

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

May 2012

Faithful Catholics to the Bishops:

*“OK on that Anti-HHS-
Mandate ‘Religious
Liberty’ Thing...But...We
Need to Talk!”*

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Rising to Common Ground

From a series on JustFaith

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*Cover: St. Arcangelo Tadini -
Italy, Founder of the Congregation
of Worker Sisters of the Holy
House of Nazareth, feast day May
20.*

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Volume 13, Number 5

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Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo
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We are an Archdiocesan-wide Catholic lay organization committed to a charitable defense of the Catholic Faith by means of education, communication, and prayer. We are devoted to the Roman Catholic Magisterium, the Holy Father, and to the bishops and clergy in union with him. Our members believe what the Church believes and we promote what the Church teaches. To this end, we believe that no individual, whether cleric or lay person, has the right to alter the substance of the gospel message or moral truths which have been inerrantly and infallibly held by the Catholic Church since Her founding.

Faithful Catholics to the Bishops:

“OK on that Anti-HHS-Mandate ‘Religious Liberty’ Thing...But...We Need to Talk!”

By Jon Merrill

Does this sound familiar? *Worrisomely* familiar?

...the great effect of the Jesuits had been to recover Europe for the Faith by making every sort of allowance – trying to understand and by sympathy to attract the worldly and the sensual and all the indifferent, and insisting the whole time on the absolute necessity of loyalty to the Church. *Defend the unity of the Church, and talk of other things afterwards; preserve the Church which was in peril of destruction; only then, when you have leisure, after the battle, debate other things.*

Hilaire Belloc, in the above paragraph describing the Counter-Reformation strategy of the Jesuits, was *describing*, not necessarily *proscribing*. He nevertheless observed, looking back over a four-century stretch, that the “every-sort-of-allowance” strategy, the strategy of a *tribal*, content-free “loyalty to the Church” before all else, had quite obviously failed to stay the decline of “Catholic culture” in Europe. Yes, many parts of the continent were indeed recovered, but, as the serious debate over those other, very important things had been postponed, seemingly *sine die*, once “unity” had been achieved, that recovery in many places was not so much “for the *Faith*,” as for the *institutional, tribal Church*.

In the HHS-mandate battle, the American bishops and many of their Catholic supporters – the orthodox and pious right along with the “the worldly, the sensual, and the indifferent” – have embraced a similar strategy, one which, while it might succeed in (temporarily) preserving the “power” of the *tribal Church*, will no more stop the real decline of the *Faith* in America than the loyalty-first strategy of the Jesuits succeeded, in Europe, in preserving either Catholic culture *or* the Catholic *Faith*.

Still apparently unable to walk and chew gum at the same time, still worshipping the idol of a *factitious* unity, still fearing above all else a *de-jure* schism which would supposedly impoverish the Church and make of its faithful members an insignificant, politically powerless remnant, still confusing the human element of the visible Church with the Catholic *Faith* itself, the bishops are determined to propagandize in this current battle *solely* in defense of the “religious liberty” of the Church. (Given conflicting intra-Faith understandings of that term – which must, then, necessarily, appear between quotation marks – it can be hard for an historically-informed Catholic to know precisely what *kind* of “religious liberty” the bishops are out to defend.)

This 21st-century strategy promises to be even less effective than its Counter-Reformation precursor. While those original Jesuits at least understood that they should make a point “of talking of other things *afterwards*,” “of debating other things, *after* the battle,” the American bishops don’t seem to understand, or to want to admit, that there is really anything else to talk about. “Religious freedom” – whatever that means exactly – is all there is to it. What Catholics will *do* with that liberty, and, more importantly what they will or will not be at liberty to



In the HHS-mandate battle, the American bishops and many of their Catholic supporters – the orthodox and pious right along with the “the worldly, the sensual, and the indifferent” – have embraced a similar strategy, one which, while it might succeed in (temporarily) preserving the “power” of the tribal Church, will no more stop the real decline of the Faith in America than the loyalty-first strategy of the Jesuits succeeded, in Europe, in preserving either Catholic culture or the Catholic Faith.

believe, as Catholics, is not so important, as long as they continue to understand “the absolute necessity of loyalty to the Church.” And it really is preferable, the bishops seem to suggest, to think of it in terms of loyalty to the *Church* – or, even better, to the *USCCB* – rather than to the *Faith*. For though the Faith can change or evolve, the USCCB we will always have with us.

But the tribal, rally-around-the-Church/(USCCB) approach won’t work now. Or, rather, it will “work” only to the extent of prolonging the existence of the bishops’ denatured, de-Catholicized, government-“partnered” institutions of social assistance and education. The Church-y approach made some sense, and it may have succeeded in stemming the secularist tide, at the tail end of the Age of Faith, when tribe members and their hierarchical servants still shared a fairly unequivocal understanding of the tenets and requirements of their religion – but *now*, at the high tide (one hopes) of the cynical hierarchy-endorsed Age of Ambiguity, of the Age of Faith-*lessness*, we need desperately to talk about, well, the *Faith*, rather than the *tribal Church*. (And the less said about the USCCB the better.)

There are two major topics of discussion between people and servants which must be tackled immediately after this HHS battle is won, if, that is, we really can’t just talk *right now*. And note: A *win* should not be in doubt. Only an acquiescence to one more murky, ambiguous

“accommodation” with government could constitute an actual *loss*. The bishops will win – and, in fact, will win a far more meaningful and Catholic victory even if a tyrannical government succeeds in driving the Church out of the worldly business, for that is all that it has become, providing secular-humanitarian services *with, at the good pleasure of, and for* that same despotic government. (As Archbishop Chaput recently noted, in glaring and still-not-comprehending understatement, the government “gets more” from that unholy arrangement than the Church does.)

Faith-Topic Number One is obvious, given the substantive issue around which the bishops’ current fight for “religious liberty” ostensibly revolves. How many countless iterations of the following statement of indignation have we heard coming from the conservative-Catholic commentariat over the past few weeks?

I am a 54-year-old weekly-Mass-attending Catholic and I have *never in my entire life* heard a homily about contraception!

But it’s not just contraception. And the silence is not limited to the related counter-cultural, “sex-obsessed” teachings of the Church. It even goes beyond the many other “hard sayings” of the Faith – from the Real Presence to the *One-True-Churchness* of the

Church – which even the *believing* Western bishops and priests have for fifty years sedulously avoided discussing in order, if not “*to attract* the worldly, sensual, and indifferent” – too late for that now – at least *to prevent* current dues-paying Club members in those categories from flying the coop.

No. The question that has been avoided is much more fundamental: Is the Church even *about* “belief” anymore? Is it a *creed*-based society of *believers*...who believe *the same things*? That should go without saying. Or is it a philanthropic, feel-good social club, with Catholic memorabilia scattered around, like that intriguing “anti-contraception” totem on the wall – a “fascinating model,” as one Cardinal Ratzinger once called it – but not something that it would make any sense to seriously “believe in?” That’s not what totems are for. And, besides, we’re not even sure what it *means* anymore. And, re-besides, if we ever figured it out, and asked club members to “believe in it” – whatever that means – that could be divisive, and clubs are about *uniting* their members, not dividing them!

But not to worry: We will definitely keep it up on the wall, because it’s *Catholic* – whatever that means – and so are we. (Many of us, after all, have names like O’Shaughnessy and Santini and Rodriguez.) Not only that, but if anybody – an oppressive Obama administration, for example



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– should ever try to force us to take the fascinating tribal totem down, we will fight to the death (well, maybe not quite to the death) to keep it up there! Because now you’re talking “religious liberty”! We might not really understand that “religion” thing, but we’re *American*, by gum, and we know a thing or two about *liberty*! ... But, “believe in” the totem – let alone *act on it*? Sorry; we don’t do belief. Too divisive. Look at the Amish, who are exempt from the HHS mandate. They don’t even have a USCCB! And not a single Amish guy or gal member of Congress. So what’s the point of the belief thing?

Here is Cardinal Dolan, in his recent letter to American bishops on the HHS mandate, suggesting which ball it is that the Club must now keep its eye on. It’s not the belief ball:

As pastors and shepherds, each of us would prefer to spend our energy engaged in and promoting the works of mercy to which the Church is dedicated; healing the sick, teaching our youth and helping the poor.

That is what the bishops think the Church, the Club, is really *about*: providing non-belief-based “social services.” No mention of the bishops using even some left-over energy to preach the (divisive) Gospel, to sanctify *Catholics*, or to rule the Church. (Yes, he does refer to “teaching our youth” ... but teaching them *what*? In the American Church as it really operates, we know that they will be taught that the Catholic Church is essentially about ... providing works of nondenominational mercy in the context of “social justice.”)

Faith-Topic Number Two addresses the Church’s fatal collaboration with secularist, anti-Catholic governments. That “partnership” has facilitated, if not actually caused, the transmogrification of Church into Club, and if it continues, as the bishops obviously intend it to – if only the battle over the contraception totem can be won in a way which will not totally alienate the government, *and its money* – then Catholic social-clubbishness will persist, while the Faith will continue to decline.

Topic Number Two has been avoided by the prelates, of course, but even by many “conservative Catholics,” some of whom agree with the overwhelming majority of Western bishops that, as long as those Catholic totems are treated with respect, a “partnership” with secularist government is perfectly appropriate and, indeed, is even *necessary*, not only to “human flourishing,” but to the flourishing of the Church. (Or is it “...of the Club?”) Are they right? Can we at least discuss it?

Or is it Cardinal Manning who is right? He, up against an un-Catholic government far more friendly to the moral *beliefs* of the Catholic Church than is the thoroughgoing secularist but occasionally totem-respecting government of contemporary America, nevertheless said that the only faithful course open to the Catholic Church, even when confronted with a relatively *friendly* un-Catholic government, was *separation*, not partnership.

Manning saw a century and a half ago that the era of the fully-fledged secularist and anti-Catholic government was right around the corner. He naturally assumed, if the Church were to maintain its “internal unity” and integrity, that it would be necessary, *charitably* necessary, for the Church to effect a “separation” from those worldly governments, and from their *money*. Far from being *distressed* at this providential turn of events which, after all, he wrote, was just a “*return*” to the original, us-against-the-world-and-the-pagan-state condition of the Church, Manning emphasized that the Church would “derive many graces” from that necessary separation. Among those graces:

Its pastors will be poor. *They will receive nothing from princes, or courts, or governments.* They will re-enter their apostolic liberty and detachment from all things: They will live of the altar by the oblations of the faithful. This will also rekindle the zeal, *charity*, and generosity of the Catholic people of the



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world. Pastors and people are held together by an intimate bond of charity and generous reciprocal service which consolidates the Church with the closest unity...

Our bishops, to put it mildly, do not seem to detect the “charm” in those particular graces, among which is a *real*, religious unity, “the closest unity” – not a mere clubby “togetherness.” Maybe they don’t see it because, as Manning implies, though it will be a grace-filled unity, it could be a materially poorer one. And if Cardinal Dolan and his fellow bishops have really come to understand the primary task of the Church as “promoting works of mercy” so as to “help the [non-Catholic] poor,” then a materially poorer Church must mean, for them, a lesser Church. “Less money to dole out – and let’s just continue to pretend that we haven’t been doling out *someone else’s money* – means less ‘human flourishing’. Where’s the ‘charm’ in that?”

Discussions of both topics will lead back to a single, practical question for the Faithful, Church-going Catholic: Should he support the *Faith*, or the *tribal* Church?

Yes, we know: *Theoretically*, there should be no dichotomy; no choice to be made. We understand that “the Church is the pillar and ground of the Truth,” i.e., of the *Faith*. So to support one is to support the other... theoretically. But what to do when our hierarchical servants have, in the real, not the theoretical world, come to understand the Church, for all intents and purposes, as the pillar and ground, not of the Faith, but of the West-European-style Social-Welfare State? Or, to put it more generously and accurately, but no less problematically, what to do when they promote the Church almost exclusively as the pillar and ground of social works of mercy or of a tendentious “social justice”? When the *tribal* Church temporarily – but for how long? – detaches Herself from a meaningful, in-practice connection with Her *beliefs*, or when those “beliefs” are revealed, as in the affair of the HHS mandate, as being for many of Her hierarchical servants and most of Her “members” not much more than tribal totems, what is the average trying-to-be-faithful Catholic Joe to do?

That is what we need to talk to you about. ☞

Jon Merrill is the founder and director of Militia Caritatis Dei, a traditionally orthodox, catholically Catholic international charity which conspicuously rejects government funding.

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Are You Interested in the Bible?

By Tom McBride

Since approximately 1980, the Catholic laity's interest in Scripture has grown by leaps and bounds. It seems to me that this trend began with the conversion to the Catholic Faith of several Protestant ministers and bible scholars. These men were the likes of Scott Hahn, Marcus Grodi and Steve Wood. Scott Hahn was probably one of the leaders in this trend, and he continues to be so today. He continues to publish books on biblical topics, and he now heads the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology. Check it out at www.salvationhistory.com. One of the happiest fruits of this increased interest in the Bible among Catholics is that there is a new generation of Catholic biblical scholars who are cradle Catholics. Among them are Brant Pitre and Michael Barber. Dr. Pitre teaches at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, Louisiana. Dr. Barber teaches at John Paul the Great University in San Diego, California.

The purpose of this article is to introduce readers to the educational materials produced by Dr. Pitre. I first became aware of Dr. Pitre several years ago when, while surfing Amazon, I ran across a book he had written. The book was titled *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*. The book was a revision of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame. I was intrigued by the title so I bought the book. One of the things that most impressed me about the book was how Dr. Pitre brought out the Jewish background of the teaching of Jesus. He cited a lot of Jewish literature from both before and after Our Lord's lifetime, and traced how Jesus' teaching was related to and based on that literature. In the course of the book he showed how many of the same themes from the Jewish literature he cited show up in the New Testament. Only later did I learn that his major field of concentration in his Ph.D was in Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, which probably explains his use of the Jewish literature in his work. I have found his insights into the "Jewish roots" of the New Testament to be fascinating.

After I first became aware of Dr. Pitre, I found that he had a website: www.brantpitre.com, and that he sold bible studies through www.catholicproductions.com; The bible studies take the form of DVDs, CDs and MP3 recordings. For simplicity I will refer to them as CDs. Actually, the CD sets are not strictly limited to bible studies. They include subjects like Eucharistic and sacramental theology, but all of the sets approach their subject matter from a biblical, and Jewish, perspective.

The CD sets cover a wide range of "sizes." There are some which are a single CD, some that are several CDs, and some that are twenty or more CDs. As far as I can tell, most of the longer sets are recordings of actual courses which Dr. Pitre teaches. I have found all of the sets to be characterized by two traits which I think the readers of the Pepper will appreciate. First, they are extremely rich. Second, they are always faithful to the Church's Magisterium.

One of the most useful things about the CD sets is that they each come with an outline in pdf format which can be downloaded and printed so you can follow the presentation in the set on the outline. I have found that being able to follow along with the outline greatly increases what I learn from the set, and also provides a convenient place to make notes about things discussed in the set which may either not be covered at all or not be covered completely in the outline. As you might expect, Dr. Pitre sometimes discusses subjects in the set which are not in the outline, either in response to student questions or just as a digression. Some of the "digressions" are extremely interesting. Another thing I really appreciate about the outlines is that they usually give references to outside sources on the subject matter. In the case of sets which are recordings of courses taught by Dr. Pitre the outline will usually include the texts which he uses for the course. Dr. Pitre does not use "textbooks" as we usually think of them; rather, he uses original sources which are usually books. Having this information available makes it possible, if one is interested, to look up the sources and read them to supplement the material in the set and the outline.

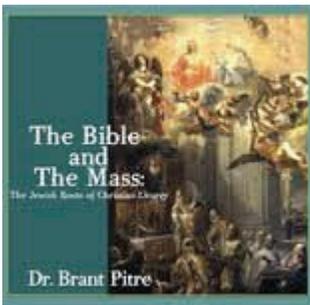
I would like to illustrate what I am saying about Dr. Pitre's CD sets by briefly mentioning two of them that I have used. The first one is a set on "Spiritual Theology." In my experience, lay people do not hear much preaching about the Church's rich teaching on prayer and the pursuit of Christian perfection. This set goes a long way toward fixing that problem. Dr. Pitre covers the traditional teaching of the Church on the three levels



Dr. Brant Pitre

of Christian perfection: the purgative, illuminative and the unitive ways. He explains the degrees of prayer, and, as he does in all his courses, he brings in the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I have found that it is not very well known that the entire fourth section of the Catechism is on prayer. Dr. Pitre brings in the teaching of the great Doctors of the spiritual life, such as, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and Francis de Sales. In addition he refers to more modern masters of the spiritual life, such as Adolphe Tanqueray, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Thomas Dubay. You may recognize Father Dubay's name because he taught a course on contemplation on EWTN, and he also wrote a book on the spiritual life called *Fire Within*, published by Ignatius Press, which, in my opinion, is the best modern treatment of the subject. In the set, Dr. Pitre is teaching the spiritual theology course to undergraduates in a Catholic college who have no prior knowledge of spiritual theology. The effect is that the presentation is down to earth and easy to understand.

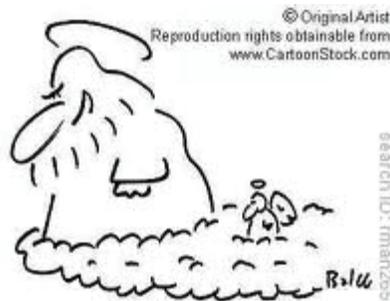
The second course I would like to mention is called "The Bible and the Mass." This is a recording of a course taught by Dr. Pitre to Catholic undergraduates. In the recordings it becomes apparent that the students know relatively little about the Bible. This helps the listener because it requires Dr. Pitre to give simple, comprehensive presentations geared to people, like the present author, who do not have a lot of background in biblical studies. Several times in the recordings, Dr. Pitre makes the point that most books and lectures about the liturgy, and especially about the Mass, begin the discussion with the Last Supper and proceed from there. By contrast, Dr. Pitre begins with the tabernacle which Moses constructed in the desert after the Exodus. He explains the Jewish worship in the tabernacle and how it provides the background for Catholic worship. Dr. Pitre explains the principle feasts of the Jewish liturgical year, and how they were fulfilled by Christ. He also goes through the common of the Mass and explains the biblical sources for the vestments and the rites which we see every time we go to Mass. The set is eye opening in regard to the Jewish background for the Catholic liturgy, and, at least in my opinion, does much to cure the complaint "I don't get anything out of the Mass."



The prices of some of the longer sets can seem expensive. For example, the "Spiritual Theology" set is \$117.00, plus shipping, for 17 CDs. The "Bible and the Mass" set is \$134.95, plus shipping, for 22 CDs. Naturally, smaller sets are less expensive. A single CD is \$7.95, plus shipping. All of the sets are available as MP3 downloads for lower prices. I might also mention that I have learned a lot just from reading some of the outlines for courses which I have not purchased (yet), and perhaps you can too.

As anyone can tell who has read this article up to this point, I am a fan of Brant Pitre. I have found that if I listen to a set of his CDs, whether it is big or small, and follow along in the outline, that I learn a great deal about the Bible and the Church's teaching. I believe that anyone who will listen carefully to the sets and follow along in the outline will find that he profits greatly from the experience. If one were also to read some of the outside sources cited by Dr. Pitre, the experience would be even more valuable. ✎

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"Building a Tower of Babel, are they?
— I'll slap them with a diversity
program they'll never recover from!"

Calling Bigotry by Its Name

The following was written in response to the advertisement placed in the New York Times on March 9, entitled "[It's Time to Quit the Catholic Church](#)," by Annie Laurie Gaylor. The Times rejected an almost identical ad entitled "It's Time to Quit Islam."

By Father Peter West, Vice President for Missions, Human Life International

I gave up reading the *New York Times* years ago because of its clear animus toward the Catholic Church, but a friend sent me a copy of your advertisement calling for "liberal Catholics" to leave the Church. You might be surprised to hear that many practicing Catholics agree with you, and wish that those who reject the Church's teachings would leave. Of course, the Church herself does not necessarily want this, but why stay in a Church whose teachings you do not accept?

You might also be surprised that I actually admire your stance more than I admire that of Catholics who oppose Catholic teaching. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus says: "I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3, 15-16) You are certainly not lukewarm in your beliefs, and there is something admirable about that.

Nevertheless, your ad was a vile display of ignorance and anti-Catholic bigotry. From the time that Jesus Christ founded the Church on the Twelve Apostles, there have been sinners and even traitors in our midst, but the Church has survived because it is not of human, but of divine, origin. For this reason, most Catholics stay, despite the many scandals and human flaws of the institutional Church. Catholics continue to attend Mass because they know that Christ instituted it at the Last Supper and said the words "Do this in memory of me."

You claim that the Catholic Church wants to outlaw contraception. This is simply not true, despite claims of partisans and mainstream media types who imagine a secret plot to do so. What is true is that since the 1st century the Catholic Church has taught that the use of contraception is morally wrong. We believe sex is a beautiful gift from God to be shared between a husband and a wife who are faithful and open to transmission of new life. Sex is an expression of total self-giving, including the gift of fertility. Every time a married couple makes love it is a renewal of the marital covenant.

The pills you advocate are powerful hormones. Why do we tell boys not to use performance-enhancing hormones, but we force feed girls powerful hormones that, according to the World Health Organization, are in the same category as asbestos as a cancer-causing agent? How is this good for women's health?

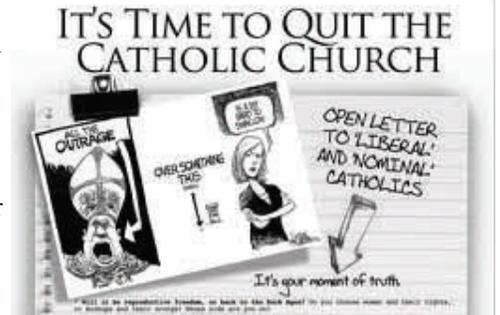
If there is a war on women, as you claim, it is being waged by those who say that a woman's body is like a broken machine that needs a pill to work properly. Ms. Gaylor, fertility is not a disease, and contraception is not medicine. It doesn't fix what's broken; it takes a healthy bodily system and causes it to act against nature.

Despite your scare tactics, the Church is not trying to restrict your access to birth control and no politician wants to outlaw contraception. Further, there are plenty of places where one can get free or inexpensive birth control. The relentless campaign being waged by people like you who want to force Catholic institutions to act against the tenets of our faith is a grave offense to the First Amendment of the Constitution, which guarantees us not only the freedom to worship, but freedom to conduct business according to our religiously held beliefs.

At Notre Dame University, President Obama promised he would respect the conscience rights of religious institutions. He has now broken that promise in the most cynical and unequivocal terms. His so-called "accommodation" was nothing of the sort. It continues to force faithful Catholics to violate their religious beliefs.

The Catholic Church defends life, which is a natural and unalienable right that we have from our Creator. In the age of ultrasound, it is getting harder and harder for you to credibly claim that abortion, which we will be forced to subsidize in the form of abortifacient drugs, is anything other than the taking of an innocent human life.

The distortions in your ad are too many to mention here, but I truly have no hard feelings toward you personally. Your attacks stem from ignorance about the true nature of Christ and His Church. This season of Lent is a time that Catholics are called to reflect on the sufferings of Christ. From His Cross, Jesus forgave those who were responsible for his death with the words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I hope that all Catholics will follow the example of Christ, and join me in forgiving you and praying for you.✠



The New York Times ad in question

Are Babies Not Persons? Seeing Patterns

By Dr. Jeff Mirus

A recent article in *The Journal of Medical Ethics* argued that infanticide is morally equivalent to abortion, and therefore perfectly justifiable. This might have been surprising, except that a month earlier the same journal had published an article arguing that it is morally permissible for doctors to kill patients if their organs might be used for effective transplants in others. So let us recognize the pattern and realize that *The Journal of Medical Ethics* has an agenda.

There are, of course, other patterns that we should recognize here. The first pattern would be that ethics is meaningless unless rooted in something that transcends the ethicist. The fact that anyone who argues for any moral position can claim to be an “ethicist” lowers the bar to the point of non-existence. It makes no sense even to reason about morality if we do not believe that nature has a moral order which the human person is capable of discerning. And, of course, to recognize a moral order in nature is to recognize the necessity for a lawgiver and a judge, that is God. There is a pattern there.

Another case of patterns helps us to recognize how it is we know things. As I have argued elsewhere (most recently in *Proving God*), the human person has an innate ability to grasp the natures of the things he observes, and to discern their purposes and ends. Indeed, this capacity is absolutely essential for moral thought, which cannot with any intelligibility be based on either opinion (the domain, apparently, of what we might call the *new ethics*) or empiricism (which is the form of inquiry used in modern science and limited to physical measurement).

We must first acknowledge the human capacity to discern the nature of things before we can see the folly of the opinion of these authors in *The Journal of Medical Ethics*. They claim that, while a human being is present from the moment of conception until natural death, only a *person* has a right to life, and a *person* cannot be said to exist until a human being develops to the point of reflecting on the worth of his own life. Only then does it become an injury to have life taken away.

But this line of thought ignores how we actually discern the reality of what it means to be human. Rather, we know both within ourselves and from countless examples outside of ourselves that human beings have a fundamentally different nature from other bodily creatures. If we were to sum up this difference in a single word, we would say that unlike all other bodily beings, humans are fundamentally *moral* beings. As I have already hinted, this simply means that, because they possess intellect, human beings can discern the natures of things, their purposes and ends, and so discern what is right and wrong; and, because they possess will, they are capable of choosing in light of this knowledge to do either good or evil. These characteristics also mean, by the way, that human beings possess some sort of spiritual core which other bodily creatures lack. Moreover, the individual beings who *by nature* possess

this consciousness of reality, including this profound moral awareness and the capacity to interact with reality in a moral way, are called *persons*.

But this fundamental grasp of what it means to be human is not the only human pattern we recognize. We also discern that human beings are physically different from every other creature, and we learn to recognize easily which embodied beings are human beings and which are not, without the slightest need for a “personhood” quiz. Again, patterns. I know you are a human being with a human nature the moment I see you, and you know the same of me. We just do. And we do not need to demonstrate our competence to each other for this recognition to obtain. We instantly recognize each other as persons.

Now it may be that this or that human being fails to develop in the normal way physically or intellectually, or that through disease or accident he may lose one or more of his physical and mental abilities. For many reasons, including developmental reasons, he or she may be unable to express the full potential of his nature at any given time. He cannot do so, for example, before he has learned—as bodily beings must learn—to express it, nor can he do so while sleeping, or in a coma, or with a broken leg, or with an injured brain. Nor does each person rise to the same level of expressiveness. When this expressiveness is limited through illness or injury, we rightly regard it as unfortunate, but we still understand that the fundamental characteristics of human nature are present, including that spiritual core and moral trajectory which makes this person unlike any non-human bodily being, that is, unlike any-



thing that is not a person.

Again, we are designed to see real things whole, neither bound by the limitations of empirical measurement nor divorced from reality by ungrounded fancy. Thus do we understand natures and purposes and ends. Though our understanding is neither infallible nor complete, and though it is generally strengthened by discounting peculiar individual observations in favor of more universal experiences, in a fundamental way we humans simply gaze out at the world—or inward to ourselves—and in so doing we perceive and we know. In fact, we must deliberately train ourselves—that is, deliberately confuse ourselves, generally under the influence of some inordinate desire—to ignore what we cannot not know.

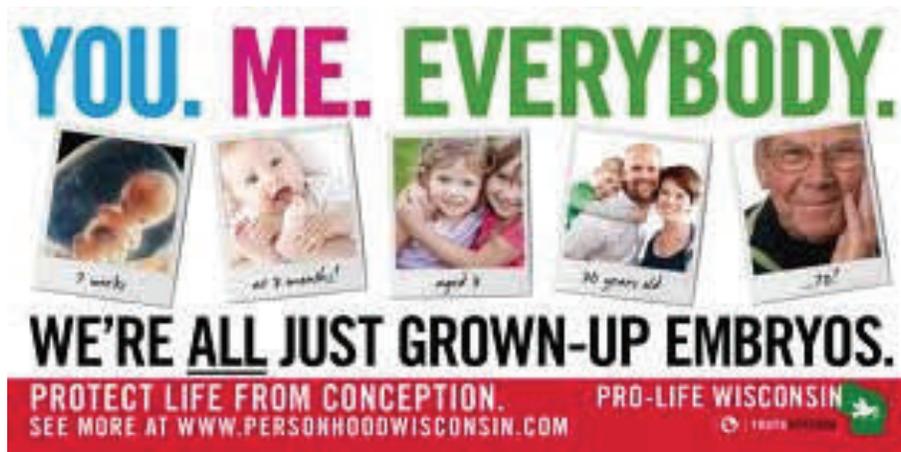
At the same time, we must acknowledge that the authors of the infanticide article did get something right. They were right to point out that there is no moral difference between infanticide and abortion. Moreover, had they done so, the authors of the organ transplant article would have been right to point out that there was no moral difference between killing patients for their organs and infanticide or abortion. All three actions take the innocent life of a human person; all three are murder. This, of course, is the slippery slope which all those who have opposed abortion from the first warned we could not escape slithering down. There is a pattern here, too, and a very consistent one.

One part of this last pattern is convenience—the convenience of those with power taking precedence over the convenience of those without it. Even language follows power, as it is a great convenience to dignify such arguments from convenience with the name of *ethics*. But the editor of *The Journal of Medical Ethics* has extended this ethic of convenience still further by the words he used to defend his authors and condemn their critics (see the London *Telegraph*, “Killing babies no different from abortion, experts say”). Noting that the authors of the infanticide article had received death threats, editor Julian Savulescu responded thus:

This...has been an example of “witch ethics”—a group of people know who the witch is and seek to burn her. It is one of the most dangerous human tendencies we have. It leads to lynching and genocide. Rather than argue and engage, there is a drive to silence and, in the extreme, kill, based on their own moral certainty. That is not the sort of society we should live in.

But how convenient these words are! How convenient to advocate the killing of whole classes of human persons in the name of what Savulescu elsewhere termed “well-reasoned argument based on widely-accepted premises” while accusing those who wish to kill only two specific persons for crimes against humanity of being on a witch hunt! We have seen this self-serving pattern again and again: No matter what our *bettors* may do or say, it is always their detractors who are at fault. Indeed, in the universe of convenience, form always trumps substance.

But once again, and fortunately, we human beings can discern the nature and meaning of the patterns of life. This is, among other things, how we recognize the difference between the innocent physical danger of a train hurtling down a track and that other kind of danger—that far more clever and very human danger. I mean moral danger, the danger that kills not only the body but the spirit, the kind of danger posed by *The Journal of Medical Ethics*. ❧



Don't Tell Me that Birth Control Is Carcinogenic!

LifeSite News

A press release issued on July 29th of this year by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a division of the World Health Organization (WHO), declared the little publicized classification of combined estrogen-progestogen oral contraceptives (OCs) as carcinogenic. The IARC placed the contraceptives into their Group 1 classification, the highest classification of carcinogenicity, used only “when there is sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in humans.”

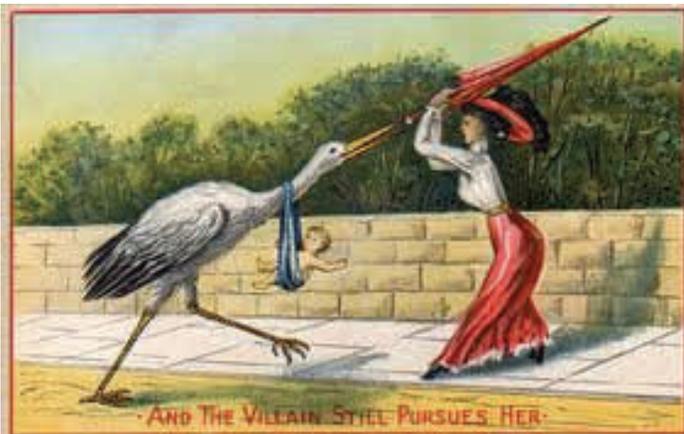
Combined estrogen-progestogen OCs are the most commonly prescribed forms of contraceptives. According to the IARC “worldwide, more than 100 million women - about 10% of all women of reproductive age - currently use combined hormonal contraceptives.”

This outright declaration by the World Health Organization of the proven dangers of combined OCs comes as an unexpected surprise to many who have been working for years to publicize their dangers. “I’m stunned that they would come out and say that, because they’ve been denying this for years,” said Toronto area MD and medical adviser to Campaign Life Coalition, Dr. Shea. But he added, “They’re really only admitting something that’s been known.”

In 2003 the National Cancer Institute (NCI) became one of the latest added to the list of scientific bodies that had found a substantially increased risk of several types of cancer amongst combined OC users, citing a “significant increase” of the risk of breast cancer, as well as an increase in the risk of cervical and liver cancers. Despite this admission, no significant steps have yet been taken to protect women’s health and to curb the use of combined OCs.

The IARC press release further confirms the NCI’s findings, declaring that: “Previously, combined oral contraceptives had been determined to be carcinogenic to humans, but only primary liver cancer was specifically implicated. The Working Group concluded that combined oral contraceptives alter the risk of several common cancers in women. They increase a woman’s risk of cervical cancer, breast cancer, and liver cancer.”

Despite the immediate danger to the nearly 100 million women worldwide who are regularly ingesting the newly-defined ‘carcinogenic’ contraceptive pills, the IARC did not recommend that the regular prescription and easy availability of combined OCs should undergo any review. In this the IARC parallels the National Cancer Institute’s study concluded with the recommendation that, instead of the obvious remedy of decreased use of the medically dangerous combined contraceptives, women should undergo frequent mammograms and Pap tests, to discover and curb already developing cancers. ☞



<http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/world-health-organization-classifies-contraceptives-as-highly-carcinogenic/>

Rising to Common Ground

By Stephanie Block

JustFaith's next major reading project is *Rising to Common Ground: Overcoming America's Color Lines* by Danny Duncan Collum. Collum is a contributing editor and columnist for the politically progressive *Sojourners* magazine and has written this book for "white American Catholics" who, along with other white Americans, "are the often unwitting carriers of the white supremacist virus in America." (preface)

Somewhat mis-titled, the book's discussion isn't really about abstract *race* relations in the US but is very specifically about the situation of Afro-Americans who are descended from slaves.

Comparing the health, income, and educational accomplishments of this demographic to "white people," Collum concludes that "a large number of African-Americans are trapped in ever-deeper poverty and falling further behind the American mainstream." (p 65) "The African-American poor are now heavily concentrated in inner-city neighborhoods where almost everyone is poor." (p. 66) Public hospitals and schools in these neighborhoods are under-equipped (pp 66-67); families in these neighborhoods are more likely to be broken (pp 94-99); and an enormous number of black men are incarcerated (pp 99-103).

This, Collum says, points "to something deep, powerful, and pervasive in American life that functions to the disadvantage of black people. It's something we can call structural or systemic racism..." (p. 3) The term "racism," in this sense, is used very specifically to mean *not* merely prejudice against another group of people but a "purpose of domination" that achieves its ends by means of oppressive and segregating actions. "A racist society, for instance, would be one in which people of one skin color are disproportionately poor, imprisoned, and underrepresented in the most prestigious professions." (p. 8) And, as he demonstrates, Afro-Americans *are* "disproportionately poor, imprisoned, and underrepresented in the most prestigious professions." Therefore, Collum concludes that the problem is covert but active racism.

If the problem is simply one of *skin color*, however, one must explain how it is that other people "of color" who have freely immigrated to the US are often better educated, demographically speaking, and economically more successful, at least by the first generation, than the native "Afro-American" population.

Collum hints at this distinction early in the book: "It is inevitable that, after three hundred years of constant reinforcement, many of these [negative] notions would be internalized by black people, too." (p. 15) He is more explicit by the end when he writes: "We've seen that most of America's racial injustices are rooted in the past – especially in the horror of slavery and the systematic dehumanization of Jim Crow." (p 105)

What is to be done? Collum has two, quite different approaches. The first of these involves the implicit approval of liberationism. This is presented to the reader in chapter 8, "Where to Start?" The chapter discusses a "colloquial English" translation of the Bible⁽¹⁾ that retells the New Testament in contemporary race-relation terms, explores "African-American Biblical Theology, reduces the history of the Catholic Church's consistent anti-slavery position to mere "verbal reprimands" (p. 81), and then presents current Catholic teaching as stating that the Christian's moral responsibility is not satisfied with "individual conversion and unity within the Church" but requires resisting "racism at every level through our educational institutions, national law, and international institutions" (p. 83). To whatever degree "resistance to racism" is understood through the liberationist's lens, such as continuing "reparations" to the descendants of slaves, however, it is not what the Church teaches as an appropriate or adequate response to the problem.

The book's second approach examines sociological problems in the "African-American" demographic and focuses particularly on the crisis of family life – single-parent households, out-of-wedlock births, high abortion rates, declining education and increased poverty – taking "place during the very time overt racial discrimination has begun to subside in America.... So the blame for this problem, which contributes so much to the disproportionate and continuing poverty of African-Americans, cannot be attributed entirely to racial discrimination" (p.96).

One would expect a book written by a Catholic to propose ways the Church might foster family life for all people, but the chapter glosses over this to focus instead on the US criminal justice system – and a supportive media – that dispro-



“Why fight over superficial differences...?”



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portionately targets black men, suggesting that reportage and prosecution of criminal behavior is a cause of broken family life rather than a consequence of it...and an example of covert racism.

The book ends on a particularly interesting note, recommending Alinskyian organizing as a vehicle within congregations to begin bridging the racial divide and building relationships of solidarity. Specifically, Collum discusses the work of Saul Alinsky's faith-based Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) and its off-shoot the PICO Network, that ideally bring segregated congregations "together in a...citywide network to act on values and interests they held in common — values such as nurturing children, achieving social justice, or creating broad-based economic development" (p. 129). It all sounds so idyllic and promising until one delves into what *specifically* is meant by "achieving social justice" or "creating broad-based economic development," which Collum doesn't attempt.

Therefore, the unavoidable conclusion of the book is that the Church's mandate to "resist racism" calls for participation in Alinskyian organizing. The JustFaith program doesn't push the point at this juncture (it will later on) but certainly leaves the possibility open. During weeks 10-12, JustFaith participants discuss Collum's book in great detail. Week 11 accepts the liberationist retelling of the Gospel and explores it. Week 12 asks what role the Christian community can play in furthering dialogue on the issues of reparation and affirmative action. Question 3 of this section is particularly interesting. "In addition to the policy actions in Chapter Twelve of the Collum book, we read of two examples of how the Church has been instrumental in addressing racism (pages 114-120). What efforts is your own parish or diocese involved in to address and dismantle racism?"⁽²⁾ Given the book's final chapter, any participant with experience in Alinskyian faith-based organizing will have ample opportunity to discuss it. ☞

¹ Clarence Jordan, Cotton Patch Gospel, Smyth & Helwys Publishers, published as a series throughout the late 60s, early 70s.

² JustFaith Catholic Version, Week 12 2011-2012, Facilitators' materials, page 6, question 3.

May Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting
May 25, 2012
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

Helpers of God's Precious Infants
Planned Parenthood Abortuary
701 San Mateo Blvd.
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays: 8 AM – 11:30 AM
Wednesdays: 12 Noon – 3:00 PM
For more information, call Phil Leahy:
(505) 440-3040

Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel
Tuesdays, Thursdays: noon
Fridays—Extraordinary Form of the Mass: 9:30 AM
For more information, call
(505) 266-4100



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“I must say that, among educated people, politics occupies far too great a proportion of time. . . . In truth, questions of higher spirit cannot even be compared to the sort of blinking frivolity of politics. The ultimate problems of life and death show the colossal nature of this difference even more. Modern mankind is characterized precisely by the loss of the ability to answer the principal problems of life and death. People are prepared to stuff their heads with anything, and to talk of any subject, but only to block off the contemplation of this subject. This is the reason for the increasing pettiness of our society, the concentration on the small and irrelevant.”

- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

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