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Priests Sound Off on Octuplet Controversy

By Matt C. Abbott

I sought comments from several reputable and orthodox Catholic priests on the controversy surrounding the woman who recently gave birth to octuplets.

Father Peter West:

The case of Nadya Suleman giving birth to eight children after having already given birth to six children conceived through *in vitro* fertilization has raised many questions surrounding the whole process. Some ask if so many babies should have been implanted; others wonder if some should have been 'selectively reduced' — a euphemism for the violence of abortion. But few are asking the question, is *in vitro* fertilization ethical in the first place? This case provides us with a teachable moment whereby faithful Catholics can instruct others about the sacredness of human life from its very beginning, and God's wonderful plan for marriage, sex and family life.

The primary reason the Catholic Church opposes *in vitro* fertilization is that a child has a right to come into the world as a result of an act of love between his or her father and mother, not as a result of a laboratory process. Thousands of embryos have been frozen and deprived of their mother's care. Many don't survive the freezing and thawing. Others are discarded or subject to further abuse and experimentation. Often more embryos are implanted than are intended to be brought to term, so they are 'selectively reduced' — a euphemism for killing. But these reasons are secondary to the fact that a child enters the world not as a result of an act of love, but through a third party in a laboratory process.

Until the 1930's all Christian churches were united in opposing contraception. The widespread use of contraception led to a utilitarian view of the body, increasing promiscuity and far more, not less, abortion, and now euthanasia. God is the author of sex. Sex is something beautiful and good when we respect God's plan for it. God intended sex to be an expression of total self-giving love and open to the transmission of life in the context of a marriage between a husband and wife who have pledged themselves to each other for life.

Contraception and sterilization are immoral because the procreative (life-giving) dimension of the conjugal act is deliberately separated from the unitive (love-giving) dimension of the conjugal act, so that actions by which God may choose to give life are deliberately rendered infertile. *In vitro* fertilization disassociates the love-giving dimension from the life-giving dimension.

In vitro fertilization is the flip side of contraception. Contraception is sex without babies. *In vitro* fertilization is babies without sex. While the Church is often accused of being anti-sex, we teach that the actions by which a new human being comes into the world are a reflection of Trinitarian love. What we oppose is the degradation of sex. Karl Marx said that sex was no more significant than drinking a glass of wine — a mere satisfaction of a bodily appetite. The Church sees sex as an act of love by which God, if he chooses, can bring forth a new human life made in his image and likeness.

But whatever way a child comes into the world, his life must be respected and protected. Pope John Paul II asks in *Evangelium Vitae*: 'How can you have a human individual without having a human person?' Science shows us that at the moment of fertilization a new human life has begun. This is not a potential human being, but a human being with great potential. As we grow from that point to adulthood, there is no change of nature or gradation of value. Life must be respected at every stage of development.

For couples suffering from fertility problems, there is hope. Thomas W. Hilgers, M.D., is a pro-life obstetrician and gynecologist and director of the Pope Paul VI Institute. Dr. Hilgers has developed a system called NaProTechnology to help couples manage their fertility while respecting God's moral law. NaProTechnology works *with* — not *contrary to* — nature. Dr. Hilgers says that too many doctors today skip over the underlying problems causing infertility and immediately recommend *in vitro* fertilization.

Behind every 'no' [to *in vitro* fertilization] is a great 'yes' to the dignity of the human person, respect for innocent human life, the sanctity of marriage, and reverence for the love-giving actions by which new human beings enter this world.

Father Phillip De Vous:

This case illustrates the perfect intersection of the perverse incentives offered by the welfare state, taken together with medical technology and medical practitioners unchecked by the guidance offered by sound moral norms, coupled to the personal irresponsibility and immaturity of the mother. To borrow from columnist Diane West, this is the perfect cultural anecdote to illustrate what 'The Death of the Grownup' looks like — culturally, personally and professionally. Every sane citizen of this republic of ours has much to be worried about.

Father Joe Mack:

I think both Pope Paul VI and the future Benedict XVI warned us of this type of behavior when the Church was blessed with *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 and the *Instruction on Respect for Human Life...* in 1987. We've come full circle from losing respect for human reproduction as rightfully belonging to marriage, as warned by Pope Paul VI, to Cardinal Ratzinger's admonition that children are not a right/object of ownership, but a gift: the 'supreme gift' of marriage. This very confused young woman is at the very least a marker for the grave state of affairs our contraceptive, free-love society has brought down upon us. God help those children.

Father Richard Perozich:

Pope John Paul II in his 1999 Angelus address on the Feast of the Holy Family said that 'a family is created when a man and a woman give themselves to each other in marriage and are open to the gift of children. The union between *the mother* and the child conceived and the irreplaceable role of the *father* require that the child be wel-

came into a family which, as far as possible, will guarantee the presence of both parents. The specific contribution made by each one to the family and through it, to society, deserves the highest esteem.'

The way of conceiving a child is in *humanae modo*, that is, normal sexual relations between a man and a woman. Fertility treatments may include *in vivo* fertilization, but not *in vitro* fertilization.

The gadflies of our society speak of sexual rights and reproductive rights. Holy Church speaks of sexual responsibility and reproductive responsibilities. Single people and those in varying domestic partnerships might be able to care for a child through providing material needs and a degree of affection, but they cannot replace the family of a husband joined by God to his wife with all the divine graces.

The medical community's guidelines for implanting embryos for *in vitro* fertilization do not reflect a real sexual or reproductive responsibility, but appear to have grown up in a false understanding of rights of adults who do not fully take into account the welfare of the child.

This case shows the irresponsibility of citizens, scientists, doctors, and legislators who are trapped in the language of rights and who are awed by science and thus use it without a responsible ethic or morality. Who is irresponsible? A woman who willfully conceives without a husband, a doctor who uses science because he can in order to create new life outside the womb, legislators who promote embryonic research and techniques, and justices who invent rights for adults to play with nature, with life, and with children without considering the nature of marriage, family, and the needs of a child in its biological, psychological, emotional, ethical, moral, social and spiritual development to be responsible to the Creator.

May Catholics reject the idea of rights and hold fast to their responsibility to the Creator, to one another, to children, in order to form a culture of life. No society will ever be just as long as it is one of rights without responsibility to God, to self, and to one another.

Father Tom Euteneuer:

Every one of these children is a precious and unique gift of God who deserves life, and they are absolutely not to be blamed or destroyed for what seems like some truly awful decision making by their mother. But why should we be surprised by this? The deeply problematic situation into which these beautiful children are born is the logical result of a common mindset that treats the beauty of human fertility as just another thing to be controlled by science for selfish reasons, as *in vitro* fertilization is designed to do. We are reminded time and time again that the more we try to 'get beyond' the traditional family, the less we are able to make the moral case against severely irresponsible behavior such as this. We must pray for the children and the mother, and that our Lord brings about the best possible resolution to this very troublesome situation for all concerned.

Father James Farfaglia:

Clearly we can see the terrible problem with *in vitro* fertilization. We must never separate the procreative and the unitive dimensions of the conjugal act. When man tries to play God, the results are disastrous. *In vitro* fertilization needs to be made illegal. We need to follow God's laws and respect nature.]

Reprinted with permission. Matt C. Abbott is a Catholic columnist with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication, Media and Theatre from Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, and an Associate in Applied Science degree in Business Management from Triton College in River Grove, Ill. He has worked in the right-to-life movement and is a published writer focused on Catholic and social issues. He can be reached at mattcabott@gmail.com

Albuquerque, New Mexico video...

Abortions Earmarked by Race

An investigation of Planned Parenthood's money

By Lila Rose

Over the summer, *The Advocate* investigated the financial dealings of *Planned Parenthood* and made some shocking discoveries about the clinic-owning “nonprofit.” We obtained the information by having an actor call clinics across the country and pose as a donor. The actor who called, *The Advocate's* advisor, communicated to them a very racist agenda—the one that Margaret Sanger, *Planned Parenthood's* founder, had envisioned. He then asked to donate money specifically for the abortions of African-American babies in order to “lower the number of blacks in America.”

Despite his bigoted requests, no *Planned Parenthood* employee (or director of development, in one case) declined the tainted money. Some even asked to speak with other employees to get permission. In the first day of calling seven clinics, not a single *Planned Parenthood* representative expressed outrage or concern at the racism behind donations specifically “to reduce the number of blacks.” In fact, some even went as far as agreeing with the anti-black agenda.

Planned Parenthood's 800 clinics receive more than 200 million dollars of taxpayer money annually. It is unacceptable for a nonprofit to accept donations that target specific races. Unfortunately, *The Advocate's* investigation discovered this is official policy. The calls unearthed a *Planned Parenthood* program that poses a threat to minority communities. Many centers set up “women in need” or “justice” funds designating money specifically for minority abortions. With more than 79% of clinics in minority neighborhoods, and more than 1400 black abortions daily, these programs are doing precisely what our actor asked them to do. *Planned Parenthood* is (intentionally or not) exterminating the black community.

UCLA has allied with *Planned Parenthood*, hosting their speakers and events each year. The university even offers a special *Planned Parenthood* internship through the public affairs major and regularly sends students to their clinic in Santa Monica. Our administration should immediately cut these ties with *Planned Parenthood*, and any other organization which espouses a racist agenda.

Transcripts from Ohio and Idaho calls to *Planned Parenthood Development* offices:

Ohio PP Representative, Lisa Hutton, administrative assistant

Ohio donor: There's definitely way too many black people in Ohio, so I am just trying to do my part.

PP Rep: OK, whatever.

Ohio donor: Well, blacks especially need abortions, so that's what I'm trying to do.

PP Rep: For whatever reason, we'll accept the money.

Ohio donor: OK. Great, thank you.

Idaho PP Representative, Autumn Kersey, director of development

Idaho donor: The abortion—I can give money specifically for a black baby, that would be the purpose?

PP Rep: Absolutely. If you wanted to designate that your gift be used to help an African-American woman in need, then we would certainly make sure that the gift was earmarked for that purpose.

Idaho donor: Great, because I really faced trouble with affirmative action, and I don't want my kids to be disadvantaged against black kids. I just had a baby; I want to put it in his name.

PP Rep: Yes, absolutely.

Idaho donor: And we don't, you know we just think, the less black kids out there the better.

PP Rep: Understandable, understandable.

Idaho donor: Right. I want to protect my son, so he can get into college

PP Rep: Alright. Excuse my hesitation, this is the first time I've had a donor call and make this kind of request, so I'm excited, and want to make sure I don't leave anything out.

To watch the New Mexico video, *Planned Parenthood Racism Investigation*, visit:

liveactionfilms.org/liveactionfilms/racism/index.htm

Guidelines for Evaluating Reiki as Alternative Therapy

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Doctrine

1. From time to time questions have been raised about various alternative therapies that are often available in the United States. Bishops are sometimes asked, “What is the Church’s position on such therapies?” The USCCB Committee on Doctrine has prepared this resource in order to assist bishops in their responses.

I. HEALING BY DIVINE GRACE AND HEALING BY NATURAL POWERS

2. The Church recognizes two kinds of healing: healing by divine grace and healing that utilizes the powers of nature. As for the first, we can point to the ministry of Christ, who performed many physical healings and who commissioned his disciples to carry on that work. In fidelity to this commission, from the time of the Apostles the Church has interceded on behalf of the sick through the invocation of the name of the Lord Jesus, asking for healing through the power of the Holy Spirit, whether in the form of the sacramental laying on of hands and anointing with oil or of simple prayers for healing, which often include an appeal to the saints for their aid. As for the second, the Church has never considered a plea for divine healing, which comes as a gift from God, to exclude recourse to natural means of healing through the practice of medicine.(1) Alongside her sacrament of healing and various prayers for healing, the Church has a long history of caring for the sick through the use of natural means. The most obvious sign of this is the great number of Catholic hospitals that are found throughout our country.

3. The two kinds of healing are not mutually exclusive. Because it is possible to be healed by divine power does not mean that we should not use natural means at our disposal. It is not our decision whether or not God will heal someone by supernatural means. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out, the Holy Spirit sometimes gives to certain human beings “a special charism of healing so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord.”(2) This power of healing is not at human disposal, however, for “even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses.”(3) Recourse to natural means of healing therefore remains entirely appropriate, as these are at human disposal. In fact, Christian charity demands that we not neglect natural means of healing people who are ill.

II. REIKI AND HEALING

A) The Origins and Basic Characteristics of Reiki

4. Reiki is a technique of healing that was invented in Japan in the late 1800s by Mikao Usui, who was studying Buddhist texts.(4) According to Reiki teaching, illness is caused by some kind of disruption or imbalance in one’s “life energy.” A Reiki practitioner effects healing by placing his or her hands in certain positions on the patient’s body in order to facilitate the flow of Reiki, the “universal life energy,” from the Reiki practitioner to the patient. There are numerous designated hand positions for addressing different problems. Reiki proponents assert that the practitioner is not the source of the healing energy, but merely a channel for it.(5) To become a Reiki practitioner, one must receive an “initiation” or “attunement” from a Reiki Master. This ceremony makes one “attuned” to the “universal life energy” and enables one to serve as a conduit for it. There are said to be three different levels of attunement (some teach that there are four). At the higher levels, one can allegedly channel Reiki energy and effect healings at a distance, without physical contact.

B) Reiki as a Natural Means of Healing

5. Although Reiki proponents seem to agree that Reiki does not represent a religion of its own, but a technique that may be utilized by people from many religious traditions, it does have several aspects of a religion. Reiki is frequently described as a “spiritual” kind of healing as opposed to the common medical procedures of healing using physical means. Much of the literature on Reiki is filled with references to God, the Goddess, the “divine healing power,” and the “divine mind.” The life force energy is described as being directed by God, the “Higher Intelligence,” or the “divine consciousness.” Likewise, the various “attunements” which the Reiki practitioner receives

from a Reiki Master are accomplished through “sacred ceremonies” that involve the manifestation and contemplation of certain “sacred symbols” (which have traditionally been kept secret by Reiki Masters). Furthermore, Reiki is frequently described as a “way of living,” with a list of five “Reiki Precepts” stipulating proper ethical conduct. 6. Nevertheless, there are some Reiki practitioners, primarily nurses, who attempt to approach Reiki simply as a natural means of healing. Viewed as natural means of healing, however, Reiki becomes subject to the standards of natural science. It is true that there may be means of natural healing that have not yet been understood or recognized by science. The basic criteria for judging whether or not one should entrust oneself to any particular natural means of healing, however, remain those of science.

7. Judged according to these standards, Reiki lacks scientific credibility. It has not been accepted by the scientific and medical communities as an effective therapy. Reputable scientific studies attesting to the efficacy of Reiki are lacking, as is a plausible scientific explanation as to how it could possibly be efficacious. The explanation of the efficacy of Reiki depends entirely on a particular view of the world as permeated by this “universal life energy” (Reiki) that is subject to manipulation by human thought and will. Reiki practitioners claim that their training allows one to channel the “universal life energy” that is present in all things. This “universal life energy,” however, is unknown to natural science. As the presence of such energy has not been observed by means of natural science, the justification for these therapies necessarily must come from something other than science.

C) Reiki and the Healing Power of Christ

8. Some people have attempted to identify Reiki with the divine healing known to Christians.(6) They are mistaken. The radical difference can be immediately seen in the fact that for the Reiki practitioner the healing power is at human disposal. Some teachers want to avoid this implication and argue that it is not the Reiki practitioner personally who effects the healing, but the Reiki energy directed by the divine consciousness. Nevertheless, the fact remains that for Christians the access to divine healing is by prayer to Christ as Lord and Savior, while the essence of Reiki is not a prayer but a technique that is passed down from the “Reiki Master” to the pupil, a technique that once mastered will reliably produce the anticipated results.(7) Some practitioners attempt to Christianize Reiki by adding a prayer to Christ, but this does not affect the essential nature of Reiki. For these reasons, Reiki and other similar therapeutic techniques cannot be identified with what Christians call healing by divine grace.

9. The difference between what Christians recognize as healing by divine grace and Reiki therapy is also evident in the basic terms used by Reiki proponents to describe what happens in Reiki therapy, particularly that of “universal life energy.” Neither the Scriptures nor the Christian tradition as a whole speak of the natural world as based on “universal life energy” that is subject to manipulation by the natural human power of thought and will. In fact, this worldview has its origins in eastern religions and has a certain Monist and pantheistic character, in that distinctions among self, world, and God tend to fall away.(8) We have already seen that Reiki practitioners are unable to differentiate clearly between divine healing power and power that is at human disposal.

III. CONCLUSION

10. Reiki therapy finds no support either in the findings of natural science or in Christian belief. For a Catholic to believe in Reiki therapy presents insoluble problems. In terms of caring for one’s physical health or the physical health of others, to employ a technique that has no scientific support (or even plausibility) is generally not prudent.

11. In terms of caring for one’s spiritual health, there are important dangers. To use Reiki one would have to accept at least in an implicit way central elements of the worldview that undergirds Reiki theory, elements that belong neither to Christian faith nor to natural science. Without justification either from Christian faith or natural science, however, a Catholic who puts his or her trust in Reiki would be operating in the realm of superstition, the no-man’s-land that is neither faith nor science.(9) Superstition corrupts one’s worship of God by turning one’s religious feeling and practice in a false direction.(10) While sometimes people fall into superstition through ignorance, it is the responsibility of all who teach in the name of the Church to eliminate such ignorance as much as possible.

12. Since Reiki therapy is not compatible with either Christian teaching or scientific evidence, it would be inappropriate for Catholic institutions, such as Catholic health care facilities and retreat centers, or persons representing the Church, such as Catholic chaplains, to promote or to provide support for Reiki therapy.

Most Rev. William E. Lori (Chairman), *Bishop of Bridgeport*
Most Rev. John C. Nienstedt, *Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis*
Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair, *Bishop of Toledo*
Most Rev. Arthur J. Serratelli, *Bishop of Paterson*
Most Rev. José H. Gomez, *Archbishop of San Antonio*
Most Rev. Allen H. Vigneron, *Bishop of Oakland*
Most Rev. Robert J. McManus, *Bishop of Worcester*
Most Rev. Donald W. Wuerl, *Archbishop of Washington*

1 See *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Prayers for Healing (14 September 2000)*, I, 3: "Obviously, recourse to prayer does not exclude, but rather encourages the use of effective natural means for preserving and restoring health, as well as leading the Church's sons and daughters to care for the sick, to assist them in body and spirit, and to seek to cure disease."

2 *Catechism*, no. 1508.

3 *Catechism*, no. 1508.

4 It has also been claimed that he merely rediscovered an ancient Tibetan technique, but evidence for this claim is lacking.

5 As we shall see below, however, distinctions between self, world, and God tend to collapse in Reiki thought. Some Reiki teachers explain that one eventually reaches the realization that the self and the "universal life energy" are one, "that we are universal life force and that everything is energy, including ourselves" (Libby Barnett and Maggie Chambers with Susan Davidson, *Reiki Energy Medicine: Bringing Healing Hospice* [Rochester, Vt.: Healing Arts Press, 1996], p. 48; see also p. 102).

6 For example, see "Reiki and Christianity" at http://iarp.org/articles/Reiki_and_Christianity.htm and "Christian Reiki" at <http://areikihealer.tripod.com/christianreiki.html> and the website www.christianreiki.org.

7 Reiki Masters offer courses of training with various levels of advancement, services for which the teachers require significant financial remuneration. The pupil has the expectation and the Reiki Master gives the assurance that one's investment of time and money will allow one to master a technique that will predictably produce results.

8 While this seems implicit in Reiki teaching, some proponents state explicitly that there is ultimately no distinction between and the self and Reiki. "Alignment with your Self and being Reiki is an ongoing process. Willingness to continuously engage in this process furthers your evolution and can lead to the sustained recognition and ultimate experience that **you are universal life force**" (*The Reiki Healing Connection* [Libby Barnett, M.S.W.] <http://reikienergy.com/classes.htm>, accessed 2/6/2008 [emphasis in original]). Diane Stein summarizes the meaning of some of the "sacred symbols" used in Reiki attainments as: "The Goddess in me salutes the Goddess in you"; "Man and God becoming one" (*Essential Reiki Teaching Manual: A Companion Guide for Reiki Healers* [Berkeley, Cal.: Crossing Press, 2007], pp. 129-31). Anne Charlish and Angela Robertshaw explain that the highest Reiki attainment "marks a shift from the ego and self to a feeling of oneness with the universal life-force energy" (*Secrets of Reiki* [New York, N.Y.: DK Publishing, 2001], p. 84).

9 Some forms of Reiki teach of a need to appeal for the assistance of angelic beings or "Reiki spirit guides." This introduces the further danger of exposure to **malevolent forces or powers**.

10 See *Catechism*, no. 2111; *St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae II-II*, q. 92, a. 1.

11 See *Catechism*, no. 2111; *St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae II-II*, q. 92, a. 1.

Wine, Women, and Wedding Song:

The Marriage Feast at Cana

By Marie P. Loehr

Heart of Jesus, golden chalice, brimming with the ruddy wine . . .

--*St. Gregory Hymnal*, No. 62

It is impossible to think of a wedding without women and music. There is always wine at a wedding. Somewhere in Scripture, in the Old Testament, a writer notes that wine gladdens the heart. It is a gift of God to us, in his Creation, to bring us joy, to lift the spirit, to release the delight that wells up in us on festive occasions—drunk in moderation, of course!

Weddings are festive occasions. We should eat, drink and be merry—not because "tomorrow we die," but because a wedding is the beginning of a new union, a communion of hearts, and in conjugal communion, new life. It is an occasion to sing the glory of God for his gift to us—of life, of participation in his life, in pro-creative participation in his creative life in us. A wedding is an occasion for looking back in reminiscence, for being together in joy, for looking forward to happiness and continuity.

It is a witness to the heart—the seat of life, the source of life, the wellspring of life in the body, the image of love in the spirit. Thus it is a joy, rejoicing. What does that have to do with humor?

If we see humor as one means of stepping out of ourselves, detaching ourselves from our egos and biases and triviality, then it has much in common with weddings. Weddings produce the same effect, at their best. How do humor and weddings go together? Let us count the ways . . .

First and foremost, humor and a sense of humor is essential for the couple themselves. Simply to get through the stress of the wedding preparations, and celebration itself, requires a sense of humor, of humility, and especially irony. Although a wedding should be cause for joy and harmony, all too often it degenerates in acrimony, consternation, and either high dudgeon in the proud, or helpless merriment in the humble. Anything that can go wrong will.

Cana is no exception.

The problem in this case is that the wine runs out. The couple, and their families, are about to suffer serious embarrassment before all their friends and neighbors. There is a problem of faulty preparation, of embarrassment, of poor hospitality, a shadow on the new marriage.

Mary Theotokos is present. She has also kept an eye on the entire situation—the couple, the family, the feast. Her knowledge and awareness indicates her care, what moderns call “situational awareness.” She keeps an eye out for anything she can do to help, to keep the festivities running smoothly, to take some of the burden off the couple and their families.

Her son and his friends are there also. Some exegetes suggest that this extra number of guests caused the shortage of wine. This is a silly assumption. A wedding feast was an occasion for the whole town to toast the couple and make merry with them. The wine would flow like water, before, during, and after Christ’s arrival with his apostles.

The second humorous element in the Cana experience takes place in the intersection of the wine crisis, and Christ’s presence.

Mary seeks Christ out, and says to him, quietly, perhaps her hand on his arm—very gently: “They have no wine.”

Again, exegetes make much of the theological ramifications of this exchange. Some of these interpretations are legitimate, and worth pondering. There is theological and spiritual depth in all Christ says and does, obviously. But at its most basic, this encounter is a normal everyday exchange of the sort that takes place between men and women every day, everywhere.

Mary asks nothing, overtly. She simply comments on a situation that meets her eye and confronts the newlyweds. Christ looks at her, perhaps one eyebrow raised a bit, one corner of his lip quirked.

Every man who’s engrossed in a baseball game on TV, or sacked out on the couch for a Saturday respite from the daily grind, has heard this voice and knows this tone. His wife enters the room, looks out the window, and muses—apparently to herself—“Gosh, the grass is really growing tall.” That’s only one possible scenario similar to Mary’s interchange with Christ at this moment!

How many wives have had the same answer, and its accompanying groan. “Woman, what would you have me do?! My hour has not yet come.” We may translate the last as, augh, I’m not ready yet, can’t this wait? The first line of this reply is subtler, however. No man is ever in doubt as to what wife or mother wants him to do. But clarification is always the safest course to take. More important, it puts off the inevitable, however briefly. It gives him time to collect himself, and psych himself up to do what she wants him to do.

Does God need to do this? Christ is divine, but he is also human, and there is a subtle ironic humor to his response, even gentle teasing. He is amused at the feminine subtlety and tact, but he also respects it. Mary understands this perfectly well. Surely she smiles, and goes to give the wine steward a heads’ up. “Do whatever he tells you.”

It also indicates the honor in which she is generally held that he does not question or ignore her. He hastens to follow Christ’s instructions, as Christ has followed her subtle instruction.

Here is the third instance of humor. The wine having flowed like water, Christ now turns that on its head, and the water now flows like wine, becomes wine in truth. This reversal itself is humor—gentle, delightful humor. If the wine vanishes like water in the thirsty desert, the water will now be restored and fortified and fructified as wine. It overturns routine, stands it on its head, and does indeed produce merriment—both as a situation, and as wine.

Finally, the steward responds to this astonishing reversal with equal humor, and delight. Most people serve the good wine first, then broach the lesser wine after the guests have gladdened their hearts to the point they won’t notice the change in quality. “But,” exclaims the steward to the groom, “you have saved the best wine ‘til last!” This too is humor, humor at such largesse, humor at such a reversal, humor at such exceptional hospitality.

Here again we see how unexpected and quiet both Christ and his mother are. This is a sign of humility—humility being Truth, meticulous exactitude and simplicity. Humility is the wellspring of true humor—Christ

teases Mary gently, but she knows her Son. Both she and Christ tease the steward with the impossible charge to fill the six huge water jars with . . . water! And they tease the steward and guests, too, with the reversal of vanishing wine via water into prodigal amounts of fine wine!

Cana is almost an image of divine practical joke—a sign of God’s prodigal generosity, and his subtlety, his unexpectedness, his quiet working without fanfare or spotlight. We ask for a glass of water. He sweeps us off our feet with a tidal wave—and as we go down for the third time, we’re still complaining, where’s my glass of water? Where’s the wine?! We are immersed in it. This is the humor and the lesson of Cana. And so should all our prayers be presented, with humility, humor, and Mary’s trust and tact.]

Legislative Summary

Information prepared by the *Center for Traditional Family Values*

The most recent New Mexico legislative session ended on March 21, 2009. Heavy homosexual and pro-abortion agendas were defeated but Governor Richardson may call a special session for another shot at homosexual marriage so **sign up for alerts at www.tvacnm.com**, if you haven’t already. At www.nmlegis.gov, one can access a 16 page list of bills passed by both the House and the Senate and a 1½ page list of legislation acted upon by the Governor, which means the Governor has a lot more decisions to make – sign, veto, or do nothing (automatic veto). The only bill being tracked by the *Center for Traditional Family Values* that made it to the Governor’s desk was the abolition of the death penalty, which is considered a pro-life issue by some.

Here is a summary of this session’s most pressing challenges to traditional values:

- **Sanctity of Marriage**
 - SB 12 – homosexual marriage, failed (17-25) in the Senate. [Watch for special session]
 - SB 439 – homosexual partner health insurance – tabled in Senate Judiciary
 - HJR 2 & SB 162 – marriage defined as one man and one woman – tabled in Public Affairs
- **Sanctity of Life**
 - HB 256 – Freedom of Choice Act (opposed) – tabled in House Judiciary
 - SB 77 – Embryonic Stem Cell Research (opposed) – passed Senate (27-14), failed (30-38) in the House
 - SB 121 – Parental Notification (support) – tabled in Senate Public Affairs
 - HB 196 – registration of fetal deaths – passed House (56-2), Senate schedule
 - HB 814 – assisted suicide (opposed) – tabled in House Public Affairs
- **Education**
 - SB 638 – School Tolerance & Diversity Curriculum – 15 min/day for 13 years for homo indoctrination in K-12 — tabled in Senate Public Affairs (4-4)
 - HJM 31 – study of bullying, defined to include “sexual orientation or gender identity”— passed House 63-0, tabled in Senate Judiciary
 - SB 433 – Origins Education (support), www.originseducation.org, tabled in Senate Education
 - SB 355 – Equal Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (support), www.educatenm.org, tabled in Senate Judiciary
 - SB 255 – Reduce size of schools (support), www.thinknewmexico.org — passed Senate (28-11); tabled in House Education
 - HB 740 – college textbooks (support) – tabled in House Education
- **Justice**
 - HB 285, abolish death penalty (opposed) – Governor signed
 - SB 649 – Erasing Criminal Records (opposed) – tabled in Senate Judiciary
- **Election Law**
 - HB 52 – same day voter registration (opposed) – passed House 40-27 – tabled in Senate Rules
 - HB 274 – Reduce voting age to 17 (opposed) – tabled in House Judiciary
 - HB 591 – Voter ID (support) – tabled in House Elections
 - SB 413 – Dissolution of the Electoral College Process (opposed) – tabled in Senate Rules

- **Gambling**

- SB 330 – ATM & slot bill (opposed) – passed Senate (20-16) – tabled in House Public Affairs,
www.nmcag.org

For ongoing information, visit the *Center for Traditional Family Values NM* - <http://www.traditionalvaluesnm.org>

Humble Plea

Pro-Life movement seeks assistance from the Vatican in “Sheep without a Shepherd”

By Stephanie Block

Operation Rescue founder, Randall Terry, recently presented Vatican officials from various dicasteries, congregations, and councils with the document entitled *Oves Sine Pastore* (“Sheep without a Shepherd”) (full text at www.humblepea.com), asking them to replace bishops who do not follow Church law.

Terry states, “From March 3 to March 7, 2009, I and eight other Catholic pro-life activists met with various Vatican officials about the tragic role that many American prelates play in the continued shedding of innocent blood in America,” adding that his materials include “well-documented proof that many of America’s bishops – and perhaps the majority of them – do not uphold the teachings of the Church regarding the sacredness of Holy Communion, nor are they obeying the clarion call of *Evangelium Vitae* to defend the innocent unborn in the political sphere.”

Oves Sine Pastore begins with the question, “Why did 55% of American Catholics Vote for Barack Obama?” It reproduces an impassioned and tasteful advertisement to vote pro-life that every diocesan newspaper in the United States, except one, refused to run.

It then details *Faithful Citizenship*, a document produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, that Terry believes is misleading and causes “confusion and scandal with the Faithful.” Giving numerous examples, Terry writes, “Millions of Catholics believed they had the blessing of U.S. Bishops to vote for Barack Obama, and used *Faithful Citizenship* to justify their treachery against innocent blood.”

The third section of *Oves* gives examples of US bishops “who openly reject Church teaching” and other bishops – including then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger – who urge pastoral correction of recalcitrant Catholic politicians, including withholding Communion.

Section Four depicts cases of pro-lifers engaged in legal and non-disruptive activities who have been persecuted by fellow Catholics.

The document closes with the plea that bishops “who openly refuse to obey Church teaching” be replaced with “bishops who will uphold Church Law on Holy Communion, and who will unflinchingly defend the right to life of unborn children.” It also seeks a “call for obedience in all U.S. bishops...that they cease the scandal of giving Holy Communion to unrepentant supporters of child-killing.”

The last point in this closing section asks the Vatican to “Investigate the corruption of government money. The “tax-exempt” status has silenced our prelates; worse is that many of the dioceses receive government money from the very ones they refuse to discipline. We must untangle ourselves from an unholy alliance.”]

Lukewarm NM

Sixty-five percent of Americans in a recent Gallup poll think religion is important (although, when Gallup asked how many think religion is important *in their own lives*, the number was 54%). Regionally, the story is a bit different, though.

Michelle Krogmeier/gallup.com

The Bible Belt—Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Texas— still seems to take its religion seriously.

New England (Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut) and the Northwest (Alaska, Washington, Oregon...and Nevada) have the highest concentrations of heathens, holding almost reversed religious priorities from the Bible Belt states.

One analyst opines that the cultural difference between “red states” (conservative-Republican) and “blue states” (progressive-Democrat) comes down to religiosity.

Also complicating the data is the perception that “religion” describes a connection to an institution. While the Gallup poll finds that 65% of Americans say religion is important to them, a Pew survey found 75% pray weekly and 81% at least several times a month.

New Mexico stats placed the state at “average” — 53%. Ripe territory for evangelization.]

May Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting

May 22, 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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www.lospequenos.org

Check out *Project Defending Life's* radio show, **Lifetalk**,
which airs on 1050 am KTBL every Saturday at 2:00 pm till
3:00 pm.