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Abortion Heresy

Illogical positions lead to revealing slips of the tongue

By Marvin Olasky

A pro-abortion culture requires eternal vigilance. Heresy can sneak through. The *New York Times* has for four decades maintained abortion orthodoxy, but an editor should be fired for not cutting out a tender dialogue in the next-to-last paragraph of a 7,500-word lead story in the newspaper six weeks ago.

Let me set the scene: A husband and a wife have had 15 failed pregnancies and in vitro fertilization non-starters. Author Alex Kuczynski, a fine writer, comes perilously close to falling off the cliff when she describes a “fetus” that didn’t make it past 10 weeks as “a small dead baby” and quotes a nurse as telling her, “In case you were interested, it was a girl.” But she quickly regains her footing and writes, “I was not, in fact, interested in attaching a gender to the coagulation of cells, briefly and potentially human. . . .”

Kuczynski and her husband then decide to hire a surrogate mother to bear their child. They chose one “not so different from us. Later, during the election season, she and I were unaccountably pleased to learn that we were both planning to vote for Obama.” The article proceeds with great specific detail about the emotions involved as the author’s baby grows in another woman’s womb. When baby Max is born, the author notes “the mind-bending philosophical weirdness of it all: there is our baby—coming out of her body.”

A month later Kuczynski is sitting with her baby on her back porch in the Hamptons. She wonders whether she has, in a sense, cheated to have him. Here’s the offending section: “My husband came out and sat next to me. He took my hand. ‘You gave birth to our baby,’ he told me. ‘The doctors went in and took our baby out of you 10 months ago.’ He was casting back to the day the doctor removed my eggs. ‘It was like a C-section. They just went in and got him when he was very small.’”

Excuse me? Technically the husband is incorrect, in that what doctors removed from his wife was an egg that had not yet encountered a paternal sperm. But his poetic wisdom is solid: It was like a C-section bringing out a tiny baby. And if that’s the way it is, then maybe we shouldn’t be cavalier about killing small creatures for embryonic stem-cell research, especially when scientists have discovered that adult stem cells are as likely (maybe more so) to work well in healing some sicknesses. Maybe we shouldn’t think of a 10-week-old unborn child as merely a potentially human coagulation of cells. Maybe we shouldn’t have legal abortion of older coagulations.

Two positions on abortion are logically consistent. One states, with biblical objectivity, that the killing of small human beings, whether born or unborn, should be illegal. The other, as espoused by Princeton’s Peter Singer and others, is subjective: Small human beings dependent on others gain rights only as their needed protectors give them. This means that not only abortion but infanticide up to toddler stage should be legal (See “Blue state philosopher,” *WORLD*, Nov. 27, 2004).

This is not to say that Americans can’t come at least temporarily to an illogical middle position. Most Europeans have. In France, for example, abortion during the first 10 weeks is legal but discouraged; after that time, sharp restrictions set in. If the Supreme Court hadn’t in *Roe v. Wade* gone to the extreme of legalizing abortion through all nine months of pregnancy for any reason, we’d now have laws that allow for some abortion but do not freeze us into Court-dictated subjectivity.

Subjectivity: Right now killing an unborn child with the consent of the mother is legal in all 50 states—but in at least 35 states it is murder if a father or anyone else kills that child without the mother’s consent. In other words, our law is based on the idea that unborn children do not objectively have value unless they are recognized as children by their mothers. Do we really believe that?

Singer predicts that by the year 2040 “only a rump of hard-core, know-nothing religious fundamentalists will defend the view that every human life, from conception to death, is sacrosanct.” Maybe, but *The New York Times* must keep up its guard if we are to achieve that utopia. !

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Why Socialism is a Dirty Word

By Stephanie Block

Someone complained that the article “Catholics and Socialism” (*Pepper*, 12-08), declaring that “socialism is a dirty word,” failed to explain *why* that’s the case. The article demonstrated that those who authoritatively speak for the Catholic Church affirm socialism’s inherent evil but didn’t explain their reasons for such a position. Pro-socialists can argue that the Catholics are *wrong* - it’s a free country (for a while longer, anyway) - but they can’t argue (truthfully) that Catholicism supports them.

Mister Critic also questioned the distinction between Christian “communism” and Marxist socialism (or communism). After all, weren’t the early Christians “communists”? And, if it was good enough for them...

In a nutshell, Christian “communism” – placing all one’s material goods where they can be used in common by all “the brothers” – is the personal choice of an individual, freely embraced, in the context of total submission to God, the author of creation, for the sake of charity. Those elements make it a virtuous act.

Marxist Socialism, on the other hand, is an *imposed*, “universal” economic ideology/praxis. What that means is:

- Socialism is *coercive* (since it only works if everyone is playing in the game, those who don’t want to play must be forced - or, as the Chinese and Russians did, killed). Therefore, as socialism isn’t, in most cases, a personal choice, it isn’t, *per se*, an act of virtue. One isn’t virtuous for doing what one is compelled to do (though, through heroic suffering, there are always opportunities for acts of virtue).
- Socialism is *unjust* - there is no natural reward for hard work and no natural punishment for laziness (and I do recognize that the natural world can be unjust, too. That said, in the natural world, the injustice is “accidental”, that is, it isn’t essential to the system - hard work will usually pay off, if there isn’t a drought or catastrophic illness, etc. Socialism, however, builds injustice into the system, with tremendous psychological consequences. A man will generally strive harder when he thinks he has a chance of prospering. Similarly, as 20th century history proves, over and over, he will tend to produce only the bare minimum if he sees it doesn’t make a bit of difference, one way or the other.)
- Socialism is ordered toward the *materialistic* – the intention that all men in the State are to enjoy an equal share of its “goods”, whether they equally have worked for them or not. Christian “communism”, by contrast, is ordered to the spiritual, out of charitable motives. (The Christian “communist” is concerned that his brother is decently fed and clothed but isn’t obsessed that there’s an equal distribution of material wealth – in fact, general indifference to such matters is considered laudatory).
- Ideologically, socialism holds *Man as the arbiter of morals* (this is an *essential* component of socialism and not the quirk of individual socialist thinkers. Socialist thought holds that the “common good” isn’t discovered by the adherence of a society to God’s will but is determined by a consensus of society’s citizens).

Furthermore, as an *economic* system, designed to help citizens prosper, socialism simply doesn’t deliver. Economist Thomas Sowell writes:

The rhetoric of socialism may be inspiring, but its actual record is dismal. Countries which for centuries exported food have suddenly found themselves forced to import food to stave off starvation, after agriculture was socialized. This has happened all over the world, among people of every race. Anyone who saw the contrast between East Berlin and West Berlin, back in the days when half the city was controlled by the Communists, can have no doubts as to which system produces more economic benefits for ordinary people. Even though the people in both parts of the city were of the same race, culture and history, those living under the Communists were painfully poorer, in addition to having less freedom.

Much the same story could be told in Africa, where Ghana relied on socialistic programs and the Ivory Coast relied more on the marketplace, after both countries became independent back in the 1960s. Ghana

started off with all the advantages. Its per capita income was double that of the Ivory Coast. But, after a couple of decades under different economic systems, the bottom 20% of people in the Ivory Coast had higher incomes than 60% of the people in Ghana.

Economic inefficiency is by no means the worst aspect of socialistic government. Trying to reduce economic inequality by increasing political inequality, which is essentially what Marxism is all about, has cost the lives of millions of innocent people under Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and others. Politicians cannot be trusted with a monopoly of power over other people's lives. Thousands of years of history have demonstrated this again and again.

While my desires for a better life for ordinary people have not changed from the days of my youthful Marxism, experience has taught the bitter lesson that the way to get there is the opposite of what I once thought. [Sowell, From Marxism to the Market"]

So there you have some of the “whys” authoritative Catholic sources eschew socialism. Now, go wash out your mouth with soap. !

IMHO*

Welfare + abortion = serfdom

By Marie Therese Hall

It's time to take a serious look at the results of a welfare system that continues to grow, and the role of government, which we of late have been encouraged to embrace.

For over fifteen years, I worked as a volunteer at a pregnancy aide organization. I cannot tell you how many times I visited with a woman who was living with the father of one or more of her children. Neither had any intention of marrying as it meant the woman would lose her government check. Now, I am not saying that every woman *must* marry the man whose child she is carrying, but it is clear that men who are not caring for their “wives” or children find it easy to leave when difficulties arise. Our welfare system has warped what should be a sacred covenant into an invitation to indulge in irresponsible “booty calls”.

Why do liberals continue to spend our money on social programs...what are they thinking? I believe it is easy to compare their mentality to the southern plantation owners who didn't want to free the slaves. They protested they were taking care of their slaves and the slaves really wouldn't know how to take care of themselves on their own. After several generations of separating family members and sending children into the fields instead of school, they may have had half a case. The reason they wanted to “take care of the slaves”, however, wasn't out of benevolence but because it made them rich.

Well, liberals want to give lots of entitlements to the poor and destroy their families with the welfare system because the poor vote liberals into office, thereby insuring power and high salaries for those same liberals, not to mention all the jobs created for people who run the various welfare programs. If we are lucky, 17cents on the dollar actually goes to “help” a poor person. The majority goes to pay salaries to the “pencil pushers”. Liberals want to paint our view as lacking compassion when actually *theirs* is.

If government only handed out welfare checks, it is bad enough. The problem is that society never stops paying for the resulting chaos. Children raised in single parent families are less supervised, have more problems with drugs, delinquency, crime, alcoholism, and a *legacy* of illegitimacy. Generations after generations are raised without a decent male role model in the home. The ultimate disrespect for the poor comes in the government's endorsement and payment of unlimited abortions.

To date, we have destroyed a large percentage of two entire generations of people. These children may not all have become great scientists, doctors who cured cancer, or brilliant teachers, but we need to remember that God judges His children on a scale far different than ours. Jesus said that whatever we do unto the least, we do unto Him. It should come as no surprise: the insanity and greed that destroyed so many future workers and consumers is resulting in the current economic crisis.

We need to get back to the intention of our forefathers who understood that the less government was empowered to do, the greater was society's chance for freedom and prosperity.

We especially need to get over modern misinterpretation of the constitution's intention that we not *institute* a state religion. Catering to the special interest demands of atheists has greased the slide to nihilism and utter immoral depravity. !

** In my humble opinion...*

There's always a Mother-in-Law Joke!

By Marie P. Loehr

*I come into my garden . . . I eat my honey and my honeycomb, I drink my wine
and my milk. Eat, friends, and drink, drink deep, my dearest friends... - Cantic 5:1*

It's almost an aside in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It appears in the midst of a series of Christ's cures.

He is assembling the Twelve. In his peregrinations, he visits Peter's house. Once there, he discovers Peter's mother-in-law is in bed with a high fever. This is a spare statement. Yet it reveals several thought-provoking facts, and raises some intriguing questions.

Christ visits the home of Peter. The only other occasion we hear of him visiting the house of a disciple is a dinner at Matthew's house. [See Matthew 9:9-13.]

Although he often visits the house of Lazarus in Bethany for rest and refreshment, technically speaking, Martha, Mary and Lazarus are not apostles in the same sense as the Twelve. We do get some idea of the responsibilities of a hostess in the ordinary society of Christ's era--simply from Martha's complaint to Christ.

She is busy about the duties incumbent on her, serving Christ and whoever is with him. She asks him to send Mary into the kitchen to help her with the food preparation and clean-up. In this case, he chides Martha for her perhaps ostentatious attempts to set a fine table. But Mary, he says, has chosen the one thing needful, and it shall not be taken from her.

In this case, his visit to Peter's house, it appears to be casual, another occasion to develop these new relationships in the privacy of Peter's home.

Peter is married. There is no mention of the other apostles being married, although surely some of them were in the Palestine of Christ's era.

Peter's mother-in-law lives with the family, almost certainly a widow, supported and cared for by Peter, his wife, and his work.

Peter probably had children, but these are not mentioned--and we may assume they are grown with families of their own, when Christ appears on the scene.

Peter's wife is not mentioned at all. Is she deceased? Not according to some interpretations of Paul 1 Cor. 9 in his remarks about women travelling with the apostles to minister to them.

Why doesn't Peter's wife serve her husband's guests? They must rely on his sick mother-in-law to serve them food and drink.

According to Scripture, Peter is originally from Bethsaida. In his *Dictionary of the Bible*, McKenzie says Peter owns two homes, his family home in Bethsaida, and one in Capharnaum. His mother-in-law is home -- sick in bed--in Capharnaum. What does this little vignette, almost an aside lost among the other cures presented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, have to do with God's sense of humor, and its expression in Christ's words and work?

Even the pagans had a history of mother-in-law jokes. Allied to that tradition is the later tradition of the Jewish mother. The Jewish mother-in-law combines the two into one formidable woman, the power behind the patriarchal throne. Mothers-in-law remain concerned for the well-being of their sons and daughters. Mothers-in-law may be possessive and refuse to let go of their children, married or not. They may thus be interfering, disruptive, and exasperating. Mothers-in-law may often believe and demand that biological relationship supersedes spiritual relationship. When they become intrusive and divisive, they can destroy their children's marriages, unless curbed.

Is such behavior inevitable?!

When we trace such women through the Old Testament, we find Sarah, Rebecca's mother-in-law after Rebecca married Isaac. Rebecca is Rachel's mother-in-law once Jacob finally wins Rachel's hand. These were strong women who knew their own minds, who minded the affairs of their husbands and sons with care and counsel--sometimes peremptory, sometimes cunning, but always surrendered in the end to God and his exigence.

Indeed, our comedy notions of "mother-in-law" portray her as interfering and intrusive, forceful and fearsome. These women of the Old Testament could be so. Yet in the "Book of Ruth" we encounter Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law.

Naomi is such a good woman, so much the antithesis of that parody image that Ruth refuses to go home to her own mother and biological family, when her husband dies. She follows Naomi back to Palestine, and cares for her. Naomi in turn gives Ruth good and subtle advice on how to win the attention of Boaz, and gain his affection.

Naomi's advice is so good that Ruth becomes Boaz' bride. Their union produces the lineage that leads to David, psalmist and king, then finally to Christ.

This turns the stereotype of mother-in-law on its head. Mark 1:29ff. says:

On leaving the synagogue, [Jesus] went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with a fever, and they told him about her straightaway. He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her, and she began to wait on them.

Several commentaries note that malarial fevers were common around Capernaum, due to the water of the lake, and marshes around the lake. They also note that people who have suffered this sort of fever are generally weak and shaky for a few days after initial recovery. The effectiveness of Christ's cure for the woman's fever is emphasized dramatically by her not only getting out of bed, but immediately waiting on the men.

Daniel-Rops says in his *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* that a typical meal would have been some sort of bread - usually round barley loaves that had been leavened - honey, olive oil, olives themselves, lentils, onions, and perhaps fish. We see the ingredients of fish and bread in the miraculous meals that fed large groups of people, an anticipation of the Eucharist. We see similar ingredients at the meal--picnic even?--on the shore, after the Resurrection, by which Christ shows he is truly risen, no mere ghost, by eating fish grilled over the fire--with bread. Some accounts also include honey.

Peter's mother-in-law may have served them at a table, or they may have eaten using one of the storage chests that furnished every home. As ubiquitous as our plastic bins today, such chests were storage for clothes, for bedding, for tools, for food in other smaller containers. It's equally likely that the men gathered on the roof. The flat roofs of the usual home were used to eat, to relax, to discuss in the light of day and the cool of evening. Often a booth or tabernacle, similar to the Succoth booth, was a semi-permanent fixture on the roof, for obvious reasons in a warm climate, despite the storms that could blow up on the lake in full fury.

If the gathering and the meal were on the roof, as is likely, the cure and the woman's response is even more emphatic, or dramatic.

She would have had to bring everything up the outside stairs and assemble it there. But we presume she did this with joy and astonishment, rather than stereotypical grumbling and sarcastic asides.

We may consider how a modern comedian might play it. Here is one of Peter's dependents, and what is more useless and dangling than a mother-in-law in modern eyes? A burden to boot, since she's sick and must be waited upon! We might expect sarcasm from Peter, and apologies to Christ for this intrusion on the work at hand, and the excitement of male bonding and conversation, a new direction in Peter's life.

We might expect tart rejoinders and put-downs from the dispirited woman herself, a burden, a uselessness, wallowing in self-pity--and self-righteousness, as is so often the case. But none of that happens--although Christ certainly has some pithy and witty exchanges with both women and Pharisees in the Gospels!

In this lies the irony and incongruity that highlight God's sense of humor, and the way it's expressed through his Word, Christ. Part of that humor is exactly in the Otherness of God. His ways are not our ways. His ways are folly to the wise, i.e., those wise in the ways of the world. His ways are a scandal to the Jews and a stumbling block to the Greeks. This in itself is a declaration of the essence of humor.

Scandal evokes sarcasm and parody, sharp slips of the tongue, in fallen, however redeemed, humans. Stumbling blocks end in pratfalls, the banana peel, and slips of the foot. Humor makes its presence felt in such unexpected, and thus surprising, reversals. Such is the bouleversement, the overturning or reversal of reality or expectation. Reality does a somersault, startling us out of our set ways, our ego fixations, our mental ruts. There are several subtle reversals of expectation here, beyond the obvious stated above.

Christ says he has come to serve, not to be served. Thus he heals a woman of a fever, serving her need. She rises from her bed, and she serves him. He who feeds the people with bread and fish, taking pity on their hunger, is fed with bread and fish by this woman who takes pity on his hunger. Some would say that this is self-serving on Christ's part!

In fact, Christ and Peter's mother-in-law minister to one another in a little dance of mutual service and the pleasure that brings.

We also see the reality of practical humility here. Peter's humility is seen in his invitation to Christ to come to his home. Christ's humility is seen in his acceptance of that invitation.

There is certainly both humility and humor in his bending down to take this woman's hand, and lift her to health--as if he's a suitor inviting her to a dance. Her humility is seen in her acceptance of his hand, her certain

delight in the effects of his loving touch, and her alacrity in showing him practical hospitality. Mark's presentation of this is more detailed than the others, but all convey her alacrity in the brevity between Christ's service to her, and her service to him.

It is also worth contemplating another reality related to mothers-in-law, and humility, and some very subtle humor--a hint of gentle, generous teasing on God's part.

Mary Theotokos is the Mother of the Son of God in his humanity. The Son comes to us as Bridegroom, reiterating in the New Testament the mystery of the bond of union between Adonai and his Israel in the Old. The Bridegroom seeks his Bride in the Church, and lays down his life for his Bride and Church. This illuminates marriage in all its relationships. Paul says it is a great mystery.

We know that Christ gives us his Mother through John at the Crucifixion. He says to Mary and John, "Woman, behold thy son," and then "Son, behold thy mother." But as the mother of the Bridegroom, she is already and always the mother-in-law of the Bride. Like Naomi to Ruth, she is both mother-in-law and mother to the Church, and to us. She is the fullness of humility as it was meant to be in humanity. She is then a true model for mothers-in-law, as well as mothers. And Peter's mother-in-law, standing in for her daughter as hostess, reminds us of Mary's unique and singular role in God's plan.

God's majesty is in his simplicity. God's authority is in his service. God's perfection is in his self-emptying.

God is entirely humility--Father, Son, and Spirit. There is a procession of kenosis or self-emptying in the Trinity. Each is poured out for the other, and then for Creation. Where there is humility, there is humor, however wry and dry. Sometimes it is gentle, as in this case. Sometimes it is sharp. Often the joke is on us! But it always rests on reversal, irony, incongruity--and word play. And who more given to word play than the Word himself, and his Wisdom, who played before time and ages in the heart of the Father, like David dancing with delight before the Ark?! !

Around the World

The "Pill" is a Catastrophe The Austrian chemist, Carl Djerassi, who helped invent synthetic progestogen Norethisterone, the contraceptive pill, says it has led to a "demographic catastrophe." It has brought "devastating ecological effects" by releasing into the environment "tons of hormones" that had impaired male fertility. It has also created population imbalance, eliminating the connection between sexuality and reproduction. Djerassi has found that Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical condemning artificial contraception has proved "prophetic."

Most egregious of all, the "pill" is an anti-ovulatory that often produces an anti-implantation effect; that is, abortifacient effect, expelling the small human person.

"The Obama Magisterium", posted on February 9, 2009 by the incorrigible Diogenes.

"Benedict is unteachable in matters of birth control and abortion..."

So says Hans Küng the Swiss theologian who has made it clear over the years that he is ready to embrace the authority of the Church magisterium as long as the magisterium agrees with him. And if Küng did consider the Pope "teachable," who should be doing the teaching? You don't really have to ask.

Since the problem is the Pope's lack of theological sophistication, Küng presumably wants a better theologian on Peter's throne, right? Not exactly. Suddenly showing all the theological erudition of a Valley Girl on her fourth latte, he suggests that an excellent replacement would be Barack Obama. And now his fancy takes flight, leaving reality miles behind:

For Küng, Benedict should act as Obama has done, declaring a crisis, identifying the problems, proclaiming a vision of hope, revitalizing ecumenism, gathering competent colleagues of either gender, and using the power of his executive office to issue decrees (unhindered by such institutions as a democratically-elected Congress or a Supreme Court.)

Obviously Küng has a - shall we say impressionistic? - grasp of American political affairs. He may not realize that Obama is not attacking the economic crisis alone, and actually does need to enlist the help of Congress to pass legislation. But never mind that. Let's just take note of his advice. Five or ten years from now, we can come back and ask ourselves which leader was more successful: Pope Benedict, in reviving ecumenism; or President Obama, in reviving the economy. The smart money is on the Pope.

By the way, Hans, Obama has issued one executive order that had an immediate impact. It involved "matters of birth control and abortion." He's teachable, you betcha.

Around the Nation

One Down...The *Catholic Campaign for Human Development* (CCHD), a national collection that annually raises money to support community organizing, has ended all funding to the *Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now* (ACORN) because of embezzlement, instances of voter registration fraud, and political partisanship. CCHD grant criteria and guidelines prohibit partisan activity and funding of any group that engages in activities contrary to Catholic moral teaching, whether or not those activities are funded by CCHD.

Its high time for the CCHD to stop funding the other Alinskyian community organizing networks, as well—e.g. Gamaliel, the *Industrial Areas Foundation*, PICO, DART...

US Supreme Court upheld the rights of the *Center for Bio-Ethical Reform* to display graphic abortion photos in California, overturning a July 2008, California ruling that pro-life activists could not show graphic signs of aborted babies near a middle school. The case is significant because it establishes a precedent for the lawful display of abortion images in public.

Church discipline over pro-abortion politicians Ongoing discussion of the Church's responsibility to discipline pro-abortion politicians continues. When Raymond L. Burke was the bishop of La Crosse, WI (Bishop Burke has rapidly ascended from there to bishop of St. Louis and then to prefect of the *Apostolic Signatura*, the Vatican's highest court), he wrote to local politicians with consistent records of pro-abortion voting. "As a faithful member of the Catholic Church, you have an obligation to fulfill the duties of your office with regard not only to the laws of the state, but also with regard to the moral law. You have failed to restrict the evil of abortion when the opportunity presented itself....I call upon you to consider the consequences for your own spiritual well-being, as well as the scandal you risk by leading others into serious sin." More detailed information was provided and the possibility of a meeting with the bishop was offered. Those who refused to change their positions were told not to receive the sacraments "because they would not be Catholics in good standing" — they were "self-excommunicated." The *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* formed a task force on Catholics in Public Life, hoping to develop guidelines for how bishops should respond to Catholic politicians who defy Church teaching. A number of bishops have acted independently to correct the politicians under their care but others are waiting for the USCCB to make a pronouncement—which has been long in coming.

Cardinal Mahony under federal investigation over abusive priests The US attorney in Los Angeles has launched a federal grand jury investigation into Cardinal Roger M. Mahony in connection with his response to the molestation of children by priests in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, according to law enforcement sources. Allegations against Cardinal Mahony for hiding the sexual misconduct of priests, transferring them to other parishes rather than removing them from ministry around children, is nothing new. The archdiocese is paying \$660 million to 508 people.

The Bishops of Colorado have issued a statement of concern over President Obama's reversal of the Mexico City Policy, which banned non-governmental organizations that perform and promote elective abortions from receiving federal tax subsidies for overseas family planning programs. Promoting abortion as a method of "family planning" violates the beliefs and ethical norms of many foreign cultures, they argued.

Overturning the Mexico City Policy, however, was one of the first acts of the new president.

Bishop Raymond L. Burke, prefect of the *Apostolic Signatura*, has partially blamed a USCCB document for the abandonment of pro-life teachings by voting Catholics and the election of the "most pro-abortion president" in US history. The document, "*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*," he said, "led to confusion" for saying that, under certain circumstances, a Catholic could in good conscience vote for a candidate who supports abortion because of "other grave reasons," as long as they do not intend to support that pro-abortion position. Although "there were a greater number of bishops who spoke up very clearly and firmly ... there was also a number who did not." The bishops' document represents "a kind of false thinking, that says, 'there's the evil of taking an innocent and defenseless human life but there are other evils and they're worthy of equal consideration.' But they're not. The economic situation, or opposition to the war in Iraq, or whatever it may be, those things don't rise to the same level as something that is always and everywhere evil, namely the killing of innocent and defenseless human life."

Around New Mexico

Pope Benedict XVI has named Fr Jim Wall vicar for clergy in the diocese of Phoenix, as bishop of Gallup, succeeding Bishop Donald Pelotte SSS. Since Pelotte's resignation, Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmsted has acted as apostolic administrator of New Mexico's mission diocese.

Father Wall was born on a Navajo Reservation in Ganado, part of the Diocese of Gallup. He attended Arizona State University and St John's Seminary, Camarillo, California, and was ordained in 1998... at age 44, this makes him the nation's youngest diocesan bishop. During his 11 years as a priest, he has served as a parish priest and as the Vocation Director for the Diocese of Phoenix, as the Vicar of Clergy for the Diocese of Phoenix, and as Director of the Mt. Claret Retreat Center in Phoenix.

Patrick Madrid's website carries a comment from Father Bud Pelletier, a friend of the bishop elect's. Father writes, "Bishop Elect Wall is warm, funny, outgoing, athletic, and one of the best 'listeners' I know. He is truly a man of the Church, faithful to the Magisterium, dedicated to the reverent celebration of Mass, and truly a priest for the People of God. I cannot say enough positive things about him, and I know the Diocese of Gallup will be led by one of the best bishops in the world."

And a Phoenix seminarian, asked how he found his path, told the diocesan *Catholic Sun* that he was "just another vocation caught in the crosshairs of Fr. Jim Wall."

Keeping it Straight....

For New Mexicans who are attempting to follow the ever-increasing plethora of legislative action in the state, the following websites offer email alerts and ongoing analysis from a "traditional" perspective.

- www.tvacnm.com - Traditional Values Action Committee. You can sign up at this website for information about proposed state and federal legislation impacting the sanctity of life, marriage and family.
- www.issuesandvalues.com - Provides resources on specific bills and issue-based background papers.
- www.defendinglife.org - Project Defending Life is a pro-life ministry of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and provides resources and activities to defend human life, including legislative updates.
- <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/legislatorsearch.aspx> - The government website to follow specific pieces of legislation and the legislators behind them.
- www.lospequenos.org - Provides resource material about "progressive" attempts to undermine Church teaching.

Around the Archdiocese

Prince of Peace Catholic Community in Albuquerque has a video projection system to the right of the altar and lectern, evidently to enliven Church readings and the Sunday homily. An Old Testament reading, for example, that referenced the Ark of the Covenant, produced the overhead projection of a speculative Ark. At Christmas, parishioners say, a video was shown of the birth of a baby, so they "would know the pain Mary had to go through."

Catholic teaching, however, is that Our Lady is "ever virgin:"

The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. [Catechism of the Catholic Church]

If anyone does not, according to the holy Fathers, confess truly and properly that holy Mary, ever virgin and immaculate, is Mother of God, since in this latter age she conceived in true reality without human seed from the Holy Spirit, God the Word Himself, who before the ages was begotten of God the Father, and gave birth to Him without injury, her virginity remaining equally inviolate after the birth, let him be condemned. [Dogmatic statement of the First Lateran Council]

Besides Mary's perpetual virginity—that is, before, during, and after giving birth to Jesus—she was free of original sin by her Immaculate Conception and therefore presumably free of the sufferings of child-bearing pains, a consequence of original sin. Although not *dogmatically* held, Mary's freedom from pain during childbirth is a long-standing tradition in both the Eastern and Western churches.

Special Sarcastic Report on the CAFE (Catholic Adult Fellowship & Education) held at Risen Savior Catholic Church in Albuquerque.

By Alan Peter

The topic was annulments. Father Jerry Plotkowski made it clear during his presentation that the annulment comes *after* the divorce. This is an effort by the Church, led by the Archbishop, to return Catholics to the bosom of the Church, and to the Sacraments. First the marriage, then the divorce, then the annulment, then the second marriage. Or third - my ex-sister-in-law is on her third marriage - all witnessed in a Catholic Church. Maybe she needs more sacramental prep? But, again, just for the record, annulment doesn't lead to divorce; it follows it.

So now, you're whining about how easy it is to get an annulment. Well, that's not true either. You have to present a petition, the Tribunal reviews it, contacts the witnesses you suggest, notifies the *responder* (the other party in the marriage), has the "Defender of the Bond" review the petition, and then sends everything to another Tribunal (usually Phoenix, in our case) for review, before granting the annulment. Estimated waiting time is 18 months, although Father tells us that newer procedures and experienced personnel are reducing that time. "Very few" of the approximately 200 annulments that are processed every year don't go through, Father reassured us. Nationwide, the "success rate" is 90%.

"Wait, wait," you say, "what about the Defender of the Bond? Isn't marriage a Sacrament?"

In our Archdiocese, three priests serve as Defender of the Bond - Father Dennis Garcia, Father Steve Schultz, and Father Adam Ortega. Certainly these men aren't going to let *sissy stuff* get through. Perhaps you understand *stuff* incorrectly. Although Father tells us that "Rome doesn't like it," the main reason a petition is processed is for "lack of discretion." What's *that*? I mean, as Father assured us during his presentation, the Catholic Church presumes all marriages are valid, even those performed by a civil magistrate in a Las Vegas wedding chapel. Yes, but annulment asks the question: at the time of consent, *was* the marriage valid? "Of *course*, it was," you reply. See, you assume too much. Was one person too young or immature and too little understanding the purpose of marriage? Was one person pressured into getting married? Did one person misunderstand the concepts *perpetual* and *fidelity*? Go to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe website (<http://www.archdiocesesantafe.org/Offices/Tribunal/OnlineDoc.html>), and download the forms. Read them.

Then look in the mirror and ask yourself "was I 100% ready for marriage?" If you pass that test, then peer across the kitchen table and try to guess if your spouse was also 100% ready. You see, it only takes one person to invalidate a marriage. As one Canon lawyer said, "there isn't a bond we can't break."

About now you might be experiencing some stress. If you can handle more stress, do an Internet search on Sheila Rauch Kennedy. In 1991, she was served with divorce papers by her husband Congressman Joseph Kennedy, responded by saying "nuts" (or words to that effect), and refused to cooperate. She became her own *Defender of the Bond*. Remember, this is Boston, her husband's last name is Kennedy ... but she actually had her annulment declared *invalid* - in 2005 (though she wasn't informed until 2007, but that's another story). This took a lot of effort on her part, and extracted a heavy toll, part of which you can read about in her book *Shattered Faith*.

Attendees at the presentation, with the same misunderstandings as you, asked about receiving Communion or dating/being married while divorced and not having an annulment...yet. Father said, "strictly speaking - no, but talk to your Pastor." He said that he can "put you in touch with good Pastors" who *might* be able to *move things along* and *ease your mind* as regards the Sacraments or a second marriage. This part of the presentation was more *implicit* than *explicit*, so you should probably call Father at the Tribunal because if I have even hinted at something that is against Church teaching, that would be calumny.

If you are skeptical, and I would tend to agree with you, go to your bookshelf and pull out your favorite *Book of Saints*. List all the divorced and remarried saints. I'm struggling here and could use your help developing such a list. Father said during the latter part of his presentation, "God is bigger than Church law." If he was referring to the time [John 5:1-9] when Our Lord healed the man who had been waiting by the pool at Bethesda and had no one to carry him into the water when the Angel troubled the water, then that is true. Did Our Lord oppose the law? Read Matthew 8:1-4 where Our Lord cures the leper. What does He say afterward? Go, present yourself to the High Priest, and offer the gift prescribed in the Law. Follow the law, even the duty to the High Priest who will soon clamor for my Crucifixion. Did Christ have to follow these laws? He asked that very question in regards to the temple tax [Mtw 17:23-26]. Rather than cause scandal, he told Peter to go fishing and pay the tax for both of them. Finally, during the Passion, Christ responded to Caiaphas' questions. However, when interrogated by Herod, who was an illegitimate King, Christ did not answer [Luke 23:9]. When brought before Pilate, again Christ answered. He explained to Pilate that "thou would have no power at all over me were it not given thee from above" [John 19:11]. Biblical examples of Christ following the law and lawgivers.

And what *is* the law? *And some Pharisees coming up asked him, testing him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" But he answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted us to write a notice of dismissal and to put her away." But Jesus said to them, "By reason of the hardness of your heart he wrote that commandment. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. 'For this*

cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." And in the house, his disciples again asked him concerning this. And he said to them, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if the wife puts away her husband, and marries another, she commits adultery." [Mark 10:2-12] !

“Not bound by dogma, ritual, or tradition”

Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr plans swing through California in February

Reprinted from the *California Catholic Daily*, January 23, 2009

Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr, known for his special ‘initiation rites’ for men, liturgical ‘innovations,’ use of the enneagram and teachings on eco-spirituality, will be making stops in Coronado and San Francisco before heading to the *Los Angeles Religious Education Congress* in late February, where he has become a regular fixture at the annual event.

Fr. Rohr is scheduled to be in Coronado on Feb. 20 and 21, where he will conduct a conference at the Coronado Community Church, which describes itself as “a community-oriented, non-denominational Christian church” that is “not bound by dogma, ritual, or tradition.”

“Rohr is a Franciscan priest who has garnered widespread acclaim for his inspirational work, writings and preaching on scripture, integration of action and contemplation, community building, and eco-spirituality,” said an announcement by the non-denominational church. “He has carried his stirring ecumenical messages on spirituality throughout the United States, Europe, and other international venues.”

The announcement continued, “His teachings and inspirational conferences include adult Christianity, male spirituality, scripture as liberation and other themes. His written work includes well-known titles such as *Everything Belongs*; *Hope Against Darkness*; *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*; *From Wild Men to Wise Men: Reflections on Male Spirituality*, and his latest book, *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality*.

Fr. Rohr, 66, is the founder of the *Center for Action and Contemplation* in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which offers retreats that aim to provide something of a rite of initiation for men. The Center, however, is not committed to a specifically Catholic initiation ethos. Its web site notes that the Center’s philosophy includes the belief “in a universal message of love and faith that transcends the boundaries of race, nation, culture, gender, economics/class, politics, sexual orientation and religious differences.”

Fr. Rohr’s Feb. 20-21 conference in Coronado will cover two themes: “Exploring Spirituality – What’s it all about?” on Feb. 20, and “Things Hidden – Unleashing the Spirituality of Scripture Today” on Feb. 21.

On Feb. 22, Fr. Rohr is scheduled to discuss the topic “From Action to Contemplation in the 21st Century” at St. Ignatius Church at the Jesuit University of San Francisco. The conference is sponsored by *Contemplative Outreach* of San Francisco and the USF Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Following the Coronado and San Francisco appearances, Fr. Rohr will head to the 2009 *Los Angeles Religious Education Conference*, scheduled at the Anaheim Convention Center from Feb. 26 through March 1. The conference is sponsored by the Office of Religious Education of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

“Visit us at the CAC booth, # 310,” says the *Center for Action and Contemplation* web site. Fr. Rohr is scheduled to offer two workshops at the conference: “The Emerging Church” and “The Coming of the Cosmic Christ.” Rohr’s teachings have been questioned by some within the Church, who point to his affiliation with the dissident group *Call to Action*, his position on the morality of homosexuality, and his use of the enneagram.

At the 2007 *Los Angeles Religious Education Congress*, Fr. Rohr celebrated a “general liturgy” in a ballroom at the Anaheim Convention Center. The processional hymn was “Christ Be Our Light,” accompanied by bongo drums. Liturgical dancers carried large, flowing banners down each of the aisles in the ballroom. Reaching the front of the ballroom, the dancers stood along either side of the podium, twirling the giant banners.

Fr. Rohr made no sign of the cross as he began the liturgy, and the offertory procession began with two women waving banners, followed by two liturgical dancers carrying a white tablecloth, followed by others who carried the hosts in large wicker breadbaskets and the wine in glass and plastic pitchers.

Fr. Rohr also changed some of the prayers of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. For example, opening the preface, he prayed, “Father and Mother God...” He prefaced the *Our Father* by saying, “...and now, knowing we are more one than we are many, though we come from different places and races, we all share the same Father-Mother God.” !

March Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting

March 20, 2009

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

Mondays and Tuesdays at Noon

Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel

&

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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every Saturday at 2:00 pm till
3:00 pm.