

# *Los Pequeños Pepper*

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 Pope's "Green" Message:

*Not Standard Environmentalism*

By Phil Lawler

After Pope Benedict XVI delivered his "State of the World" address to the Vatican diplomatic corps on January 11, your local newspaper probably carried a headline like the one atop the story in the *New York Times*: "Pope Denounces Failure to Forge New Climate Treaty." The AP story began:

Pope Benedict XVI denounced the failure of world leaders to agree to a new climate change treaty in Copenhagen last month, saying Monday that world peace depends on safeguarding God's creation.

BBC carried a very similar headline: "Pope Benedict XVI lambasts Copenhagen failure." And *Time* magazine, also running with the AP coverage, followed suit with its headline text: "Pope Denounces Lack of New Climate Treaty."

You might have concluded, from the press coverage, that the Holy Father's speech was devoted mostly to the Copenhagen conference. But that conclusion would have been wrong. In his full 3,000-word address, Pope Benedict spent barely 100 words on the climate-change summit. It was a part of his message, but only a small part. However, it was the part that the secular media wanted to hear.

Benedict XVI, the mass media tell us, is a "green Pope." That description is undeniably accurate, in the sense that this Pontiff has frequently spoken about the need to care for the environment. Twice in quick succession—in his message for the World Day of Peace on January 11, and now in his address to the diplomatic corps just 10 days later—he has made that argument forcefully to representatives of the world's political leadership. But the "green" message preached by Pope Benedict is very different from mainstream environmentalism. Unfortunately most secular reporters, deaf to the spiritual content of the Pope's message, miss the distinction.

Reporters always simplify stories. They are regularly called upon to sum up complicated ideas in a few paragraphs—in the case of headline writers, in a few words—and their work is much easier if they can classify an idea quickly, place an argument in a convenient pigeonhole, and pronounce the story done. Thus the Pope is an environmentalist, and environmentalists were disappointed by the results of the Copenhagen summit, therefore the Pope was disappointed by that summit.

Again, that message is accurate as far as it goes. The Pope *did* express disappointment about the Copenhagen results. But that was only a very small part of his message to the diplomatic corps.

I know, from my own personal experience, how often the media oversimplify a speaker's message. Ten years ago I was running for the US Senate (coincidentally, for the same seat that is now the focus of a hotly contested special election). I was running as a pro-life candidate, and so most press coverage of my campaign stressed the abortion issue. But it was frustrating to deliver speeches that address many other issues—nuclear weapons, the income tax, gun control, immigration—and then read press accounts that mentioned nothing but my opposition to legal abortion. Those accounts were accurate, insofar as I never gave a stump speech without including the pro-life argument. But I was appalled to realize that reporters were not really listening to my arguments, but only waiting for the "money quote" that would fit into the story they already planned to write.

So it was with the Pope's "State of the World" address. When the Holy Father opened with the remark that a "self-centered and materialistic way of thinking" today "endangers creation," most reporters were quite ready to classify his speech as a standard environmentalist argument. When he mentioned the Copenhagen summit, they had their "money quote," and the story was all but complete.

Most of the world's people—including most of the world's Catholics—learned about the Pope's talk not by reading the actual text, or even the official Vatican summary, but by hearing the reports that filtered through the secular news media. Secular reporters tend to read all events in secular terms—in political terms—and so they gravitated toward a politicized reading of the Pope's words.

To complicate matters, the Vatican's public-relations efforts are notoriously inept, unable to focus reporters' attention on the most important themes of papal teaching. Furthermore, the Vatican officials most likely to speak with reporters are the ones most inclined to put their own political "spin" on the Pope's words. The net result is coverage that glosses over the most critical aspects of the Pope's message.

What was the essential thrust of that message? Pope Benedict made his argument for environmental stewardship in the context of an argument about the dignity of human life and human nature. "It is in man's respect for himself that his sense of responsibility for creation is shown," he told the diplomatic corps. "As Saint Thomas

Aquinas has taught, man represents all that is most noble in the universe.” Now, that message is the polar opposite of the extreme environmentalist line that views mankind as a threat to the earth. Drawing on a Judeo-Christian tradition that traces back to Genesis, the Pope said that God set man up as steward over creation, to fill the earth and subdue it. The Christian is naturally an environmentalist, because he wants to fulfill God’s plan.

Pope Benedict went further. Following God’s plan means respecting natural law, he said; it means honoring the lessons that are inscribed in human nature. So he explained that a reverence for life, and a determination to support marriage and the family, are also signs of respect for God’s creation. A few reporters caught that message, but then, predictably enough, expressed the Pope’s argument in crudely political terms. A *Wall Street Journal* account written with ill-concealed sarcasm, began: “Pope Benedict linked the Catholic Church’s opposition to gay marriage to concern about the environment, suggesting that laws undermining ‘the differences between the sexes’ were threats to creation.”

“Creatures differ from one another and can be protected, or endangered in different ways, as we know from daily experience. One such attack comes from laws or proposals, which, in the name of fighting discrimination, strike at the biological basis of the difference between the sexes,” he said. “I am thinking, for example, of certain countries in Europe or North and South America.” The headline on a Reuters story simplified still further: “Pope says gay marriage threat to creation.”

Again, those accounts are not inaccurate; the Pope did make those arguments. But by presenting the Pope’s point in its barest simplified form—virtually as a slogan—the reports gave readers the grossly misleading impression that the Holy Father was delivering a political speech. He was not. Pope Benedict was addressing a political audience—the ambassadors representing the world’s governments to the Holy See—but he was delivering a spiritual message. I wrote above that the Pope began with an expression of concern for welfare of creation. That is not entirely accurate. The first words of the papal address were about “celebration of the birth of the Incarnate Word;” the Pontiff invited all the world to join in that celebration.

In the annual “State of the World” address, a Pope traditionally tours the world’s trouble spots, offering observations about all the challenges that face political leaders. Pope Benedict’s address this year was no exception. He did not confine himself to the topics of environment and gay marriage. He also spoke about Darfur and the Congo; about peace in the Middle East and the drug traffic in Latin America; about nuclear weaponry and global hunger; about secularism in Europe and natural disasters in Asia His thoughts on all those topics, regrettably, did not fit into the story line that most reporters chose.

There were a few exceptions. In Italy, Sandro Magister of *L’Espresso* saw the Pope’s address as an endorsement of three causes: an ecology of nature, but above all of man; a positive secularity; and religious freedom. Magister’s summary was not perfect, but it did accurately reflect the breadth and depth of the Pope’s address, in a way that no American secular reporter matched.

Because the Pope’s address came through to the general public in such grossly oversimplified forms, many readers have expressed discontent about what the Pontiff said—or, perhaps, what they *think* he said. One recalls the words of Bishop Fulton Sheen: “There are not more than 100 people in the world who truly hate the Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they perceive to be the Catholic Church.”

Yes, Pope Benedict did express dismay about the paltry results of the Copenhagen summit. But the Pope’s speech cannot be reduced to that one passage. (In fact, the Pope’s views on climate change should be a matter of only passing interest, even to loyal Catholics. His teaching authority extends to matters of faith and morals, not to questions of scientific fact.) The Pontiff is not committing the teaching authority of the Catholic Church to a political cause.

Near the conclusion of his address to the diplomatic corps, Pope Benedict offered his own summary of the essential message: “There is so much suffering in our world, and human selfishness continues in many ways to harm creation,” he said. “For this reason, the yearning for salvation which affects all creation is that much more intense and present in the hearts of all men and women, believers and non-believers alike.” He also offered a solution—one that goes far above and beyond any political platform. The key, the Pope said, is to respect the nature of man: to recognize and embrace God’s plan for the human race. He concluded: “May the light and strength of Jesus help us to respect human ecology, in the knowledge that natural ecology will likewise benefit, since the book of nature is one and indivisible.” ∞

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# Augustine and Evolution

*II. Everything Old Is New Again*

By Marie P. Loehr

*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork ... - Ps. 19:1*

*Where were you when I made the world? ... laid the cornerstone of the world? - Job 38: 4, 6*

There are many ramifications to the evolution debate. As noted, there is much to define and sort out. Before engaging in debate, we need to define terms, and sort out our own confusions. Too many Catholics accept atheistic straw men, and atheists' distorted presentation of Catholic teaching and practice, as if such misrepresentations were actual fact. Too many Catholics don't stop to question atheist assertions, much less materialistic or secularist Darwinian myths. The first thing Catholics need to do is to educate themselves in the various forms of scientific evolutionary theory, and its terminology, as well as its counterfeit philosophical distortions. Then they need to learn proper orthodox Catholic teaching on Genesis and Creation, as well as the nature of true science and reason, in relation to faith and doctrine.

In *Evolution for Believers*, Fr. Stanley Jaki, O.S.B. opens his remarks by noting that St. Paul tells us in Romans 12:11 that our service of God should be "reasoned service." Jaki then discusses St. Augustine in the same vein.

For him [Augustine] whatever the human reason could establish about any material thing was a supreme standard. So of Genesis, if the Bible itself appeared to contradict conclusions which reason safely reached, the Bible was to be reinterpreted. [Jaki, *Evolution for Believers*, p. 2]

In the "Notes" to Book Four of *The Literal Meaning of Genesis I* the editor states:

According to Augustine, in addition to the eternal reasons or causes which are in the Word of God as the divine exemplars of the works He creates, there are also causal reasons implanted by God in the created world, accounting for the generation and growth of the living beings that appear throughout the ages." [Op. cit., pp. 252-253, note 67]

A number of commentators speak of Augustine as anticipating modern scientific evolution (as opposed to Darwinism or the ideology of evolutionism) by talking of "seeds" sown by God throughout Creation that would bear fruit over the millennia. Gregory of Nyssa is also cited on some websites as having a similar concept of God's work in Creation.

If we understand evolution in its strictest sense as a process of growth, change, development, maturation, then the analogy of a seed is not so far off the mark. A seed looks nothing like its mature product, whether we look at an oak tree or corn stalk or rose flower. Plant seeds are generally miniscule, hard, often dark. They may be any shape at all—flat or globular, ovoid or circular, speckled or monochrome. The acorn is a distinctive shape, with its round body, pointed end, rough cap, and its size not suggesting the mighty oak it will become.

When we put a seed into water, or into dirt, if all the conditions are right, the seed splits open. Thread-like hairs appear at one end, pale white and fine as cobweb in many cases. A single delicate tendril appears at the other end with a single tiny leaf, the cotyledon. Sometimes the first shoot sprouts two of these leaves. Now we begin to see the basic parts of the final plant—root, stem or trunk, and foliage. But this is still a far cry from its finished growth. The mature plant does not reflect its genesis at all, until it flowers and fruits and drops new seeds into the ground. Who would connect an acorn with the oak tree, without education and training? In some form, we know every house begins with an architectural blueprint designating floor plan, construction instructions, wiring, plumbing, and such. Seeds, whether human, animal, or plant, contain blueprints for the finished product. In plants, animals or humans we call these blueprints DNA.

Augustine may not have known beans about DNA, but he understood how the laws of nature, material and spiritual, work together to produce certain effects. Those effects in turn cause other effects. The "great chain of being" is a great chain of cause-and-effect. Science can follow the material connections, the physical causes and

their effects. We, like Augustine, rely on science to examine a Creation that is reasonable, ordered, intelligible. It is so, objectively in itself, and subjectively for us, because there is a rational, logical, intelligent God who is not only truth, but also love. There is no conflict between this God, and an evolving Creation, a Creation created in totality in God's *Nunc stans* or eternal NOW, yet unfolding in our *nunc fluens*, the successive moments of space-time, flowing from the first moment of Creation to its end in Parousia.

Part of the problem of Creation for human understanding is that we live in that flow of time and its nanoseconds, seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia . . . We are like amphibians living in water, *aka* matter and its motion, on the one hand, while we also reach out to what C.S. Lewis symbolizes by "the Fixed Lands" of *Perelandra*. Our human being seeks the still point of totality, Being itself, God himself, one and three.

If we really think about it, we realize that Creation never has ended. Fr. Jaki describes the first book of Genesis as a priestly teaching about the Sabbath rest, rather than some sort of primitive science text. But we might equally suggest that the seventh day, when God rests, well-satisfied with the work of his Word, is in fact Parousia itself.

Augustine would suggest that God rests from all his works "in the sense that He does not create any new kinds of creatures that were not in the original creation either **actually or potentially**: and at the same time He is working by reason of the fact that He governs the world He has made, according to the words of Christ, who says: *My Father works even until now, and I work as well.* (John 5:17) . . . [op.cit., p. 254, n. 68]

Augustine does not understand Creation as simply a creation *ex nihilo* [out of nothing] and *totum simul* [all at once]. Although he examines *Genesis* 1-3 with a very careful eye, it is also with a genuine concern to avoid confusing religious interpretation with science, or using science as the definitive word to explicate God's word in Genesis. Even in his era, he was concerned that educated pagans, especially those up-to-date in the scientific knowledge of their eras, not be turned off God and the Church by credulous Christians misinterpreting Scripture and ignorant of basic or complex scientific knowledge. This was a concern in Augustine's era, and it remains a serious problem in our own age.

Fr. Jaki sums up this short examination of Augustine and evolution with his usual good sense and intellectual force, "The quantitative analysis of chromosomes [in DNA] represents a quantitatively decisive support for holding that all life forms are so many links in a single process, called evolution."

Many difficulties may remain, but Newman's dictum that a thousand difficulties do not make a doubt is valid not only in theology but in science as well. And no one should appreciate this more than the believer."

Humans are always eager or anxious to resolve all theories and/or mysteries at once. Every generation believes itself the last word in both theology and science. But we know almost nothing, even when we believe we know much, even when we see ourselves as the cutting edge of religious and scientific knowledge.

Augustine understood this particular problem well. He worked to counter it with faith AND reason, logic AND common sense, knowledge AND its ever-necessary pursuit of greater accuracy, truth AND love. Do we understand these things? Do we come even within shouting distance of his breadth and depth of vision in examining and explicating Scripture **and** science?

He would have no problem dealing with evolution--whether as the Church understands and accepts it, or in its corrupted materialist and Darwinist ideological distortions. He would sift it as finely and accurately as the farmer separates wheat from chaff. We can do no less.↵

# Growing Scandal at the USCCB

By Stephanie Block

It's a shame to pick on just one individual when there are so many other deserving souls at the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (USCCB) but John Carr, who for years served as Secretary for its *Department of Social Development and World Peace* and now heads its *Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development* (same game; different name) has certainly been a major influence in the place.

Now, if one had no further knowledge than the above, one might reasonably expect someone serving an Episcopal conference of the Catholic Church under a title of "justice" and "human development" would be a champion of the most vulnerable and deeply oppressed, in short, of Catholic social justice teachings.

Instead, we discover that Mr. Carr has, while serving the USCCB, also chaired the board of the *Center for Community Change*, not to mention other leadership positions with this progressive, pro-abortion political group. During this time, the USCCB awarded \$150,000 to the *Center for Community Change* through a 2001 *Catholic Campaign for Human Development* (CCHD) grant, it promotes the group on its website, and it has exchanged speakers at various events. Furthermore, at least 31 other CCHD grantees have worked with the *Center*, giving the *Center's* political work unofficial but very substantial support from a powerful Catholic body.

## *Center for Community Change*

One must then ask what the *Center's* political work is. A lay Catholic organization, the *Bellarmino Veritas Ministry* ([www.bellarmineministries.com](http://www.bellarmineministries.com)) has recently produced a disturbing report that, in particular, examines instances of the *Center's* overt, pro-abortion position. For instance, the *Center's* Executive Director Deepak Barghava has stated quite openly on the *Center's* website that it's fighting for "lifting restrictions on women's access to health services:"

Even as we continue to fight for affordability, for a public option, for greater efforts on racial disparities, for lifting restrictions on women's access to health services and immigrant inclusion, we believe it is important for all Americans to take stock of the truly important changes that the current reform will achieve.

This position is expressed in the Introduction to a special project of the *Center*, its *Movement Vision Project*:

The challenge posed by the lessons from the right is not just for individual, single-issue movements to articulate a shared vision but for those visions to add up to something even larger: a broader, multi-issue progressive movement. If related single-issue organizations working toward the same long-term goals would be more powerful, imagine the power of even more organizations, working across issues for the same ends. Certainly the issues are intersectional – foreign policy is inextricably intertwined with economic development policy; abortion rights and reproductive freedom intersect with criminal justice. Our solutions must intersect as well. [As quoted in "Momentum Briefing," a publication of the Tides Foundation]

The *Center's* resource library recommends an activists' guide to promoting abortion rights, *Reproductive Justice Briefing Book: A Primer on Reproductive Justice and Social Change* by SisterSong. A *Center* summary for the book says:

Need a one-stop shop for information on reproductive justice? Well, SisterSong has got the right tool for you. This series of articles documents the struggle for reproductive justice and bridges this struggle with other issues within the social justice movement such as immigration and queer rights. Additionally, the series touches upon the future of the women's movement in relation to reproductive justice.

These and other findings have led Michael Hichborn, Director of Media Relations for the pro-life organization, *American Life League*, to write:

I have discovered ... full-blown Catholic cooperation with a pro-abortion and pro-homosexual organiza-

tion at the highest levels of the CCHD. While John Carr and those he works with in the CCHD may profess to be pro-life, and we aren't questioning this, the fact of the matter is that whatever justification may be offered for this kind of cooperation is nothing short of the flaccid excuses pro-abortion "Catholics" in public office toss out when they profess to be "personally pro-life, but ..."

The *Center's* progressive political activism, particularly its support of abortion, is a bigger problem than one might think at first glance. As an organization, it "strengthens, connects and mobilizes grassroots groups to enhance their leadership, voice and power." [[www.communitychange.org/who-we-are](http://www.communitychange.org/who-we-are)] These grassroots groups include Alinskyian organizing networks, deeply ensconced in Catholic parishes around the country.

For example, together with *Gamaliel* – one of these Alinskyian organizing networks – the *Center* co-sponsored a highly political and unabashedly partisan conference called "Realizing the Promise: a Forum on Community, Faith and Democracy."

Other Alinskyian organizing networks – PICO and *Interfaith Worker Justice* – have worked with the *Gamaliel* and the *Center* to push health care reform, despite its abortion components.

And the *Industrial Areas Foundation*, the premier Alinskyian organizing network founded by Saul Alinsky himself in 1940, has listed the *Center for Community Change* as an affiliate. [[www.industrialareasfoundation.org/locate\\_e\\_mw.html](http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/locate_e_mw.html)]; this is a cached page accessed on 2-1-10. On that date, the site itself was under construction and unavailable.]

## Nothing New

Carr's progressive networking is hardly new. For example, in 2001, the annual *Catholic Social Justice Ministry Gathering* focused on George Bush's *Faith-based and Community Initiative* and included speakers John Sweeney, then-president of the AFL-CIO union and a Policy Advisor for the *United States Catholic Conference* (now incorporated into the USCCB), and Ernesto Cortes, the Southwest Regional Director of the *Industrial Areas Foundation*.

Sweeney said that he and John Carr agreed that the Catholic Church and the labor movement needed to be more collaborative. The right to private property, said Sweeney, must be reconciled by the understanding "that private property is a social mortgage." Ernesto Cortes, for his part, appealed for organizing to keep the market "in its place."

The twin cry of Sweeney and Cortes for greater support of their respective brands of organizing, together with Krammer's reminder that Catholic Charities had established a precedent for church/state cooperation, created optimistic anticipation among Conference participants. [Stephanie Block, "Faith-Based and Community Initiative: DiIulio Addresses the 2001 Catholic Social Ministry Conference," *The Wanderer*, 3-15-01.]

Going back even further, Carr appears among the signatories of the "Declaration of the 'Mission to Washington,' Joint Appeal by Religion and Science for the Environment (now called the *National Religious Partnership for the Environment - NRPE*)," Washington, D.C. May 12, 1992. The *Appeal* stated, among other things, that:

...[T]he human community grows by a quarter of a million people every day, mostly in the poorest nations and communities. That this crisis was brought about in part through inadvertence does not excuse us....We signers of this declaration - leaders in religion and science - call upon our government to change national policy so that the United States will begin to ease, not continue to increase, the burdens on our biosphere and their effect upon the planet's people....We believe there is a need for concerted efforts to stabilize world population by humane, responsible, and voluntary means consistent with our differing values.

Catholic social teaching has never considered human beings a burden or called for "stabilization" of their numbers.

The *Bellarmino Veritas Ministry* concludes its report about the *Center for Community Change*, saying:

This report, in conjunction with the previous research provided by American Life League and reported by LifeSiteNews, should put to rest any doubts that the *Center for Community Change* should not be consid-

ered an ally of the Catholic Church. While it may seem that the interests of the Church and the CCC intersect on several important issues such as health-care and immigration reform, a cursory examination shows that Church social teaching and the CCC's guiding principles are, in fact, two separate roads leading to fundamentally different destinations.

One might paraphrase this to apply to John Carr, as well: *while it may seem that the interests of the Church and Mr. Carr intersect on several important issues ...a cursory examination shows that Church social teaching and Mr. Carr's guiding principles are, in fact, two separate roads leading to fundamentally different destinations.* ∞

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Since writing this article, there have been further developments in the USCCB scandal. Its annual *Catholic Social Ministry Gathering* in Washington DC (February 7-10, 2010) included a number of problematic presenters, including:

- Fr. Thomas Reese, who the Vatican forced from his position as editor of *America Magazine* for its unremittingly non-Catholic articles.
- Diana Hayes, professor of systematic theology at Georgetown University and a speaker for the dissident "Catholic" organization, *Call to Action*, promoting same-sex marriage, women's ordination, and liberation theology.
- John Carr and Paul Booth, who together with his wife Heather, are founders of the Midwest Academy a training institute for progressive activists. The Booths served as host committee members for the pro-abortion *National Organization for Women's Intrepid Awards Gala*. Additionally, Heather Booth helped organize "JANE," in 1965, to obtain illegal abortions for women. As for Paul Booth, he is now the executive assistant to the president of the *American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees*, a union that endorsed the 2004 Washington DC pro-abortion March for Freedom of Choice.

A few days later, another story broke revealing that the USCCB is a dues paying member of *The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights* (LCCHR). Founded in 1950 as a legislative lobbyist on behalf of its members, LCCHR materials insist those members "must share LCCHR's principles and purposes." These principles evidently include abortion "rights" and same-sex "marriage," and "family planning," as evidenced by its activities – such as opposing the 2004 Federal Marriage Amendment, defining marriage as between a man and a woman, and supporting the ratification of the United Nations' pro-abortion *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.

LCCHR supports *Planned Parenthood*, saying it "delivers vital reproductive health care, sex education, and information to millions of women, men, and young people worldwide," and argued for the *Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances* (FACE) Act. LCCHR has lobbied against the confirmation of pro-life and anti same-sex marriage judges and justices. ∞

*More on Rohr...*

## Miami Archdiocese again Features Prominent Gay-Activist Priest

By Eric Giunta

January 23, 2010 ([LifeSiteNews.com](http://LifeSiteNews.com)) - The Miami Archdiocese's St. Thomas University is once again sponsoring spiritual exercises by a gay-activist priest, who is known for encouraging his followers to immerse themselves in pagan rituals.

Fr. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan, is scheduled to deliver a "Scripture and Spirituality" reflection at the university's Chapel of St Anthony. The evening of reflection is noted approvingly in the Archdiocese's latest "pastoral bulletin," dated January 15.

Fr. Rohr is known for his dissent from the teachings of the Church, despite his being a Franciscan monk.

He is on record admitting that he does not adhere to Catholic teaching on contraception, the ordination of women to the priesthood, and homosexuality. In answer to one question about homosexuality, Fr. Rohr answered, "I think God would ask of the homosexual relationship exactly what God asks of the heterosexual relationship: truth, faithfulness, long-suffering, and the continuing forgiveness of the other."

Additionally, Fr. Rohr has faced criticism due to his advocacy of radical feminist critique of Judeo-Christian "patriarchy" (including the Bible's references to God in masculine terms), as well as his encouragement of the use of various pagan rituals in devotions he leads (e.g., the enneagram). He is also known for conducting spiritual retreats where men practice ritual nudism.

Fr. Richard Rohr serves as director for the *Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC)*, which he founded in 1987. The Center serves as a hotbed for radical Christian dissent. It is a frequent sponsor and constituent of *Call to Action*, an umbrella sect known for its "pseudo-Catholicism." In 1997, CAC endorsed the 4th National Symposium on "A National Dialogue on Lesbian/Gay Issues and Catholicism," sponsored by *New Ways Ministry*.

Both the University and the Archdiocese declined to comment when contacted by LifeSiteNews.com (LSN).

This is not the first time the Miami Archdiocese has hosted and promoted Fr. Rohr's ministrations. In June 2006, another of the Archdiocese's "pastoral bulletins" advertised that Fr. Rohr would be the keynote speaker at a convocation of Catholic preachers.

As LSN has documented previously, the Miami Archdiocese is not new to sponsoring such events. In February 2009, the Miami Gay Men's Chorus held their season premier concert at a Miami Beach Catholic church. Earlier that same month, Saint Thomas University's School of Theology Ministry featured a guest-lecture by "ecospiritualist" Sr. Miriam Therese MacGillis, a Dominican nun who promotes goddess-worship. In 2007, LSN reported Barry University's granting a theology award to another notorious goddess-worshipping feminist Dominican nun, Sr. Elizabeth Johnson.

Two of the Archdiocese's parishes, Saint Anthony and Saint Maurice, are listed as "Gay-Friendly" in a directory published by the Conference of Catholic Lesbians. Both of the Archdiocese's universities, Barry and St Thomas are also categorized as "Gay-Friendly" by the Conference.☞

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USA

# Controlling Population Growth

*Is this where Catholic environmental concerns should be aiming?*

By Stephanie Block

Janet Smith, a philosopher and educator who has spoken extensively about *Humanae Vitae*, the Catholic encyclical from 1968 that discusses the moral problems of artificial birth control (“artificial” birth control refers to chemical and barrier methods rather than abstinence from sexual intercourse), gives a hilarious scenario between a couple who are committed to natural family planning.

They have a recurring conversation every month. It may happen on that weekend when the mother-in-law takes the children and they’re looking forward to a nice weekend together. A little quiet lunch, maybe some shopping, a movie, a romantic dinner, and a relaxed evening with no children, no stress... just a nice night. But the woman gets up in the morning and says, “Darling, I’m afraid I’ve entered the fertile phase.” So, there’s disappointment. The weekend is not going to be everything they thought it would be.

They ask themselves, “Why are we doing this? Why are we abstaining? Why did we decide it’s not a good idea to have a baby?”

And the husband might say, “Well, you know, the reason we decided not to have a baby right now is you said you’re too tired. You’ve got too many little ones or you’ve got a job now and you’re really fatigued and you really can’t imagine having another child. Are you still tired?”

She might say, “Well, no. As a matter of fact, I’m not too tired right now. The younger ones are a little bit older and you know I think I may be able to handle another baby. Let’s take a risk. Let’s really enjoy this day in the way we planned.”

Or, she might say, “Of course I’m still tired. You never help. You said you’d give the kids a bath. You don’t give them a bath. You said you’d let me have Saturday afternoons free. I’ve never had a Saturday afternoon free. Of course I’m still tired.”

To which, he’ll say, of course, “I’ll start bathing them tomorrow, dear.”

Or, she might say, “The reason we’re not having a child right now is you said our financial burdens are too great. You can’t imagine supporting the family we already have, let alone any more. Are you still financially burdened?”

To which he might say, “Well, no, I’m not. We’d just refinanced the house and I was kind-of panicking. I’m getting a promotion soon. Things are OK. Let’s take a risk.”

Or, he might say, “Of course we’re still financially burdened. What world are *you* living in? Your friend, Jane, gets a fence around the house; you have to have a fence around the house. Your friend, Jane, gets a new kitchen; you need a new kitchen. Your friend, Jane, gets new dishes; you need new dishes.”

To which, she’ll say, of course, “I don’t need those new dishes.”

The important thing, says Janet Smith, is that they’re having this conversation and it’s a conversation that’s focused around important matters, which is why they’re having babies and why they are not having babies and how their life is going together and are they sharing the burdens or not. Couples using contraception tell her that they can go for a very long time without having that conversation.

Implicit to this conversation is the fact that there are serious and licit reasons – wanting new dishes probably doesn’t fall into that category but being overwhelmed and exhausted very well might – for even the most generous and life-affirming spouses to avoid having babies at certain points.

Also implicit to this conversation is that there are licit ways of avoiding pregnancy, namely the identification of periods of fertility in a woman’s cycle followed by abstinence from sexual intercourse during those times.

What’s missing from this discussion is that there is no simple, effective method for spouses to identify these periods of fertility. Women’s bodies are sensitive. Mental or physical stresses (and whose life is free of these?) can suddenly alter fertility cycles – not to mention the variables caused after giving birth or during lactation. And some women just have quirky, idiosyncratic systems.

While there *are* methods that can achieve, with almost 100% accuracy, identification of fertility, they require training, charting, and a lot of attention.

## CycleBeads

Entering into this conversation is something called the *Standard Days Method* of family planning. Older Catholics remember using “the rhythm method” – sardonically dubbed “Vatican Roulette” because of all the resultant “rhythm” babies. This is something along those lines, although proponents of the method claim otherwise.

The inventors of the *Standard Days Method*, who interestingly enough hie from Georgetown University Institute for Reproductive Health, have “determined that women who usually have menstrual cycles between 26 and 32 days long are potentially fertile – or able to get pregnant – on days 8 through 19 of their cycles. So the *Standard Days Method* identifies a fixed set of days in each menstrual cycle as the days when a woman can get pregnant if she has unprotected intercourse. If the woman doesn’t want to get pregnant, she and her partner avoid unprotected intercourse on days 8 through 19 of her cycle.” Women using the method correctly found that “it was more than 95% effective. That is, out of 100 women using the method for 1 year, fewer than 5 would get pregnant.”

To help a woman monitor her cycle, she is encouraged to wear a bracelet, “a string of 32 color-coded beads, with each bead representing a day of a woman’s menstrual cycle. They have a black rubber ring that the woman moves one bead each day in the direction of the arrow. When the woman starts her period, she puts the ring on the first bead, which is red. She continues moving the ring one bead each day of her cycle. When the ring is on a dark bead, she is on a day in her cycle when she can have intercourse without getting pregnant. But when she is on a day represented by the white beads, she may be fertile and could get pregnant...” [[www.cyclebeads.com](http://www.cyclebeads.com) ]

Simple enough and certainly, from the perspective of bureaucrats trying to manage the demographics of given areas, an effective way to curb population growth.

## However...

The presumption here is that none of the five individual women (and their families) in every group of 100 who are using the *Standard Days Method* of family planning will be gravely affected by the situation. Yet, if the reason for avoiding pregnancy is serious enough to justify turning to a family planning method in the first place, is this really a suitable method to use?

Or, considered another way, if these 100 couples are comfortable knowing that four or five of them (statistically speaking) will get pregnant while using the method, do they really have serious enough reasons for avoiding pregnancy in the first place?

Or, does anyone still consider such questions anymore? ↪

# Old Media Misses the Mark As Youngsters March

By Colin Mason

My wife has a sort of faux-award that she occasionally bestows, called the “Golden Eyeball Award.” It is presented to people who, for some reason or another, inexplicably miss seeing something that is sitting directly in front of them.

If anyone deserves this award this year, it is some members of our American media community, who can consistently be counted on to miss the glaringly obvious when it comes to the annual March for Life. Of course, ignoring the largest continuing protest in American history has become the status quo for most news sources, but this year many seemed to go out of their way to get things wrong.

Take, for instance, Rick Sanchez of CNN (who, to his credit, actually reported on the March). Sanchez was inexplicably unsure as to who was more numerous at the March: pro-lifers or pro-choicers. In a YouTube clip since made infamous by bloggers, Sanchez squints ceremoniously at his monitor while insisting that, “as you might imagine, there are both sides being represented today.” As images of thousands of pro-life protesters stream across the screen right in front of him, he reassuring his viewers that “we’re going to keep an eye on these for you because we want to make sure we report it fairly and squarely” (in the end, he deduces that there seem to be more pro-lifers. Good work, Sherlock).

As someone who attended the March personally, I know from experience that pro-choice protesters are rare to nonexistent. While sources disagree on the number of pro-life attendees, we all agree that there are more of us than whatever handful of pro-choice protesters bother to show up to counter us.

The media also seemed obsessed this year with proving that the pro-life movement was aging ungracefully, and that it was not attracting young people, especially women, to its ranks. According to Krista Gesaman of Newsweek, there were few young women to be found at the March, since most of them are more inclined to stay home and blog.

“Where are the young, vibrant women supporting their pro-life or pro-choice positions?” she asks. “Likely, they’re at home.” She goes on to quote a DC police department official as stating that “a majority of the participants are in their 60s and were the original pioneers either for or against the case.”

My advice to Krista? Get out of your office and out onto the streets of DC. The truth may surprise you.

For her part, our reliably antagonistic foe Cristina Page goes a step further. In a piece picked up from the Huffington Post she says that the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* is “yet another day to observe the pro-life movement’s riveting mid-life crisis.” Incredibly, she says that the pro-life establishment’s “relentless allegiance to ‘ideals’” has led to a “newly emergent, progressive pro-lifer,” who is, somehow, “a far more threatening development to the traditional pro-life establishment than anything NARAL or Planned Parenthood could have dreamed up.” This emerging pro-lifer, according to Page, has far more in common with the pro-abortion left than he/she has with the traditional pro-life establishment. Morals and values, she insists, are a game for the oldsters. And the oldsters are dying out.

Not only are these assumptions deeply insulting, they just aren’t true. Those who actually attend the March (like me, and countless other bloggers and news writers), have all noticed the same trend: the March is getting younger every year.

Not only that, but it is growing in size, and its ethnic diversity is increasing. In fact, the pro-life movement as a whole has all the appearances of a movement that is gaining momentum, not losing it. Our leaders also seem to be having smashing success in communicating their values to the younger generation, because the younger generation is turning out in droves.

And why shouldn’t this movement speak to the young? Today’s youth are the survivors, the ones who made it past the slaughter. They are the lucky ones. For people like Cristina Page, born while abortion was illegal, the issue is about women’s rights and reproductive health. For the young, it is about life and death.

So long as there is a movement that advocates the killing of its young, it will inevitably lose in the long run. The pro-life effort is solid because it is self-sustaining—while the pro-choice movement is not. When people like Cristina Page accuse us of being old or out-of-touch, this speaks more to their own jaundiced ideologies than anything else. When a movement has no future and no hope, it’s hard to see past the despair and the darkness.

The pro-choice movement is akin to the dwarfs in C.S. Lewis’s *The Last Battle*—so attached to their own cynicism that they absolutely refuse to be “taken in.” Even by the facts. ☞

*Colin Mason is the Director of Media Production at Population Research Institute. This article is reprinted with permission.*