Mexico has not addressed potential abuses of biotechnology, including human cloning, destructive embryo research, or assisted reproductive technologies.” The full report can be read at www.aul.org/?p=81.



Jamie T. Phelps, O.P

March Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting

March 14, 2008

Call (505) 293-8006 for information.

Pro-life Prayer:

Planned Parenthood Abortuary

701 San Mateo Blvd.

Holy Innocents Chapel:

(505) 266-4100

Times: Daily 8 AM – 3 PM

Tuesdays at Noon

Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel

Fr. Stephen Imbarrato

&

Thursdays at 9:30 AM

Fr. Millan Garcia

Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (1962 Missal)

☩

For more information, call

(505) 266-4100

Helpers of God's Precious Infants

1. Planned Parenthood Abortuary

701 San Mateo Blvd.

Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays: 8 AM – 11:30

AM

Wednesdays: 12 Noon – 3:00 PM

&

2. Medical Arts (801 Encino Place)

Saturdays: 8AM-11:30AM

For more information, call Phil Leahy:

(505) 440-3040

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Albuquerque Interfaith 2007... and On, and On...

By Stephanie Block

"I think they're receding, like the snow pack," he insisted, referring to *Albuquerque Interfaith's* activity in New Mexico. "I haven't noticed them doing much of anything recently."

How does one answer that? Alinskyian organizations often keep a low profile when it's expedient. One well might *not* notice their doings as there might not be many *doings* to notice. There's no expansion. There are no major news stories. There are no big actions. From the organization's perspective, however, that's all right. "Two steps forward; one step back," as they say.

For a precedent, one might look south, to El Paso, where Alinsky's *Industrial Areas Foundation* made a tremendous organizing push during the 1980s. It created EPISO – the *El Paso Inter-religious Sponsoring Committee*. The faithful pushed back, countering with their own organization under the banner of "*Cristo, Sí – EPISO, No!*" So, EPISO had a few years of excitement, quieted down, and then around 2000 spawned a "sister" in the area – *Border Interfaith* – that claims it's "connected to the IAF but not to EPISO," despite having shared the same lead organizer. Credulity is strained but the action will begin again, under new circumstances and under a new name.

Which is the whole idea. While the locals are thinking short-term and looking for immediate gratification, progressives are building a machine for the long haul.

Think phases. In phase one, those seeking a specific sort of social change have found each other and are networked together.

After a decade or so, however, the organization may become predictable. Phase two, therefore, is introspective...a development period, if you will. July 9, 2006, the *Sunday Albuquerque Journal* carried a front-page article "Left Flexes Its Muscles". Debra Dominguez-Lund, on the *Journal* staff, writes, "Religious liberals, noting the success Christian conservatives have had in Republican politics, are trying to catch up. They've become more active, united, and media savvy, say local and national experts."

The large, front-page photo accompanying this article shows the Rev. Trey Hammond of La Mesa Presbyterian, identified in the caption as "co-chairman of Albuquerque Interfaith – a multi-denominational group of at least 30 area churches, schools, unions and non-profit institutions – says he believes the 2004 presidential election was a catalyst for religious liberals to be more vocal about their own religious and political views."

In case there's any question about what a "religious liberal" believes, a companion piece (offered side by side with "Left Flexes Its Muscle" and boxed together with it by a distinct, black border) about an alternative "Catholic" parish in Las Cruces that

“rejects the authority of the pope, ordains female, homosexual, and married priests, and consecrates same-sex marriages...”

Another companion piece by the same author as “Left Flexes...” opens: “In the world of religion, the left corner includes *Albuquerque Interfaith*, the *Network of Spiritual Progressives*, *Faith in Public Life*, the *Catholic Alliance for the Common Good*, *FaithfulAmerica.org*, and the long-standing *National Council of Churches*.”

Further into the first article, we discover that Hammond also identifies “...the issue of war, caring for the poor and a whole better way to operate as a nation.” And further still, we discover that the traditional Catholic Church, as represented by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, has a nuanced political position, siding with political conservatives on abortion and same sex marriage and with the liberals on poverty and healthcare. Despite its dual political citizenship, however, the article makes it clear that the Archdiocese is publicly allied to the “religious liberals,” through support of *Albuquerque Interfaith* and other progressive companions.

So, in 2007, *Albuquerque Interfaith* spent much of its energy “flexing.” In June, it offered an Institute for Public Life, with an advertisement in the Aquinas Newman Center parish bulletin that described the event in grossly liberationist terms: “*Liturgy* is a Latin word meaning *public servant* or *the work of the people*. What are the traditions and institutions that once buffered and defended our families? Our traditions of caring are rooted in liturgy. These traditions are deeply engrained yet somehow lost in the shuffle of economic and cultural pressures. Catholic social teachings say, ‘...we cannot realize our full potential or appreciate the full meaning of our dignity unless we share our lives with others and cooperate on projects that hold the promise of mutual benefit.’”

Now, in the first place, the quote isn’t from Catholic social teaching at all but from the writings of Thomas Massaro, SJ (*Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, p. 120), which is quite a different thing. In the second place, and what is far more significant, the deliberate blurring of the Catholic meaning of the word “liturgy” with a secular and politicized meaning – on Catholic property, no less – is very offensive.

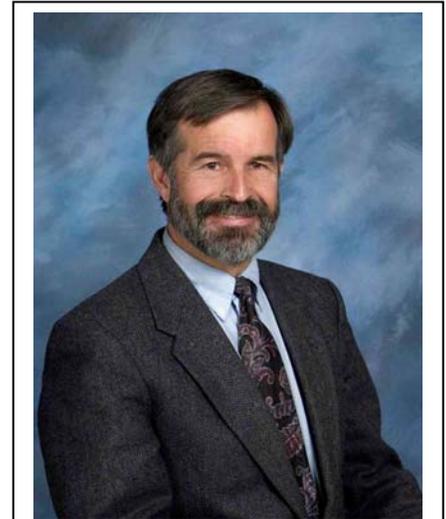
Then in November, *Call to Action’s Pax Christi* and *Albuquerque Interfaith* co-hosted a Leadership Training at the Aquinas Newman Center. All Newman Center leaders from the two “ministries” were invited – and any other interested party. “The purpose of this upcoming training is to give us better tools to begin to understand what it takes to organize in our parish in a more effective way. ...It is first and foremost about building relationships and identifying potential leaders. Frank Pierson, an Industrial Areas Foundation organizer, will lead us in this training.”

What business does Frank Pierson, an Industrial Areas Foundation national organizer concerned about the business of organizing “religious liberals,” have with *reorganizing* a Catholic parish?

Then we have the Holy Family Catholic parish webpage on evangelization. It boasts, “We have sponsored chapter meetings of the Albuquerque Interfaith Organization.” One *highly* doubts that the representatives of other denominations, when they come to Holy Family for a chapter meeting, are being “evangelized.”

As a final bit of organizational “flexing”, we read that the Archdiocese of Santa Fe 5-year *Pastoral Plan*, published in 2006, has, as a goal, cooperation “with programs that address issues and populations not served by existing Catholic organizations but which promote Catholic Social Teaching values. (i.e., WINGS, Dismas House, Bread for the World, Albuquerque Interfaith, etc.) beginning fall 2007.” To this end, Chris Sandoval serves the Archdiocesan Office of Ecumenical & Inter-religious Affairs on the Service to Gospel Justice Committee, representing both *Albuquerque Interfaith* and the *Call to Action* group *Pax Christi New Mexico*. Chris Sandoval has been active with the Aquinas Newman Center Peace and Social Justice Committee, working on these same two programs.

The pieces are in place. A major election is looming and the “religious liberals” are pushing same-sex marriage and embryonic stem cell research on the state level – with a vengeance. Far from “receding, like the snow pack,” “religious liberals” have begun phase three. Stay tuned. N



Rev. Trey Hammond, senior pastor at La Mesa Presbyterian Church and co-chair of Albuquerque Interfaith