

THIS ROCK

Catholic Apologetics
and Evangelization

The Cristeros and the Mexican Martyrs

By Christopher Check 12

Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide

By Leon Suprenant 20

Eros Needs the Refining Fire of Agape

By Christopher Kaczor 24

Pray Together, Stay Together

By Pete Vere



AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN THEOLOGY



Applications now being accepted for Fall 2007

THE MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL DEGREES IN THEOLOGY AT AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY recognize that fidelity to Catholic truth demands more—not less—commitment to deepening and broadening one's intelligence. We seek to reach up to the great minds and hearts of the many saints and scholars who over the millennia have contributed to the quest for wisdom and holiness, *scientia* and scholarship.



"The courage to engage the whole breadth of reason, and not the denial of its grandeur—this is the program with which a theology grounded in Biblical faith enters into the debates of our time."

—POPE BENEDICT XVI



Full tuition scholarships available to high-achieving applicants, including five-year scholarships with full tuition and generous stipends for doctoral students.



For more information and application material contact:

Ave Maria University

1025 Commons Circle

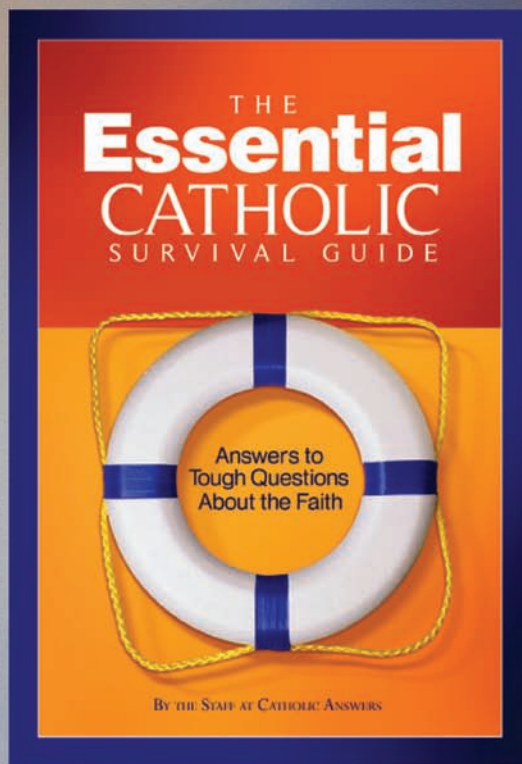
Naples, Florida 34119

877-283-8648

graduatetheology@avemaria.edu

www.avemaria.edu

The antidote to anti-Catholic attacks!



Here at Catholic Answers, we've found that the most effective products for countering attacks and clearing up misunderstandings have been our tracts. They've been around since the beginning of the apostolate and have resulted in many thousands of conversions.

And now you can find seventy of our best tracts compiled into one cohesive, well-organized book—*The Essential Catholic Survival Guide*. If you've ever wished you had the answers to anti-Catholic attacks right at your fingertips, this book is exactly what you need.

It is indexed by topic, so the right answer to important Catholic questions can be found instantly. Whether you're asked about papal infallibility, the institution of the Mass, or the reasoning behind the Church's stance on birth control, you'll find the answers in this *Survival Guide*.

You'll also learn the answers to questions such as these:

- Why do Fundamentalists argue that Christ spoke figuratively when he told his followers to "eat his flesh and drink his blood"?
- Is celibacy mandatory for all priests?
- Do Catholics believe that they must be "born-again" to be saved?
- What is an indulgence?
- What do Catholics and Protestants believe about Mary's virginity?
- What is the Catholic position on evolution?
- What does the Catholic Church teach about salvation?

The Essential Catholic Survival Guide can be used by anyone, anytime, anywhere to defend the Catholic faith. With the flip of a page, every question, criticism, attack, or myth can be answered quickly, easily, and convincingly.

It's the essence of Catholic apologetics—all rolled up into one attractive, easy-to-use manual that is destined to become the most effective weapon of its kind in defending the Catholic Church.

Prepare yourself to defend the Catholic faith with skill and charity by ordering your copy of *The Essential Catholic Survival Guide* today!

THE ESSENTIAL CATHOLIC SURVIVAL GUIDE

To order, visit shop.catholic.com or call 1-888-291-8000.

\$24.95

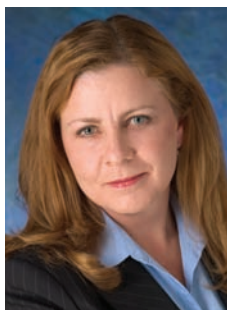
TR0507A
(MENTION THAT YOU
SAW THE AD IN THIS MONTH'S
ISSUE OF THIS ROCK.)

We've Had a Little Bit of Luck

Alfred P. Doolittle is the likable rogue of *My Fair Lady*,
the one who sings "With a Little Bit of Luck," which begins:

The Lord above gave man an arm of iron
So he could do his job and never shirk.
The Lord gave man an arm of iron—but

With a little bit of luck, with a little bit of luck
Someone else'll do the blinkin' work.



The lyrics go on to outline what God wants and what luck can do in other areas of life. Booze: "With a little bit of luck you'll give right in" (to temptation). Marriage: "With a little bit of luck you can have it all and not get hooked." Helping your neighbor: "With a little bit of luck, when he comes around you won't be home." Adultery: "With a little bit of luck you can see the bloodhound don't find out."

Alfie's ethical approach causes Colonel Pickering to cry, "Have you no morals, man?"

"No, no," Alfie replies. "I can't afford 'em, guv'nah, and neither could you if you was as poor as me."

Alfie rejects what he calls "middle-class morality," but it's really Christian morality he's talking about: temperance, chastity, charity, fidelity. Alfie's attitude is so singular that Professor Higgins jokingly calls him a "philosophical genius of the first order" and "one of the most original moralists in England." He warns Pickering that "if we listen to this man for another minute we shall have no convictions left."

Apparently we have listened to that man and others of his ilk. In today's society, Alfie's lack of morals is not shocking but rather the norm. We've watched any number of "philosophical geniuses" and "original moralists" crusade against temperance, chastity, charity, and fidelity.

In a society with Christian morals, a character like Alfie makes good comedy, but a whole society of Alfies is tragic. One aspect of that tragedy is that the noise it generates tends to drown out the voice of conscience—or to change the meaning of conscience altogether. But "[a] well-formed conscience is about doing what God wants, not what I want," as Leon Suprenant points out in his fine article beginning on page 20. He offers some tips for hearing that inner voice and understanding what it really means to follow our conscience.

To his credit, after Alfie inherits a fortune, he steps up to the plate, marries his mistress, and begins supporting his relations. There's hope for all of us.

THIS ROCK

Volume 18, Number 7

Publisher

Karl Keating

Editor

Cherie Peacock

Contributing Editors

Jimmy Akin, Joanna Bogle, Matthew
Bunson, Anthony E. Clark, Kenneth J.
Howell, Robert P. Lockwood

Associate Editor

Sophia Sproule

Art Director

Sherry Russell

Contents

© 2007 by Catholic Answers, Inc.
No portion of this magazine may be repro-
duced in any form without permission.

This Rock

(ISSN 1049-4561) is published ten times a
year (monthly except for combined
May/June and July/August issues) by
Catholic Answers, Inc., an IRC 501(C)(3)
nonprofit organization.

Subscriptions

One-year: \$39.95
Two-year: \$71.95
One-year, Canada and Mexico: \$59.95
International elsewhere: \$76.50
To subscribe, telephone (888) 291-8000,
visit our Web site at www.catholic.com,
or send payment to *This Rock*,
P.O. Box 199000,
San Diego, California 92159-9000.

Postmaster

Address changes to
This Rock, P.O. Box 199000,
San Diego, California 92159-9000.

Periodicals postage paid

at El Cajon, California, and at additional
mailing offices.



6

KEEP IT TOGETHER: ADVICE FROM THE TRENCHES 6

Revealed: secrets to a successful marriage! With hundreds of titles on how to achieve marital bliss lining bookstore shelves, why does the divorce rate remain steady? One simple reason: Getting married is easy, staying married is not. Here, a canon lawyer draws on his experience with marriage tribunals and offers basic advice for a loving, lasting relationship.

By Pete Vere, JCL



12

¡VIVA CRISTO REY! THE CRISTEROS VERSUS THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION 12

The persecution of the Catholic faith is as old as the faith itself. But few Americans are aware of the scourge visited on the faithful in neighboring Mexico less than a century ago. When an atheist regime seized control of the government, closed churches, and exiled and murdered priests, the *Cristeros* took up arms to defend the Church and her people. The martyrs of Mexico ensured the future of the faith.

By Christopher Check

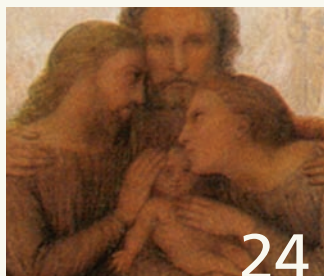


20

MORE THAN A FEELING: WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW YOUR CONSCIENCE 20

A notorious pro-choice advocate claims she “knows with every ounce of her being” that Catholics may disagree with Church teachings but still remain faithful. Her statement betrays a widespread—but mistaken—understanding of freedom of conscience. In fact, conscience is an interior, individual encounter with the voice of God, wherein we freely elect to follow his will.

By Leon J. Suprenant, Jr.



24

GOD OF DESIRE 24

“Love is not merely a sentiment,” writes Pope Benedict in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*. “A sentiment can be a marvelous first spark, but it is not the fullness of love.” The fullness of love requires that romantic love (*eros*) be purified by self-giving love (*agape*). The Holy Father explains how God’s love for his people is the perfect union of *eros* and *agape*.

By Christopher Kaczor

Departments

- 2 *Reasons for Hope*
We’ve had a little bit of luck.
By Cherie Peacock
- 4 *Letters*
- 30 *Damascus Road*
An unexpected sequel.
By Leona Choy.
- 32 *By the Book*
Hail Mary, conceived without sin.
By Tim Staples
- 36 *Eyes to See*
Let your face shine on us.
By Michael Schrauzer
- 40 *Truth Be Told*
An inquisition primer.
By Robert P. Lockwood
- 44 *Quick Questions*
- 48 *Last Writes*
Pop quiz redux.
By Karl Keating

On the Cover

The Angelus (1857) by Jean Francois Millet. A couple pauses to recite the

Angelus prayer:

The angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary . . .

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to thy word. Hail Mary . . .

And the Word was made flesh: And dwelt among us. Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Good Thursday?

I just received your latest edition of *This Rock* and I was especially interested in the article by Tim Staples on “How Do We Explain the Passover ‘Discrepancy’?” (May/June 2007). I happen to have been doing a lot of research on this subject and I immediately saw a serious “discrepancy” in Mr. Staples’ article.

Mr. Staples said, “And remember, that means the *fourteenth* of Nisan would have been *Thursday*. This would have been the *day of preparation* when the Lamb was slain and the *Passover meal eaten in the evening*.”

Now all four facts that I emphasize are very accurate. At the time Christ died the fourteenth of Nisan was a Thursday, and that day was called “the day of preparation,” and in the evening the regular Passover meal was eaten.

However, under the heading “Just The Facts, Please” Mr. Staples immediately says, “We know for certain that our Lord *died on Friday* (cf. Matt. 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54, and John 19:31).”

It just so happens that each one of the verse references cited above from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all say the very same thing: namely that the day Christ was crucified was “the day of preparation.” And the day of

preparation, as you noted before, was *Thursday*, not Friday! So the one thing “we know for certain” is that our Lord DID NOT DIE on Friday!

In addition, I cite no less an authority than the present Pope, Benedict XVI. I heard the announcement of his Thursday (April 5) homily over the radio and finally got a copy.

In the narrations of the evangelists, there is an apparent contradiction. Between the *Gospel of John*, on the one hand, and what, on the other hand, Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us. *According to John, Jesus died on the cross precisely at the moment in which, in the Temple, the Passover*



UNIVERSITY
OF DALLAS

EXCELLENT ACADEMICS...

“Those interested in a first-class liberal arts education, in a Catholic environment that’s open to engaging everyone’s arguments in search of the truth, should look very seriously at the University of Dallas—to my mind, one of the very best Catholic universities in America.”

—George Weigel, biographer
of Pope John Paul II



To learn more about our nationally recognized
Core Curriculum, please visit www.udallas.edu/undergrad/core.cfm

AUTHENTICALLY CATHOLIC...

The University as a whole is shaped by the long tradition of Catholic Learning and is faithful to the Magisterium.

To read about our President’s commitment
to faithful Catholic education, please visit
www.udallas.edu/administration/presletters.cfm



UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

www.udallas.edu • 1-800-628-6999
Irving, Texas Rome, Italy

lamb was being sacrificed. His death and the sacrifice of the lamb coincided. (All emphases mine.) This means that he died on the eve of Passover, and that, therefore, he could not have personally celebrated the paschal supper; at least that is what it would seem.

On the contrary, according to the three synoptic evangelists, the Last Supper of Jesus was a paschal supper, in its traditional form. He introduced the innovation of the gift of his body and blood. This contradiction, until a few years ago, seemed impossible to resolve . . .

The discovery of the manuscripts of Qumran has led us to a convincing possible solution that while not accepted by all, is highly probable. We can now say that what John referred to is historically correct. Jesus truly spilled his blood on the eve of Passover at the hour of the sacrifice of the lambs. However, he celebrated Passover with his disciples probably according to the calendar of Qumran, that is to say, at least one day earlier—he celebrated without a lamb, like the Qumran community who did not recognize the Temple of Herod and [who] was waiting for a new temple. (Zenit.org, qtd. in *The Wanderer*, April 19, 2007)

This means that, according to the pope, Jesus died on a Thursday of the “Passion Week” and not on the traditional Friday, which has been celebrated for the last 1682 years since the council of Nicaea in 325. It was at that council that the confusion started.

—Jack W. Langford
Burlleson, Texas

Tim Staples replies: I very much appreciated your comments. But I think we can clear up the difficulties you have with my article. You not only disagree with my holding to the traditional day of Christ’s crucifixion, but you go so far as to say

that “we know for certain . . . our Lord DID NOT DIE on Friday!” And you seem to base your assertion on two points.

1. “The day of preparation,” according to the Gospels, would have been Thursday. And that is the day Jesus was crucified according to the text. Thus, Jesus would have been crucified on Thursday, rather than Friday. 2. You cited Pope Benedict XVI, from his homily on Holy Thursday, April 5, 2007 as agreeing with you. You cite the Pope as saying:

According to John, Jesus died on the cross precisely at the moment in which, in the Temple, the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, his death and the sacrifice of the lambs coincided. This means that he died on the eve of Passover . . .

Would not “the eve of Passover” represent Thursday? Your questions are good ones. I will respond in two points:

1. As I said in my article, “the day of preparation,” in the Gospels, speaks in accord with the way the Passover was celebrated in the temple and by the priests. Though a strict observance of the date of Passover would have had “the day of preparation” to be on Thursday, the fourteenth of Nisan, the common practice of the day was similar to modern practice in the Church. Feasts could be, and often were, moved to the closest Sabbath. Thus, “the day of preparation,” when the lambs were actually slain would have been Friday, rather than Thursday. Thus, Christ would have been crucified on Friday, “the day of preparation” (cf. Matt. 27:62). In my article, I did not have the space to get into precisely how the apostles could have celebrated the Passover if there were no sacrificed lambs to use for the liturgical observance. Pope Benedict XVI, in his above-mentioned Holy Thursday homily, actually gives a very plausible, though not definitive, answer to that question. He argues: “Consequently, Jesus celebrated the Passover without a lamb—no, not without a lamb: instead of the lamb he gave himself, his body and his blood.”

2. Your second point is in error, but it is not your fault. When you quoted Pope

Benedict XVI as saying, “This means [Christ] would have died on the eve of the Passover,” you were quoting from *The Wanderer*, which was quoting from Zenit.org online. Unfortunately, the good folks at Zenit.org mistranslated the text. If you go to the Vatican Web site (www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070405_coena-domini_en.html) you can find the proper translation: “However, this means that he must have died the day before Easter.”

The original Italian—the language in which the Pope composed and spoke his homily—uses the word Pasqua, which means Easter. The Italian word for Passover is Pesach. Understanding that Easter begins with the vigil on Holy Saturday, “the day before Easter” would refer to Friday, not Thursday. The Pope was actually arguing for the traditional day of Good Friday to be the day Jesus was crucified.

Correction:

The author photo on page 13 of our July/August issue incorrectly depicted Aghi Clovis. Joanna Bogle’s picture appears below. We regret the mistake.



We welcome your comments, insights, and questions regarding articles in this issue. Concise letters about a single subject are best. Letters may be edited. Please e-mail letters to thisrock@catholic.com or write to us at PO Box 199000, San Diego, CA 92159-9000.

If you would like to discuss articles online, please visit the This Rock discussion thread on the Catholic Answers Forums at: <http://forums.catholic.com/>. Past issues of the magazine are available at www.catholic.com.

The Angelus (1857) by Jean Francois Millet, located in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. Praying together is vital to maintaining a healthy marriage.



KEEP IT
TOGETHER:

*Advice from
the Trenches*

BY PETE VERE, JCL

ART RESOURCE



My wife and I have been married for seven years—about the same time I have served as a canon lawyer investigating the validity of marriages. I have found that marriages break down for many reasons, and that Catholics are not immune from today's culture of instant gratification and no-fault divorce.

Working at the tribunal, I see a lot of failed marriages. Not all of them will be declared invalid (or “annulled,” as common parlance incorrectly has it). But each of them represents a broken relationship. The tragedy is multiplied when children are involved. They see their home torn in two and the stability of family life cut from under them. They wrestle with whether each parent still loves them.

While marital breakdown is not always preventable, my experience as both a canon lawyer and a married man have taught me five things Catholic couples can do to strengthen their marriage.

Pray Together

The first thing a couple must do if they wish a strong marriage is pray

together. One of the biggest surprises I encountered in tribunal work is that many couples, including those who are active in the Church and the pro-life movement, do not pray together as couples. When children come along, this evolves into failure to pray as a family.

A gentleman once approached me after a talk and explained he was going through a rough patch in his marriage. He was active in the Knights of Columbus, the local pro-life movement, and a men's prayer circle to which I belonged. His wife headed both the parish's rosary society and the local society for Catholic women, and she brought Holy Communion to the sick after Mass each Sunday.

“You've prayed together about your marriage problems, right?” I asked.

“We’ve prayed about them,” he replied, “but not together.”

He then shared that their extracurricular church activities ate up a lot of the schedule. He and his wife seldom found time to pray together. They often prayed, but not as a couple. She faithfully led the rosary at the parish every Thursday, which left her too tired to pray when she got home. Instead of staying for a drink with the boys, he would stop at the perpetual adoration chapel on his way home from the Knights of Columbus. She was in bed when he finally walked through the door. The only time the couple prayed together was at Sunday Mass—assuming no conflicts were present in their schedule.

Assisting at the parish or with a local Catholic apostolate is good. However, it should never replace time with one’s spouse. Apart from our relationship with God, marriage is the most important relationship we will enter (if it is the vocation to which God calls us). The marriage covenant mirrors the covenant between God and His people. Several passages throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament make reference to this.

A couple cannot become one in flesh unless they also strive to become one in spirit. Thus a couple should make time to pray together—not just pray, not just for each other, but together as a couple.

Prayer reinforces the sacramental bond God has created between the couple. It reminds them that God stands at the center of their relationship. Additionally, it teaches them to rely upon God and trust in his providence as they face the many difficulties life throws at them.

Prayer as a couple becomes all the more important when children are born into the marriage. “The family that prays together, stays together,” was a favorite saying of the late Fr. Patrick Peyton. Marriage is the foundation of the family. Children learn from the example of their parents. A child’s greatest incentive to prayer is watching mom and dad pray. Prayer as a married couple is an essential building block to family prayer.

Eat Together

Fast food, T.V. dinners, microwave meals, nutrition drinks—as a society we seem to have forgotten what real food looks like. What’s even more disturbing is that, in the name of convenience, we have forgotten what real food tastes like. This is unfortunate: Nothing brings together friends and family like a delicious home-cooked meal. We have forgotten about real food because we have forgotten about the family meal.

Time and time again at the tribunal I have seen this simple fact: Long before a married couple stops living

together, their schedule gets the better of their day and they stop eating together. The family meal is becoming a museum piece.

Children can become more susceptible to a culture of sex and violence simply because supper is no longer a sacred time in which families come together to share their day. The meal offers a family the perfect opportu-

A couple cannot become one



nity to pull together as one, to combine talents, to converse, and to enjoy the fruits of a common labor. Family meals are not just about nutrition; they are fundamental to family life.

Take a good look at the Gospels. Jesus uses meals to mark important events in his life and to impart his more important teachings. For example, his first public miracle took place over a meal. At the wedding feast of Cana, the bride and groom ran out of wine. Jesus’ first public miracle, at the urging of our Blessed Mother, was to keep the meal going by changing water into wine. Thus Christ blessed the marriage by blessing the meal.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes is another good example. Having fed the multitudes, our Lord chose this moment to reveal that he is the Bread of Life, that his flesh is real food and that his blood is real drink. Our Lord reveals one of his most profound theological truths—the mystery of transubstantiation—over a meal. Additionally, he institutes the sacrament to which this truth applies most directly, the Eucharist, during the Last Supper. Thus the Mass is modeled on the family meal, with our fellow Catholics being brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sitting around the table and sharing a good meal, especially one the family has prepared together, helps build a strong marriage and a strong family life.

Talk Together

“We stopped communicating.” This is by far the most common answer when tribunal petitioners are asked

grow up. If you’re serious about divorce, I’ll quit the campaign now.”

That was the last time the candidate assumed his wife knew what was in his heart. From then on, he took time out of the campaign each day to meet her for lunch or picked up some flowers for her. Sometimes it was just a two-minute call to ask for her prayers and tell her how

in flesh unless they also strive to become one in spirit.

why their marriage fell apart. Communication is key to every marriage. Through communication, spouses say “I love you,” discover each other’s needs and wants, learn the other person’s likes and dislikes. When communication breaks down, a marriage begins to falter.

The best example I recall comes not from the tribunal, but from the campaign of an aspiring pro-life politician who approached me for help with his communication strategy. The first thing I advised him was to take at least a half-hour a day out of the campaign schedule to communicate with his wife.

Spending eighteen hours a day in the public eye, going door-to-door, encouraging campaign workers, and preparing for town hall debates were taking a toll on his marriage. His wife was overwhelmed from having to assume all the responsibilities for the children and the home while maintaining full-time employment. She wanted to talk when he arrived home late at night, but he crawled into bed and fell asleep. He was always too busy or too tired to make time for his wife until, late one night, he came home to discover she had changed the locks.

“I need you to help me write a speech for the media,” he said to me the next morning. “I don’t care how it ends, but the opening line has to be: ‘I love my wife. I love her more than anyone else on earth. I know I’m not good at expressing my feelings, but I would rather lose the campaign than lose her.’”

The speech made the front page of the local paper. It became the talk of the local coffee shops, and his numbers began to rise in the polls. More importantly, when his wife saw the paper, she marched into the campaign office, looked her husband in the eye, and said in front of the volunteers: “Why didn’t you tell me these things before? I made an appointment this morning to file for divorce.”

“I assumed you knew how much I love you,” my friend replied. “That’s why I’m running. I don’t like how government is destroying marriage and the family. I want our children to have what we have when they

much he appreciated the stability she provided to the family. Most importantly, he told her each day that he loved her.

Today, they teach communication skills to engaged and newlywed couples. They share how lack of communication nearly destroyed their marriage and how learning to communicate brought God’s blessing upon their marriage.

Play Together

One of the first patterns I noticed in marriage tribunals concerned adultery: The third party was usually a co-worker, and the adulterous relationship usually began after a period of conflicting work schedules between the married couple. When a person spends more time with a co-worker than with his spouse, it becomes easier to relate to the co-worker.

Conversely, the strongest marriages are those in which the spouses make time for each other. After communicating with God and communicating with each other, it is important that couples play together. This is why both sets of my grandparents had strong marriages.

As a child, I spent one week of my summer vacation every year with each set of grandparents. My maternal grandparents were upper-class and of British Protestant extraction, while my paternal grandparents were blue-collar, Catholic, and immigrants. One thing they had in

Further Reading

The Catholic Family Handbook by Fr. Lawrence Lovasik
(available from Catholic Answers)

Good News About Sex and Marriage by Christopher West
(available from Catholic Answers)

Love and Responsibility by Karol Wojtyla (Ignatius)

Marriage: the Mystery of Faithful Love by Dietrich von Hildebrand (Sophia Institute)

Three to Get Married by Fulton J. Sheen (Scepter) ■



*Our marriage is like our spiritual life:
the more effort we put into it,
the more God can work his grace.*

common, though, was no television in the living room. They kept the television in the den.

My grandparents had arranged their living room so that the couches, love seats, and armchairs formed a semicircle around the fireplace. The same is true with the living room layout of my wife's grandparents and many older people I have met throughout my life. Years later, a priest pointed out to me that this arrangement compels you to look at the person sitting across from you. This in turn leads to conversation, board games, storytelling, and other family activities. In short, rather than vegetate in front of the television, my grandparents spent their evenings entertaining each other.

Our marriage is like our spiritual life: the more effort we put into it, the more God can work His grace. Similarly, the more time we spend with our spouse, the more we learn about him or her, the more we open the marriage to God's blessing. Thus it is important that couples find activities where they can relax and have fun together. These games can even be tied to household chores.

Hold Hands

"Don't let me catch you again," said Fr. Joe.

I jumped. My wife and I, newlyweds, were watching the sunset from the boardwalk. Fr. Joe, a canon lawyer with the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, had snuck up behind us.

"Doing what, Father?" I asked.

"Not holding hands. You ought to be holding hands in public. Otherwise how will people know that you're married and love each other?"

My wife smiled. She had told me the same thing earlier in the evening. I laughed. I was starting my first tribunal job the next morning and holding hands was the last thing on my mind.

Now I know better. Lack of visible affection is almost always noticeable in troubled marriages. I spent the next month reading witness testimony that

stated the couple never held hands, never kissed, and never showed affection in public. Seven years later, a I can confirm that witnesses to a broken marriage most often point to a lack of visible affection.

Affection is important because God created us as physical beings with the capacity to feel. Quite often, a hug is more reassuring to our spouse than mere words. Affection allows a couple to physically express their love for each other.

Affection should not be confused with sex. The conjugal act is a physical expression of love that should be limited to the privacy of the marital bed. Affection, on the other hand, encompasses all expressions of physical love between a married couple—including those suitable for public witness.

Holding hands, hugging, and kissing hello and goodbye strengthen a marriage. Marriage is a sacrament, and these little acts of affection are the sacramentals. They permit a couple to reaffirm their love for one another, reminding them of the vows that led to their covenant. Through these actions, the couple provide public witness to their love, their relationship, and God's grace in their lives.

Marriage is a wonderful institution. Through the marriage covenant, a man and a woman are brought together to love one another. Marriage forms the basis of the family unit and of society. When both husband and wife are baptized, the marriage is also a sacrament, meaning it becomes a source of God's grace. So, take the time to pray together, eat together, talk together, play together, and to hold hands! It's worth it. ■



Pete Vere is a canon lawyer and Catholic journalist. He is the co-author of Surprised by Canon Law and Surprised by Canon Law 2: More Questions About Canon Law (Servant Books).

Can We Atone for Our Sins?

PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC VIEWS

Too often the accusations Protestants and Catholics make against each other are based on misunderstandings; the two groups fail to appreciate that they are using terms differently. This is especially true when it comes to the doctrine of salvation. Over and over again, individuals get distracted by semantics while they agree on substance.

This is not to say there are not differences between Protestants and Catholics on matters of salvation. The common Protestant assertion that it is impossible for a true Christian to lose his salvation is a clear example. This is a serious difference—not merely a matter of terminology—and it must not be ignored, for it has dire spiritual consequences. There remain semantic differences, which must be identified, clarified, and removed from theological dispute.

One of the greatest semantic misunderstandings concerns the way Catholics use the terms *salvation*, *atonement*, and *redemption*. Protestants have a distinctive and narrowly focused set of meanings for these terms, and when they read Catholic documents using these terms in larger senses, it appears to them that

Catholics are denying the sufficiency of Christ's cross.

For example, it would upset many Protestants to read Catholic books and encounter the statement that one may atone for one's iniquity by faithfulness and love. "No one can atone for their sins," they might exclaim. "That is a denial of the sufficiency of the cross; only Christ can make atonement for us!"

Well, that's true. Only Christ can make atonement for us in one sense (the most important sense), because only he can deliver us from the eternal consequences of our sins. But this is not the only sense in which one can atone for sins. We can prove this because the statement that love and faithfulness atone for iniquity is straight out of the Bible. It happens to be from the book of Proverbs: "By love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil" (Prov. 16:6).

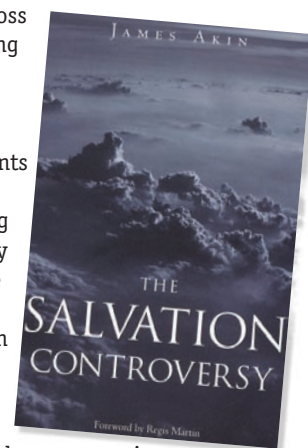
Since it is true that only Christ can atone for our sins in the most important sense, we must conclude that Proverbs 16 is speaking of atonement in a *different* sense. Christ alone can atone for the eternal effects of our sins, so we must conclude that Proverbs 16 speaks of love and faithfulness resulting

in a non-eternal atoning for sin; in other words, a temporal rather than an eternal atonement.

Unfortunately, most Protestants have lived so long with an incomplete presentation of the biblical doctrine of the atonement that they are aware only of the eternal aspect of atonement and find themselves at a loss when encountering passages in the Bible such as Proverbs 16:6.

Many Protestants have heard anti-Catholic preaching so often that they unconsciously are led to use a double standard when reading Catholic works. Reading the Bible, they accept its terminology concerning temporal atonement, but if Catholics in real life start using the same language the Bible uses on this subject, they are accused of teaching blasphemous, anti-Christian doctrines that deny the sufficiency of Christ's cross.

The only way to remedy this tendency is to point it out—to bring it into the light.



To order *The Salvation Controversy*, call 1-888-291-8000 or visit shop.catholic.com.

¡Viva Cristo Rey!

The Cristeros versus the Mexican

Imagine going to confession on a Saturday afternoon only to find no priest available. You drive to nearby—or even distant—churches and encounter only frustrated parishioners facing the same situation. A couple with a new baby cannot find a priest to baptize him. The last time anyone in the group attended Mass was months ago. This nightmare gives some sense of the profound evil that gripped Mexico nearly a century ago.

Socialist historians from Mexico and Russia have argued that the Cristeros were superstitious peasants manipulated by elites who felt threatened by the revolution's promise of progress and justice. To make such arguments they had to ignore the facts of the story (the wealthy of Mexico, including practicing Catholics, opposed the uprising), as well as the eleven centuries of Catholic militancy that informed it. Seduced by Marxist errors and Masonic superstitions, revolutionaries declared war on the Catholic Church. They seized control of the government and, in 1917, wrote a socialist constitution packed with anticlerical articles with the goal of marginalizing the Church's influence—if not driving her from Mexico altogether.

Backed by the full force of federal law, the Revolutionary Government confiscated all Church property, including hospitals, monasteries, convents, and schools. Priests were forbidden to wear their clerics in public. They were not allowed to express opinions on

politics, even in private conversation. They could not seek justice in the Mexican courts. To take a religious vow became a criminal act. All foreign clergy were deported.

In 1926, the president of Mexico, Plutarco Elias Calles, added teeth to the persecution with additions to the penal code. The “Calles Law,” as it came to be known, called for uniform enforcement throughout the country of the Constitution's anticlerical articles. It threatened severe sanctions for violations and for government officials who failed to enforce them. “As long as I am President of the Republic, the Constitution of 1917 will be obeyed,” he vowed, saying he would not be moved by the “wailing of sacristans or the *pujidos* (groans) of the over-pious” (David C. Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey!: The Cristero Rebellion, and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico*, 65).

Self-Proclaimed Enemies of God

Calles was, in one sense, just another anticlerical revolutionary in a century-old series of anticlerical revolutionaries. For him the Church represented a past he wished to see liquidated.

Unable to operate under these conditions, the Mexican bishops, after agonized deliberations and consultation with the Holy See, suspended public worship on July 31, 1926. Three bishops went into hiding; the rest left the country in exile. The next day, for the first time in more than four hundred years,

PRIESTS WHO REMAINED IN MEXICO FACED TWO CHOICES:

Revolution

no priest in Mexico ascended *ad altare Dei* to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Priests who remained in Mexico faced two choices: cooperation with the government or a life on the run. Those who cooperated were forced to abandon their parishes, to move to urban areas, and to register with their state governments—which now had the power to set clerical quotas. In the state of Tabasco, for example, Governor Tomás Canabal restricted the number of priests in his state to six, one for every thirty thousand citizens. He demanded these six take wives. In true Marxist fashion, he renamed his capital city, San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist), to Villa Hermosa (beautiful villa), and named his children Lenin, Lucifer, and Satan. His business card identified him as “The Personal Enemy of God.”

A courageous minority of priests refused to register. They went into hiding and roamed Mexico by night and in disguise, doing their best to bring the sacraments to the faithful. If caught, they were arrested, fined, jailed, and sometimes tortured and executed.

Following the suspension of public worship, the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, an organization formed by middle-class Catholic intellectuals, circulated a petition signed by two million Mexicans demanding constitutional reform. Their cries were ignored; the government went so far as to deny the petition existed. The people



The body of Fr. Gumerindo Sedano, who was martyred by the Mexican government in 1927. The sign reads “This is the priest Sedano.” The grisly scene was meant to frighten Christians into submission to the atheistic Revolutionary Government. Fr. Sedano was the parish priest in Zapotlan, Jalisco. Jalisco was one of the biggest hotbeds of the Cristero uprising.

responded with a nationwide boycott of government transportation services, energy, and entertainment. The boycott failed because Mexico’s wealthy—including many practicing Catholics—felt the sting of the boycott and complained to the government. Federal police were sent in to break up picket lines. By January 1927, many of the faithful concluded that they had exhausted all peaceful means of protest. The Mexican landowning peasant class in the rural west took up arms.

COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OR A LIFE ON THE RUN.

Bishops: Fight or Flight?

Was this the effect that the bishops had desired? In the case of a few, perhaps, yes. Bishop Leopoldo Lara y Torres of Tacambaro wrote to Calles telling him that the bishops were prepared to seal their protest “in blood.” The fiery tactics of Bishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez of Guadalajara made Rome nervous; he endured three exiles for his public opposition to the government. Bishop José de Jesús Manríquez y Zárate of Huejutla had been arrested once already for circulating tracts condemning Calles and for using his pulpit to denounce his administration. Bishop Zárate would later help supply the Cristeros, and he even considered taking the field with them. For most of the bishops, however, suspension of public worship was a non-violent protest designed to bring popular pressure on the government.

The non-violent view was shared by Jose Anacleto Gonzáles Flores, the heroic scholar and founder of the Catholic-action organization the Unión Popular. As street demonstrations devolved into street violence, however, Flores reluctantly joined forces with the National League’s René Capistrán Garza in a nationwide call to arms. Flores told his followers that they were headed for Calvary.

If one of you should ask me what sacrifice I am asking of you in order to seal the pact we are going to celebrate, I will tell you in two words: your blood. If you want to proceed, stop dreaming of places of honor, military triumphs, braid, luster, victories, and authority over others. Mexico needs a tradition of blood in order to cement its free life of tomorrow. For that work my life is available, and for that tradition I ask yours. (Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey!*, 110)

Flores was martyred after an ordeal of brutal torture during which he was hung by his thumbs while federal soldiers skinned the soles of his feet. Before he died, he accomplished much more than organizing a military uprising. He and the leaders of the Unión Popular operated catechesis programs for children and adults and relief efforts for the poor. Flores understood that a military victory would be hollow if there were no Catholic Mexico to replace Revolutionary Mexico. He was beatified in 1999 by Pope John Paul II.

No Support from Northern Neighbors

When the Cristeros took up arms in January 1927, they had very few arms to take up, only their battle cry, “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” The uprising occurred almost simultaneously in small towns and villages in a dozen western states including Zacatecas, Jalisco, Guanajuato,

continued on p. 16

Mexico's Tarcisius: José

In 1913, in the state of Michoacán, a boy was born to Macario and Maria Sánchez del Río. They called him José. Macario and Maria were cattle ranchers who loved Jesus Christ with all their hearts and who reared their four children, of whom José was the third, to do the same. José cultivated a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe and said his rosary each day with great care. He instructed the other young children of his town in the Catholic faith, and encouraged them to make holy hours before the Blessed Sacrament. José loved to play marbles with his companions, and he learned to ride and care for horses. When José was thirteen, his older brothers, Macario and Miguel, left home to join the Cristeros. José desired to join them, but his mother forbade it. For a year he begged her to let him go. “Mother,” he said, “Will you deny me the chance to go to heaven, and so soon?”

At last his mother relented, and with tears in her eyes watched her youngest son ride off to join the crusade. The Cristero commander in José’s town refused the boy’s appeal to enlist, so he made his way some twenty or thirty miles to the next town, Cotija, where he presented himself to the Cristero commander, Prudencio Mendoza.

“What contribution can so small a boy make to our army?”

“I ride well. I know how to tend horses, clean weapons and spurs, and how to fry beans and tortillas.”

Mendoza was inspired by the boy’s grit, so he made him the aide of the Cristero General Rubén Guízar Morfin. Impressed by José’s service, Morfin promoted him to bugler. His job was to ride alongside the general in combat, carrying his battle standard and delivering the general’s orders with his horn. The soldiers of José’s regiment, inspired by his piety and fervor, nicknamed him Tarcisius after the Roman altar boy who died protecting the Blessed Sacrament from a pagan mob.

On February 6, 1928, the Cristero army was overwhelmed by the federal army in fierce and bloody combat outside of Cotija. General Morfin’s horse was shot, and it looked as if he would soon be captured by the federal troops. José leapt off of his horse.

“General!” he shouted. “Take my mount and escape to safety. You are of far greater importance to the Cristero cause than I am.”

Sánchez del Río

Helping Morfin up into the saddle, José delivered a hard swat across the backside of the horse and sent it galloping away. He then took his rifle and bandolier and, taking cover behind a rock, began shooting the federal soldiers closing around him. At last the boy ran out of ammunition, and standing up shouted to the enemy, "I have not surrendered. I have only stopped shooting you because I am out of cartridges."

When the federal soldiers saw that they had been fired upon by a boy, they seized him in a fury. They put José in irons and dragged him off to the local church, which they had converted into a jail, a stable for their horses, and a coop for roosters they used in cockfights. These they had leashed to the church's monstrance. Jose scolded the soldiers for desecrating a holy place.

"Now we will see, *hombrecito*, how tough you are!" they sneered.

To test his resolve, they forced José to watch as they took another captured Cristero, tortured him, and hanged him from a telegraph pole. Instead of looking away, José encouraged the prisoner, telling him that they would soon meet up in heaven. For two days, José was locked in the sacristy of the church, during which time he wrote to his mother, telling her that he had no fear, that he had welcomed the will of God and looked forward to dying in the light of our Lord.

The captain of the guard offered José his freedom in exchange for information about the Cristeros, including the names of the people who were supplying them. José refused, so they pinned him down and cut the skin off the soles of his feet. At eleven at night, they marched José to the cemetery on the edge of town, all the while telling him that if he would deny Jesus Christ they would spare his life.

"¡Viva Cristo Rey!" shouted José, the rallying cry of the Cristeros. "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" over and over as he limped in his bloodied feet over the gravel and twigs. "Long Live Christ the King! Long Live the Virgin of Guadalupe!" At the graveyard, José was pushed into a shallow grave. Struggling to his feet he again shouted, "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" To avoid the sound of gunfire, the commander of the firing squad ordered his men to stab the boy with their bayonets. "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" Again the bayonet into his side. "¡Viva Santa Maria de Guadalupe!"

"Say 'Death to Christ the King' and save your life!" demanded the captain of the guard.

"¡Viva Cristo Rey!"

CNS PHOTO BY ARTURO CAMPOS CEDILLO



The beatification ceremony for thirteen Mexican martyrs in Guadalajara, Mexico on November 20, 2005. The image held up is of José Sánchez del Río.

The captain lost all patience and drew his own pistol. The first bullet struck José in the head, knocking him to the ground. As blood pooled next to his face, José, in a final act of defiance against the enemies of Jesus Christ who had taken over his country, dipped his hand in his blood and with it drew a cross in the dirt, then touched his lips to the cross. Six more bullets at point-blank range sent the martyr into the arms of his Savior. ■

THERE WERE MASS EXECUTIONS IN JALISCO, AND REPORTS OF CRISTERO

Durango, Michoacán, and Colima. Hundreds of small, poorly organized bands of sharecroppers and rancheros bearing machetes and a few rifles took over local municipalities by disarming the garrisons at federal outposts, as well as local police and militia units.

Lack of a long-term plan, however, took some of the steam out of these initial victories. Capistrán Garza had been a great one for creating pious fervor, but he was not the man to organize an armed rebellion. His job, as he saw it, was to cross the border and stir up sympathy for the Cristero cause among U.S. Catholics,

Torture and Death

While Cristeros often spared the lives of captured federal soldiers, the reverse was not true. Cristeros who were captured in battle were executed after undergoing torture designed to force the Catholic soldiers to reveal military secrets and to deny the faith. Electric shock, burning with blow torches, hanging by thumbs, and broken bones were common. It was also common to drag prisoners behind a horse and then quarter them alive. A widespread form of torture was to flay the soles of the feet and force the victim to walk on rock salt. Nonetheless, many Cristero prisoners died bravely, and the accounts of their deaths inspired their brothers-in-arms.

Priests captured by the Mexican government, whether they were actively serving with the Cristeros or had simply refused to register with the government, were hanged or shot. Among them was the sixty-two year old Fr. Mateo Correa Magallanes, who refused to tell federal officers what Cristero prisoners had told him in confession. Most famous of the martyred priests is Bl. Miguel Pro, unjustly implicated in a failed assassination attempt on Calles' successor, Álvaro Obregón. Pro died before a firing squad with his arms outstretched like our Lord crucified, shouting “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” Calles ordered the execution photographed, hoping that the grisly images would discourage Catholics supporting the Cristeros. But the photos had the opposite effect, and soon Calles was forbidding papers to print them. Although Fr. Pro himself was not part of any armed rebellion, his martyrdom inspired others to take up arms in support of the Cristeros. ■

sympathy that would translate into large gifts of cash with which to buy desperately needed ammunition. Garza knew that American support would dictate the outcome of the war, but the U.S. bishops were reluctant to give any sign of supporting an armed rebellion against a government recognized by the United States. Meanwhile, most of the Mexican bishops were looking for a negotiated settlement. Garza's northern sojourn yielded almost no fruit.

Knowing nothing of the diplomatic bargaining that their uprising had generated, the Cristeros pressed ahead with their war for the soul of Mexico. In some regions they were clearly winning; in others, at least they were holding their own. Taking over one rural village at a time, they began not only better to organize their army, but also to organize alternate governments in the territories they had liberated. They controlled a wide swath of towns and cities in the state of Zacatecas. The region of Coalcomán in western Michoacán sent Calles formal notification of its succession from Mexico.

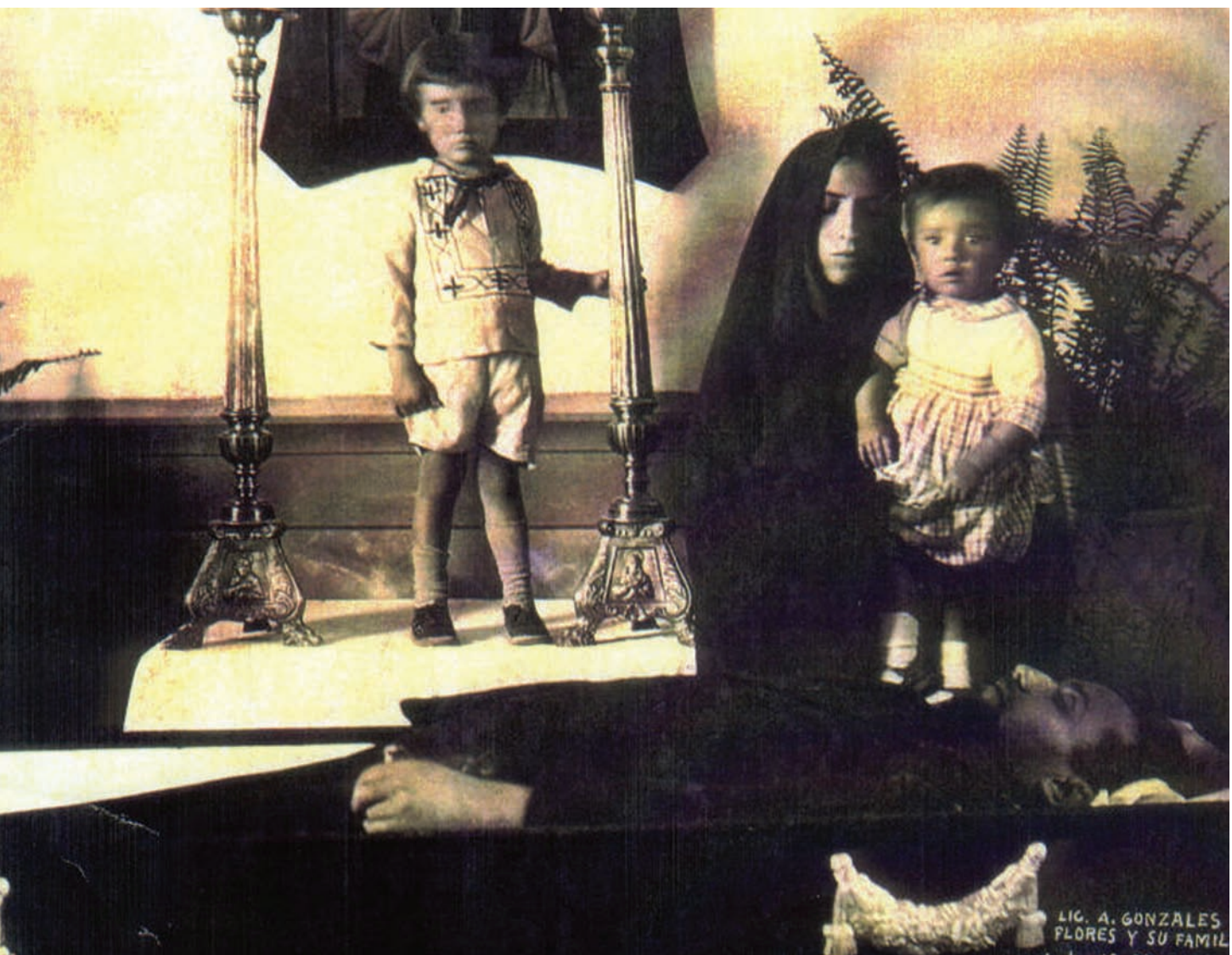
Municipal governments under Cristero control collected taxes for the war effort but also discharged the ordinary functions of civil government, such as school administration. Deeply conscious of the Christian nature of their movement, Cristero lawmakers took a hard line on moral behavior. Unmarried couples were required to marry or separate. Prostitution, gambling, and public drunkenness were severely punished, and rape could draw a sentence of death. Catholic social justice informed Cristero economic policy, which forbade speculation in corn and other crops afflicted by shortages resulting from the war.

Women Wage War of Secrecy

The war raged for thirty months. The federal government attempted to deny Cristero victories, but in fact—and in spite of severe shortages of ammunition—Catholic soldiers defeated federal units in operations ranging from large cavalry engagements on the plains of Jalisco to guerilla operations in the mountains of Durango. The American military attaché described the “remarkable tenacity” of the Cristeros and the general disorder of the federal army.

The Cristeros lived by a strict moral code, one that stood in strict contrast to the behavior of federal troops, who were frequently drunk or stoned and who terrorized the civilian population with pillage and rape. Consequently, public sympathy for the Cristeros was strong. For example, there was an extensive logistics

VETERANS BEING HUNTED DOWN AND KILLED LASTED UNTIL THE 1950s.



ANN BALL

The body of Bl. Anacleto Gonzales Flores. His widow took their sons to the wake, where she said to the elder, "This is your father. He has died defending the faith. Promise me on his body that you will do the same when you are older if God asks it of you."

network run by the Feminine Brigades of St. Joan of Arc, a Catholic women's organization affiliated with the Unión Popular. These women devised creative and clandestine ways to keep soldiers supplied: special vests for smuggling ammunition out of federal factories and secret workshops for the production of homemade explosives, such as grenades made out of jelly tins. These courageous twenty-five thousand ladies also carried messages—written on silk and hidden within the soles of shoes—between units. All of their activities were carried out under an oath of secrecy. No evidence indicates that the oath was ever broken.

The heroic efforts of the Joan of Arc Brigades notwithstanding, the Cristero army never had enough ammunition to win a decisive victory. Too often, in the heat of battle, they had to disengage so as to live to fight another day. On several occasions they were reduced to rolling boulders (called "Hail Marys" and "Our Fathers") down a hill on advancing federal troops. Although the federal army was badly led and plagued by high rates of desertion, they were never short of arms and ammunition—supplied by the U.S. government. In at least one battle, American pilots provided air support for the federal army. Stalemate, albeit

Further Reading

Blessed Miguel Pro: Twentieth-Century Mexican Martyr by Ann Ball (TAN)
Blood-Drenched Altars: A Catholic Commentary on the History of Mexico by Most Rev. Francis Clement Kelley (TAN)
The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State by Jean A. Meyer (Cambridge; out of print)
Mexican Martyrdom: Firsthand Experiences of the Religious Persecution in Mexico by Wilfred Parsons, S.J. (TAN)
The Power and the Glory by Graham Greene (Penguin)
Robbery Under Law: The Mexican Object Lesson by Evelyn Waugh (Akadine: Common Reader)
¡Viva Cristo Rey!: The Cristero Rebellion, and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico by David C. Bailey (University of Texas; out of print)
Young Faces of Holiness by Ann Ball (Our Sunday Visitor) ■

one that could last for years, seemed to be the best for which the Cristeros could hope.

"Animated by a Spirit of Good Will"

Plutarco Calles felt threatened nonetheless. The war was costing the government ninety-six million pesos a year, more than a third of its annual budget. This figure did not include the harm to his economy in reduced agricultural production (for which Calles' scorched-earth policy was to blame). Worse perhaps, his policy of relocating some 30 percent of the rural population of Mexico to urban areas in an effort to eliminate the Cristero support network was only provoking widespread resentment. Half a million Mexicans left the country, forming California's first wave of Mexican immigration. By the end of the fighting, military deaths approached one hundred thousand, 60 percent of which were federal troops.

Although Calles continued to call the shots, he turned over the presidency to his hand-picked successor, Emilio Portes Gil. Whether it was Portes Gil's more moderate positions on religious questions or Calles' growing fear that the Cristeros would never be defeated ("they are annihilating us," he told Gil), the Mexican government at last came to the bargaining table.

The man who negotiated the settlement was the U.S. ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow (whose

SCHOOL TEACHERS IN YUCATÁN AND

daughter Anne married Charles Lindbergh). Calles and Portes Gil knew that if the Mexican bishops restored public worship, the armed resistance would fade. Pope Pius XI would permit the restoration of public worship only if he believed that the persecution of the Church would abate and that Church property would be restored. Calles and Portes Gil had no plans to change the constitution, but they were willing to hint that enforcement could be relaxed.

On June 21, 1929, Mexico City's Archbishop Pascual Díaz and Archbishop Ruiz y Flores, the Apostolic Delegate, along with Portes Gil, issued statements to the press. The Mexican episcopal statement was brief, citing the spirit of good will in which negotiations had taken place and a desire that the restoration of public worship would "lead the Mexican people, animated by a spirit of good will, to cooperate in all moral efforts undertaken for the welfare of all the people of the country" (Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey!*, 312).

Portes Gil assured the people of Mexico that the Constitution did not intend "to destroy the identity of the Catholic Church" nor "to intervene in any way with its spiritual functions" and that he was prepared to listen to "any complaints . . . regarding injustices . . . committed by undue application of the laws" (Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey!*, 312). He clarified that the registration of clergy did not mean that the government could register clergy not appointed by ecclesiastical authority. He added that religious instruction could take place within the confines of a church, but not in schools, and that any law of Mexico was subject to appeal by one of her citizens.

On these two noncommittal statements, *los arreglos* (agreements) were brokered. Ruiz y Flores and Díaz had given the most generous interpretation possible to Pius XI's demand that Church property be restored: "In so far as could reasonably be expected," they told Morrow. Portes Gil told them that Church property not being used by the government would be returned immediately, but that the Church could give the government time to vacate buildings currently occupied. Portes Gil also ordered a total amnesty for all Cristeros, including free rail passes to return to their homes. Officers were permitted to keep their sidearms and horses.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the two bishops drove directly to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and knelt at the high altar in thanksgiving. Public worship was restored. The faithful packed the churches. Word came from Pius XI to the

MICHOACÁN WERE REQUIRED TO TAKE A PUBLIC OATH OF ATHEISM.

Cristeros asking them to lay down their arms. Over the next three months, in obedience to the Holy Father, some more reluctantly than others, that is exactly what they did.

Betrayal, Persecution, and Mass Executions

But within a few months of the *arreglos*, signs emerged that all was not well. A significant number of churches, schools, and rectories remained in government hands. Ruiz y Flores and Díaz attempted to meet with the president but were ignored. When they at last met with Portes Gil's successor, Pascual Ortiz Rubio (also hand-picked by Calles) and asked him to honor his predecessor's promises, they were told that Portes Gil had promised nothing.

Meanwhile, the Cristeros who were not willing to move out of their states were taken prisoner and executed. The "annihilation of Catholic militants after the 1929 agreement" (Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey!*, 294) lasted for several years. There were mass executions in Jalisco, and reports of Cristero veterans being hunted down and killed lasted until the 1950s. It is not known how many thousands of them lost their lives after the war had been declared over.

The worst years for the Church in Mexico were 1934 and 1935. In this period Graham Greene set his novel *The Power and the Glory*, in which a "whiskey priest" fights persecution and his own weaknesses.

Most state governments closed the churches. Priests practically vanished, as they were again on the run. Less than a tenth of those who had served the faithful in 1925 were permitted to operate a decade later. In truth, the number was fewer, since those who wanted to practice legally had to marry. In 1934 there were 334 registered priests for fifteen million Mexicans.

Schoolteachers in Yucatán and Michoacán were required to take a public oath of atheism and to promise to teach against the Catholic religion. Archbishop Díaz's episcopal palace was never returned. He was thrown in jail for a time and then forced to rent rooms where he could find them. Fearing to lose their property, few were willing to rent to the aged priest. He died hated by the Mexican government and not altogether loved by Catholic militants who felt he had betrayed their cause.

Doubtless it was Díaz's voice that at last convinced Pius XI to call for an end to the Cristero uprising. However, we can render no just judgment on the members of the hierarchy who sought an end to the *Cristiada* without bearing in mind that the Church is

not a political movement. It is an institution for the care of souls. We may wish ever to see the Church triumph over her enemies, but her path must be the path of her founder, a steady march to Calvary. Pius XI and his bishops needed first and foremost to restore the sacraments to the Mexican faithful, even if the circumstances under which they were to be dispensed were trying. They negotiated in good faith, which is more than can be said for anyone else at the bargaining table.

The Seed of the Church

The Mexican Church's climb out of the hell of the Revolution has been slow, and it is not finished. Mexican schoolchildren, to the extent that they even hear the story of the Cristeros, are as likely as not to get the socialist spin. Well into the 1970s, Catholic schools received regular inspections to ensure use of government textbooks. Religion could not be taught—only "values." Not until the 1980s were the anticlerical articles repealed. Not until the late 1990s, with the beatifications and canonizations of the Martyrs of the Mexican Revolution by John Paul II and, in 2005, Benedict XVI, did a sympathetic public awareness of the Cristeros resurface.

Nonetheless, the Calles Law may be off the books, but anticlerical sentiment remains, especially in the popular media, which fumed about "opening old wounds" when last summer Miss Mexico wore a dress honoring the Cristeros. When bishops in Mexico spoke against new laws permitting abortion, the press behaved as if they had no business commenting on a "political" matter.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." After Tertullian wrote those words a century would pass before the Edict of Milan. How and when God will perfect the sacrifices of the Mexican Martyrs is up to him. For our part we can contemplate the ferocity with which the Church was persecuted not long ago in our own backyard, and the zeal of the faithful who defended her with Catholic hearts forged in centuries of fighting the enemies of Jesus Christ. ■



Christopher Check is executive vice president of The Rockford Institute and a lecturer on military and Church history. He gratefully acknowledges the kind assistance of Roberto and Margarita Ucero in preparing this article.

More Than a Feeling: What it Means to Follow Your Conscience

By Leon J. Suprenant, Jr.

For some of us, our first encounter with conscience may have been the movie *Pinocchio*, where the wise Jiminy Cricket exhorts our hero to “let conscience be [his] guide.” For others, it may have been an elementary catechism class, where we learned that conscience is a “little voice” inside us helping us to sort out right from wrong. Whatever the source, animated by Disney or supernatural grace—or likely a combination of the two—we learned early on that it is a very good and even necessary thing to follow our conscience.

As we develop a more mature understanding of Christian morality, we still recognize our fundamental obligation to follow our conscience. The Church teaches that conscience is that privileged place within us where God speaks to us. Conscience gives us the framework for making good, loving choices and shunning evil impulses and temptations. Even on a natural level we encounter the workings of conscience, as pagans and Christians alike have experienced a sense “deep down” that something just is—or is not—the right thing to do.

For Christians, of course, conscience goes beyond those elements of the natural law that are accessible to every human heart (cf. Rom. 2:14–15): The more our conscience is formed by the teachings of Christ and his Church, the more our conscience becomes finely attuned to all that is true, good, and beautiful.

And conscience is not merely a window to the natural law, but a place where we actually encounter the living God. The Gospel warns us against professing belief in the Lord while failing to do what he says (Luke 6:46). What good would it be, for example, for our conscience to tell us it is wrong to defraud our creditors if we have no intention to act upon such guidance? It would be like driving at night without using our headlights. Such a culpably reckless approach would inevitably lead to disaster.

Therefore, it is clear that we have a serious duty to do what we believe is right in God’s eyes, and this

entails heeding our conscience. As the Church teaches, our dignity and even our eternal destiny lie in our obedience to God’s voice within us (see Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 16).

Where Did I Go Wrong?

All this is well and good in theory, but the whole idea of what it means to “follow one’s conscience” has been widely misunderstood and even distorted in recent decades. Rather than serve as the light of divine truth for modern man, “conscience” is now frequently advanced as a justification for the practical rejection of such truth. This contemporary phenomenon cuts us off from the fountain of mercy that the Lord offers us through the Church. After all, if we don’t understand that we’re sick, we won’t seek the appropriate spiritual medicine.

Whenever we pray the Act of Contrition, we bank on God’s help, but we also tell the Lord that we are absolutely serious about avoiding sin in the future. In other words, we’re committed to doing whatever we can to help reverse the cycle of sin in our life, to wipe out our spiritual illness at the source.

Prudentially, then, it would be extremely helpful to have some understanding of the underlying causes of our sins. We all ask ourselves, “Where did I go wrong?” Surely we’re all prone to sin because of our fallen nature, and it’s also true that sin isn’t all that innovative or trendy. Our sins are not that original. Ask any confessor! It’s actually quite possible to

Allegory of a bad conscience: The state of a man who thinks seriously about the bad state of his conscience, and who begins to be affected by it (19th century) by an unknown artist. Private collection. The animals symbolize the Seven Deadly Sins, agents of the devil.





trace most of our sins to some very basic moral errors, several of which are intimately linked to our understanding of moral conscience.

In this regard, I find paragraph 1792 to be one of the most enlightening entries in the *Catechism*. It lists some of the main reasons why we go astray. Here's what it says:

Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one's passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: These can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct.

Several of these items jump off the page to me. Doctrinal dissent has consequences in the moral life. My bad example (known as "scandal") can lead others to sin. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to the Gospel.

But let's focus more specifically on those "errors of judgment in moral conduct" that are more directly limited to an inadequate understanding of conscience.

Who's Calling the Shots?

One of the big problems today is that "conscience" is confused with our feelings and passions. Many people invoke the mantra "if it feels good, do it." Of course, if that were really a moral imperative, then God's law in essence would be, "Thou shall do whatever feels good to thee." That's a

very wide road indeed! (see Matt. 7:13-14). Sadly for the hedonist, that verse is not in the Bible.

A well-formed conscience is about doing what God wants, not what I want. There are many voices—internal (e.g., our own preferences, memories, motivations, disordered desires) and external (e.g., family, friends, media)—competing for our attention. We need a certain interiority to be able to hear the Shepherd's voice, to discern God's law that is already on our hearts. Otherwise, we do whatever is expedient, agreeable, or enjoyable, and then we carelessly assume that we're just following our conscience.

That's why the *Catechism* mentions "enslavement to one's passions" as a source of moral errors. Even when we're fairly well attuned to our interior life, our passions are constantly pushing the envelope and distracting us from listening to the Holy Spirit, looking for a chink in our armor. If our intellects and wills are not firmly grounded in the moral law, our passions will assume the role of conscience.

We see this especially in the area of sexuality. Our society bombards us with stimuli to arouse the passions. Meanwhile, two generations of Catholics have endured pastors, theologians, teachers, and parents who have doubted the Church's teachings and have not presented them in a compelling fashion. They also have not fostered virtues like chastity and modesty that will support upright behavior. This inevitably creates a huge opening for

the passions to call the shots, not the Lord and his holy law.

Interiority presupposes a certain amount of calm and silence, but the passions are very loud and demanding. Conscience sheds the light of Christ on the situation, but when we fall into the vice of letting the passions guide our decision-making, our conscience becomes blinded through the habit of sin (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* 16). We need the virtue of prudence to help us sort out the competing "voices" in our lives so as to make godly choices.

Approval Process

Another source of error of judgment in moral conduct is the "assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience." It is true that one should not be forced to act against one's conscience. But it's quite another to assert that a Catholic with a well-formed conscience may put the Church's teachings in the areas of faith and morals through his own "approval process."

Some Catholic commentators assert that a well-formed conscience and official Catholic teaching may come to opposite conclusions in moral matters. This opinion directly contradicts the *Catechism*, paragraph 2039: "Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church." A Catholic simply cannot claim to have a well-formed and well-informed conscience if he is ignorant of, misunderstands, or rejects outright God's law and

Have You Examined Your Conscience Lately?

Paragraph 1792 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives all of us a firm basis for examining our consciences. It leads us to ask these and similar questions of ourselves:

Am I ignorant of Christ and his Gospel? Do I seek the Lord's guidance through regular, humble prayer? Do I assiduously study and internalize the Bible as well as other reliable sources of Catholic teaching and spiritual wisdom?

Do I associate with people who aren't good for me? Do I too readily

follow others rather than act as my own person? Am I too concerned about what others think? Is a shared belief in Jesus Christ and his Church the most important factor in choosing my friends and associates?

Am I a slave to my passions? Am I mired in habitual sin? Do I overindulge or pamper myself?

Do I try to justify conduct that our Lord considers sinful? Is there a part of my life that I haven't turned over to God? Are there Church teachings I

refuse to accept? Do I strive to form my conscience based on the firm foundation of Catholic truth, or do I look for teachers who will "tickle my ears" (2 Tim. 4:3)?

Do I strive to see Christ in those around me, especially the poor and the annoying? Do I really take to heart the fact that all men and women have God-given dignity and value? Do I treat others with basic kindness, patience, and respect? Do I serve only myself? ■

thus commits acts that the Church considers gravely disordered.

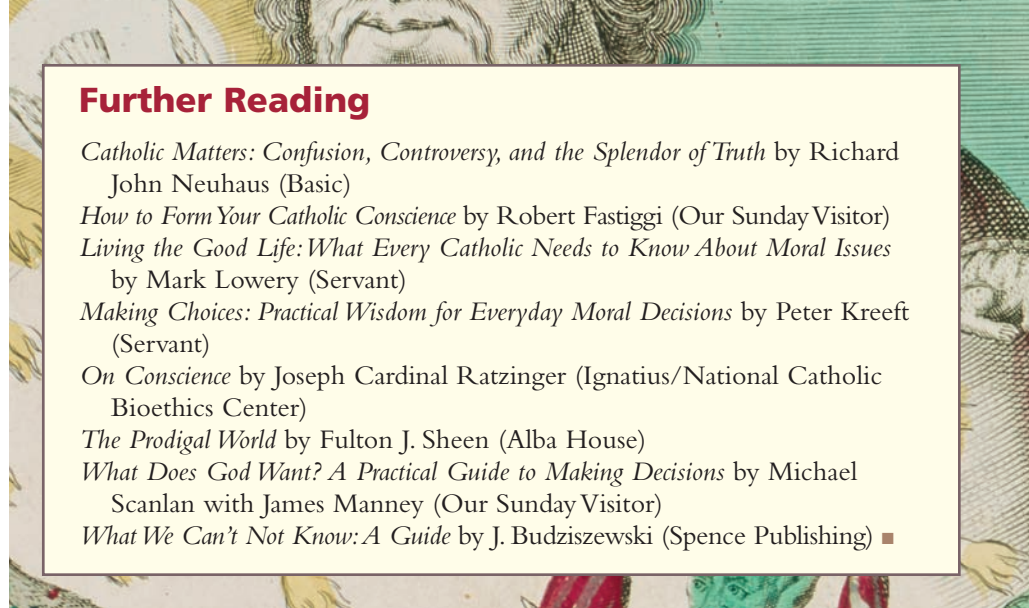
It is also true that one must follow the dictates of a “certain judgment of his conscience” (CCC 1790). Let’s look at this a little more closely in practice, though. Imagine a Catholic who reads the following excerpt from Pope John Paul II’s 1995 encyclical letter *The Gospel of Life*:

Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, in communion with the Bishops—who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine—I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church’s Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium. (*Evangelium Vitae* 62, original emphasis)

Could such a Catholic, upon reading this excerpt, be certain that he or she is right and the Church is wrong on this issue? Doesn’t such a Catholic who persists in supporting abortion “rights” thereby become his own pope?

The fact is, if we truly believe that Jesus is Lord and that he speaks authoritatively through his Church, we don’t merely consult with him, we follow him! When I tell my children what I want them to do (because I desire good things for them), I expect obedience. I don’t consider it obedience when they merely take what I say as a “suggestion” and do something else instead.

Surely following God’s law is a matter of obedience, but even more it is about love. As our Lord says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). I know that one of the greatest acts of love my children show me is doing what I ask them to



Further Reading

Catholic Matters: Confusion, Controversy, and the Splendor of Truth by Richard John Neuhaus (Basic)
How to Form Your Catholic Conscience by Robert Fastiggi (Our Sunday Visitor)
Living the Good Life: What Every Catholic Needs to Know About Moral Issues by Mark Lowery (Servant)
Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions by Peter Kreeft (Servant)
On Conscience by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Ignatius/National Catholic Bioethics Center)
The Prodigal World by Fulton J. Sheen (Alba House)
What Does God Want? A Practical Guide to Making Decisions by Michael Scanlan with James Manney (Our Sunday Visitor)
What We Can’t Not Know: A Guide by J. Budziszewski (Spence Publishing) ■

do. When it comes to following God’s law, a simple act of loving obedience is surely more pleasing to him than mere lip service and “conscientious objection.” As he says in the Gospel, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

My Own Personal Jesus

Another source of error, closely related to the first two, is the “rejection of the Church’s authority and her teaching.” What all this comes down to is a crisis of objective truth, a lack of confidence in objective moral norms, and ultimately a widespread rejection of God and his action in our life, which is known as “secularism.” As Pope John Paul II eloquently noted in *The Gospel of Life*, when we lose the sense of God we lose the sense of the dignity of mankind, and serious, systematic transgressions of the moral law are sure to follow (cf. CCC 2087).

But even for Catholics who have not fully succumbed to secularism and strive to follow Christ on some level, the Church still presents a real stumbling block. At best this manifests itself as a crypto-Protestantism, and at worst it can mark the early stages of a complete loss of faith. When the Church’s God-given authority is undercut, a significant vacuum is created. Where is truth? Some are content with a democratic or utilitarian approach: Give the people what they want. Rather than entrust Church teachings to a bunch of

unenlightened old men (i.e., the successors of the apostles), they’d rather put these things to a vote. If most people use artificial contraception or favor “gay marriage,” for example, the Church should lighten up. After all, the only mortal sin is intolerance.

Others find truth in a radically privatized faith that is about “me and Jesus” without the complexities and demands of the Church. And it’s amazingly convenient how everyone’s subjective “Jesus” approves of his or her moral deviations. Why strive to be more like Christ if we can create our own replica of Christ that is more like us?

In his February 24, 2007 address to the Pontifical Academy for Life, Pope Benedict XVI forcefully reminds us that the formation of a conscience that is both true (i.e., founded on the truth) and upright (i.e., without contradictions, betrayal, or compromise) is absolutely indispensable to Christian living.

With a well-formed conscience as our guide, may we lead lives “worthy of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:27), making good choices in keeping with our dignity as Christians. Somehow, I like to think that Jiminy Cricket would approve. ■



Leon J. Suprenant, Jr. is director of outreach for Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) and editor-in-chief of Emmaus Road Publishing, both based in Steubenville, Ohio. His e-mail address is leon@cuf.org.

God of Desire

God is love: The words are so common, so obvious, so innocuous. It was not what most people expected as the topic of Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical. Yet in it, he takes the reader beyond the superficial and trivial, offering a profound and sophisticated work that explores the connection between revelation and the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

Any discussion of love faces the difficulty that the English word corresponds to many different meanings (see "Let Me Count the Ways," page 26). Benedict focuses on the most controversial and intense forms of love—*eros* and *agape*.

Part of the debate entails precisely how to understand these two kinds of love. Roughly speaking, *eros* (desiring love) is exemplified by Romeo and Juliet or Rose and Jack Dawson from the movie *Titanic*. *Agape* (self-giving love) is exemplified by Bl. Teresa of Calcutta's dedication to alleviating the suffering of the poor.

How are these two kinds of love related to one another? Are they opposites, one being a purely selfish love and the other a purely giving love? How do the longings of the human heart for love (both *eros* and *agape*) relate to the divine?

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity poisoned *eros*, destroying our chance to achieve a taste of the divine. Don't the commands and prohibitions inherent in Christian morality turn what should be a matter of joy into bitterness? This view, expressed in various ways, is widely held today.





The Poem of the Soul by Anne-François-Louis Janmot (1814-1892), located in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, France.

Pope Benedict responds to this accusation in his encyclical. Benedict shows that erotic love and God's plan are not in opposition but profound cooperation. He does this by comparing Genesis with another ancient account of the origins of love.

The Original Spousal Spat

In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes tells the ancient Greek story about the origin of love. Originally, Aristophanes says, primordial human beings roughly resembled conjoined twins of a cylindrical shape. These first humans

were joined at the back, having four arms, four legs, and two faces. Their traveled like acrobats or gymnasts, cart-wheeling with great speed by rolling around like tires. They were powerful creatures whose pride led them to rebel against the gods. As punishment, in order to weaken and disorder these creatures, making them less of a threat and more useful to the gods, Zeus split them in two. As a result of this punishment, erotic desire arose as every human being (now looking as we currently look) yearned to find its lost half. *Eros* hungers to be reunited with a lost half, our “soulmate” who completes us. In Aristophanes’ view, *eros* arose as a result of a divine punishment for wrongdoing. Before rebellion, and before punishment by the gods, there was no *eros* and indeed no procreation. *Eros* and its yearning to reunite is an effort to put back together what Zeus made separate. Erotic desire marks imperfection, punishment, and ongoing rebellion against the divine ordinance.

In the Genesis account, on the other hand, *eros* is part of the original blessing of creation. Finding no suitable

me—she gave me some fruit from the tree” (Gen. 3:12). Marital relations become martial in the original spousal spat. Adam, for the first time, fails to see his wife as a blessing from God. However, as Genesis makes clear, the erotic love of man and woman is a part of the original blessing of creation which is damaged but not totally undermined by original sin.

Erotic love, like everything human, can be damaged through sin. Indeed, human erotic love, when made into an idol, a false religion, undermines itself. Benedict notes that the Old Testament:

In no way rejected *eros* as such; rather, it declared war on a warped and destructive form of it, because this counterfeit divinization of *eros* actually strips it of its dignity and dehumanizes it. Indeed, the prostitutes in the temple, who had to bestow this divine intoxication, were not treated as human beings and persons, but simply used as a means of arousing “divine madness”: far from being goddesses, they were human persons being exploited. An intoxicated

God’s eros arises from his perfection and completeness. He fountain, enjoying such a super-abundance that

partner among the beasts, Adam’s yearning for union is completed only with the creation of Eve: “At last this is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone” (Gen. 2:23). The fulfillment of erotic desire and the blessing “be fruitful and multiply” occur before the fall (Gen. 1:28). It is part of the divine plan from the beginning that Adam and Eve love one another erotically. After the fall, this erotic relationship is tarnished. Adam blames Eve and implicitly also blames God, “The woman you [God] put here with

and undisciplined *eros*, then, is not an ascent in “ecstasy” towards the divine, but a fall, a degradation of man. Evidently, *eros* needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns. (*Deus Caritas Est* 4)

As C.S. Lewis noted in his book *The Four Loves*, when worshiped as a divine idol, *eros* becomes a demon. On the other hand, *eros*, when developed properly, can lead to the greatest happiness.

Let Me Count the Ways

We say we love our mothers and we love ice cream. The word covers such a wide range of human affections that it is helpful to look at Greek, which has four terms:

Storge is affectionate love, such as the need-love of a child for a parent.

Philia is the love felt for friends.

Eros is romantic or sexual love, the love that desires to possess the beloved.

Agape is self-sacrificing love, the love that desires the good of the beloved. ■

Charity Perfects Desire

What is the difference between an immature and mature love? Benedict writes,

Love is not merely a sentiment. Sentiments come and go. A sentiment can be a marvelous first spark, but it is not the fullness of love. Earlier we spoke of the process of purification and maturation by which *eros* comes fully into its own, becomes love in the full meaning of the word. It is characteristic of mature love that it calls into play all man’s potentialities; it engages the whole man, so to speak. (DCE 17)

To engage the whole person involves loving more than a beautiful body, but the whole person of the beloved. It

involves more than merely loving them for the moment, but includes loving them forever. It involves more than merely our feelings, but includes a commitment of the will to foster what is truly good for them.

The language and feeling of true love says, “you alone” and “forever.” It says, “you alone” because true love accepts no substitute. If you are hungry, any slice of pizza will do. If you are in love, however, only your beloved is suitable. Love says “forever” because true love is unconditional. No one in love feels or wants a limit to that love. True love pledges and desires a unity, “until death do us part,” not “until further notice.” But, points out Benedict, true erotic love cannot achieve its goals of “you alone” and “forever” without being supplemented by another kind of love—*agape*. In Benedict’s words:

Love promises infinity, eternity—a reality far greater and totally other than our everyday existence. Yet we have also seen that the way to attain this goal is not simply by submitting to instinct. Purification and growth in maturity are called for; and these also pass

is akin to an overflowing it spills over to benefit others.

through the path of renunciation. Far from rejecting or “poisoning” *eros*, they heal it and restore its true grandeur. (DCE 5)

It turns out then that *agape* and *eros* are not opposed to one another but complementary forms of love. Indeed, for Benedict, *agape* arises naturally following *eros*:

Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature. (DCE 7)

The “giving love” of *agape* is not in contradiction to the “getting love” of *eros*. Without *agape*, *eros* degenerates into selfishness and cannot achieve its goals of “you alone” and “forever.” Without *eros* of some kind, *agape* cannot be sustained. Human beings cannot always give the gift of *agape*; they must also receive the gift desired by *eros*. These loves flourish together but flounder when separated or set in opposition. “Fundamentally, ‘love’ is a single reality, but with different dimensions; at different times, one or other

Further Reading

The Four Loves by C.S. Lewis (Harcourt)

Heart of the World by Hans Urs von Balthasar (Ignatius)

Love’s Sacred Order: Four Meditations by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Ignatius) ■

dimension may emerge more clearly. Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love” (DCE 8).

The Bridegroom Delights in His Bride

This unity of love is found even in the source of all creation. “God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*” (DCE 9). God’s *eros* differs from human *eros* in that for us erotic desire arises from our incompleteness and imperfection. We are akin to an empty jar that wishes to be filled with the other. God’s *eros* arises from his perfection and completeness. He is akin to an overflowing fountain, enjoying such superabundance that it spills over to benefit others.

We tend to use the word “lover” to pertain only to human beings, and yet God is a “lover” of each one of us. Benedict puts the point as follows: “God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation—the *Logos*, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love. *Eros* is thus supremely ennobled, yet at the same time it is so purified as to become one with *agape*” (DCE 10). The idea startles: God as our erotic lover. Yet, the Song of Solomon, chapter four in particular, has been read for centuries as not merely a man’s praise of a woman’s beautiful body, but as a metaphor of God’s taking delight in us. In the New Testament as well, Jesus the bridegroom takes the Church as his immaculate bride (Mark 2:19–20, Eph. 5:25–27). Ancient Christian authors, such as Pseudo-Dionysius, understood “God is love” not just as “God is *agape*” but also as “God is *eros*.” Mystics, like St. Teresa of Avila, experience a mystical union with God described in language reminiscent of the union of man and wife in the act of marriage. The poet John Donne put it this way:

Batter my heart, three-personed God . . .
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

God loves us—not with the cold, calculating, mechanistic love of a distant Creator, but with the urgent, personal, and overwhelming love of a passionate groom for his beautiful

Something's Wrong with John

John Yzaguirre, in his book *Thriving Marriages*, recounts that when he was a teenager, a friend invited him to attend a lecture given by a physician on living the Gospel in everyday life. John considered himself an atheist who had "outgrown" religion but went to the talk simply out of friendship. Following the talk, John asked the physician, "Do you really believe that stuff?" The doctor replied, "Who cares? The important point is whether you do." The physician took out his prescription pad and wrote these words from Jesus: "Whatever you do for the least of these you did for me" (Matt. 25:40). The physician then added, "For the next two weeks, live these words as if they were true, and then call me." John returned home, and when his dad came in the door from work, thought, "Well, if Jesus were just arriving here, I'd get up and greet him," so John did. His dad was stunned: "Everything all right, son?" Before he sat down again, John saw his mother cooking dinner in the kitchen and thought "Well, if Jesus were in the kitchen cooking, I'd at least see if he needed any help." Near the end of dinner, when only a single hamburger remained, John offered it to his younger brother, who said in alarm, "Dad, something's wrong with John." In fact, something was right with John. With God's help, he had begun to live the wisdom of Bl. Mother Teresa, "Each person is Jesus in disguise." As he loved the people he saw in his ordinary, everyday life, John soon began to love the God he could not see. John became a passionate believer and lover of people—not through argument, but by loving his neighbor as Jesus would. ■

bride. "Love is 'divine' because it comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a 'we' which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is 'all in all'" (DCE 18).

Agape Unites us With God and Neighbor

How can we experience God's love in this way? Benedict suggests: "Love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God" (DCE 16). In helping other people, you'll not only be helping them, you'll also be helping yourself know and love God more. *Agape* should not be limited to hours volunteering for various

good causes, but must include serving in every day and ordinary ways those with whom we have daily contact.

This love for neighbor should not be understood as an alternative to or as a self-standing substitute for love of God and the sacramental life. We should not strive to be only "persons for others" in forgetfulness of love of God and life in God through the sacraments. In particular, the Holy Eucharist strengthens our love for God while at the same time creating bonds with our neighbor in Christ. "Communion draws me out of myself towards him," writes Benedict,

And thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become "one body," completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself. We can thus understand how *agape* also became a term for the Eucharist: There God's own *agape* comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us. Only by keeping in mind this Christological and sacramental basis can we correctly understand Jesus' teaching on love. (DCE 14)

This union with Christ, particularly in Holy Communion, underscores the unity of the Church's mission.

The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being. (DCE 25)

It would be a grave mistake, in Benedict's view, to set these responsibilities against one another or to denigrate one in preference to another. Evangelization, sacramental prayer, and service to others combine to make God's love for us present in the world and to enliven and enrich the best of human things, most of all perhaps love. ■



A Fulbright Scholar, Christopher Kaczor holds a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame and is the Robert H. Taylor Chair in Philosophy at Loyola Marymount University. Dr. Kaczor is the author of *Proportionalism and the Natural Law Tradition* (2002), *The Edge of Life: Human Dignity and Contemporary Bioethics* (2005), and *How to Stay Catholic in College* (2007).



Please pray for:

- our monks to grow in numbers and holiness and
- our students, alumni, parishioners, and all of the Abbey family to serve God humbly and faithfully.



www.stlouisabbey.org

fralph@pior.org

(800) 638-1527

Are You Ready for an Epiphany?

It's a powerful moment.

Realizing that your investments

can have a positive impact

on the world.



EPIPHANY FUNDS

Catholic investors promoting a "culture of life." That's Epiphany Funds. We invest in companies who meet the United States Bishops' guidelines on social responsibility. In order to invest, obtain a prospectus and application by visiting our website at www.epiphanyfund.com, calling 800-320-2185 or talking with your advisor.



Investing in the Fund carries certain risks. An investor's shares when redeemed may be worth more or less than their original cost. Past performance does not guarantee future results. Please consider the investment objective, risk, charges and expenses carefully before investing. The Fund applies a redemption fee of 2.00% for shares held less than 60 days. Matrix Capital Group, Inc., New York, NY 10017 distributes the Fund.

An Unexpected Sequel

By Leona Choy

ARE WE EVER TOO OLD TO “BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF our minds”?

Could a lifelong evangelical Protestant missionary approaching her eightieth year be too old to become a Catholic?



LEONA CHOY

On my journey home from a successful seven-week speaking tour to promote my newly published autobiography, something happened that would send me on another—unexpected—journey home.

Shocked Out of My Socks

To wrap up my writing career, and after a lifetime of evangelism among Chinese people, I had set off to investigate my own ancestral roots in Europe. I wanted to leave a legacy of my life not only as a heritage for my family but as a wider witness to God’s faithfulness and guidance. I traveled several times to Europe to research my cultural, ethnic, religious, and family roots.

I was satisfied that I had traced my religious roots as far back as I could—back to the martyr-reformer Jan Hus, born in 1372 in what is now the Czech Republic. He was burned at the stake for his reforms against what I called in my research “the corrupt Roman papal Church.” Protestants claim Hus as their champion although he remained a Catholic priest to his death.

I took for granted that all my religious roots were Protestant as were those of my late husband, Ted. All our academic training and ministry was in the Reformed tradition although our mission work among the Chinese was non-denominational.

I didn’t expect anything out of the ordinary to happen to me now that I was pushing eighty. With the apostle Paul I declared that I had “finished my course.” I would never have dreamed that I was on the verge of the most cataclysmic change in my life at an age when change of any kind is usually resisted, status quo is relished, and the rocking chair is preferred to rocking any boats. Or that what I thought was the finished story of my life was only a launching pad to writing an unexpected sequel—“the rest of the story”—and possibly other books about an as-yet-unfolded faith adventure.

It happened like this. Returning from my book tour I stopped to visit an author friend with whom I always enjoyed lively discussions about Reformed theology and our other mutual Protestant beliefs. To say that I was shocked out of my socks when she informed me that she had become a Catholic is an understatement. Frankly, I thought she had fallen into serious heresy.

I prided myself on being broad-minded since my husband and I worshiped and served happily with many Christian denominations, independent churches, and parachurch organizations in America and in Asia in the course of our ministry. That did not include Catholicism, however. I was not anti-Catholic,

but I knew next to nothing about the faith. I assumed that the Protestant Reformation finally set the true Church on the right biblical track and left the corrupt Catholics in the dust worshipping Mary and the saints, blindly following papal authority, entangled in tradition, engaging in pagan practices, and working for their salvation. No one ever confronted me with the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church. Nor was I aware that I had spent my life only among the “branches” of the Christian tree and that the Catholic Church was really the main “trunk” with authentic biblical roots reaching all the way back to Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the early Church fathers.

I decided I must rescue my wayward friend. My well-intentioned strategy was to study Catholic doctrines firsthand to point out their biblical inaccuracies. I had been taught and strongly believed in *sola scriptura* and *sola fide*. From that solid Protestant evangelical platform, I felt well-prepared to shoot holes in Catholic faith and practice. I never dreamed, of course, that I could be moved from my position.

The Pursuit Begins

I continually prayed that God would keep me from error. My one desire throughout life had been to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. I am not a novice Christian in discerning God’s voice but a seasoned veteran in the faith. So I rolled up my sleeves for a no-contest victory and the dramatic rescue of my friend from Catholicism. I trusted God to lead me only in his revealed truth, just as I have trusted him since the Holy Spirit drew me into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord when I was in my early teens.

So, determined to put my friend on the right track, I invested the next four years in diligent and open-minded research, including reading Church history and the early Church fathers. It took me so long not because I was a slow learner but because I began to have nightmares when I thought of

the potential risk to my reputation in the Evangelical world were I to embrace the truth I was gradually discovering. I searched Scripture and wrestled with every aspect of Catholic theology seeking to disprove it. I was unsuccessful.

My focus shifted from trying to rescue my friend to being personally confronted with the truth of the Catholic faith. I experienced a crisis. Could I retain my honesty and integrity if I refused to acknowledge and act on the conclusions I found? How could I ignore what God obviously allowed me to discover after I sincerely prayed and totally trusted him to lead me to the truth?

I was certainly not seeking such a paradigm shift in my Christian framework of faith. What would happen to my positions of leadership in Christian organizations and missions and my responsibility as a Protestant author? Was God really calling me to become a Catholic? I could hardly speak that word aloud!

I Must Buy the Field

I echoed the question of Nicodemus: “Can a man when he is old enter his mother’s womb again?” (John 3:4) when Jesus challenged him to make a leap of faith that would have public repercussions for his leadership status in religion and society. I struggled both with the *when he is old* part and the public repercussions. It was a matter of “Truth and Consequences” and it was a life and death matter to me.

I came to believe that the Catholic Church was not another religion or “another gospel” against which Paul warned, not an aberration of God’s truth, and certainly not a heresy. It was the original trunk of the Christian tree, preserved from error in matters of faith and morality by the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus. It did not contain partial truths like the branches, but the fullness of truth. Could I live with myself if I failed to become part of the true Church even at this late stage of my life?

Over and over I counted the cost. Were I to become a Catholic, it

would doubtless cause an earthquake that would shake and confuse my friends, family, and lifelong ministry co-workers. It would upset my extensive church relationships and unsettle the readers of my published books. I would lose my lifelong Evangelical friends. My reputation would be suspect—perhaps even my mental state! Doors for ministry now open would likely be closed to me. I am the matriarch of our family. How would this affect my responsibility toward my heritage, those whose role model I had become, whose lives I hope I have helped point toward Christ?

Nevertheless, when I have found the treasure in the field, as in Jesus’ parable, I should no longer consider the cost but be willing to sell all (including my Evangelical reputation) and buy the entire field. If this was truth, should I not be willing to leave the consequences to God? The consequences are of no consequence when compared to the richness of faith I was finding in the Catholic Church and the fullness of intimacy in the Eucharist with the same Jesus Christ I have known and loved and served since childhood.

Enough hanging suspended precariously over the Tiber but not courageously walking to the other bank! Enough scrutinizing of every doctrine and judging truth with my own fallible interpretation! Enough stalling after I heard Jesus’ clear call, “Follow me!” Enough anxiety about the potential fallout from my decision! Enough excuses about advanced age, difficult change, and criticism! It was time to finally, joyfully embrace the truth of the Catholic Church.

Branches to Trunk

On January 23, 2005, as the congregation at Mass sang the hymn “All my treasures I will leave on the sand there; close to thee, I shall sail other seas,” I surrendered to my Lord all my puny, worthless, transient treasures of reputation. I left behind on the shore the lifetime nets that entangled me. Like the disciples, I responded immediately with the same *fiat* that bubbled from

my soul as a teenager when I heard Jesus’ call: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” True to his promise, Jesus has been working on making me for nearly eighty years. I am still in process, in formation, becoming conformed, transformed to the image of Christ, and pursuing holiness.

I am committed. I look forward eagerly to the adventure of “sailing other seas” with brothers and sisters in Christ who are part of the One, Holy, Apostolic Church which the Lord said he would build. I will let down my now-worn nets again in deeper waters anticipating a great catch of fishes.

My decision was followed by a year of RCIA where I was the oldest student. I continued learning from godly Catholic mentors who fielded all my difficult theological questions. I pursued personal study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, read dozens of books, listened to stacks of apologetic tapes, and seriously watched EWTN’s teaching programs, while continuing earnest prayer. I received great encouragement and help from my association with the supportive staff of the Coming Home Network.

I was received into Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Winchester, Virginia at the Easter Vigil 2005.

I respect, appreciate, and value my Christian background among the “branches,” the solid teaching of the Bible that I received, and the warm fellowship with Protestant brothers and sisters. As a Catholic, I have abandoned none of my biblical Christian beliefs but have moved deeper into the fullness of God’s truth.

Today, I want all of the undiluted, original life-flow that God intended and Jesus provided for his Church, his Body, his bride. Whereas I was formerly a temporary, happy camper among the Christian branches, I am now a joyful settler who is home at last in the Christian trunk of the Catholic Church. ■

An author and publisher, Leona Choy became Catholic after a lifetime of evangelical Protestant missionary work in China and on the university campuses of North America.

Hail Mary, Conceived Without Sin

By Tim Staples



Romans 3:23 says, “**All have sinned and** fallen short of the glory of God.” First John 1:8 adds, “If any man says he has no sin he is a liar and the truth is not in him.” These texts could not be clearer for millions of Protestants: “How could anyone believe Mary was free from all sin in light of these Scripture passages? What’s more, Mary herself said, ‘My soul rejoices in God my savior’ in Luke 1:47. She clearly understood herself to be a sinner if she admits to needing a savior.”

The Catholic Answer

Not a few Protestants are surprised to discover the Catholic Church actually agrees that Mary was “saved.” Indeed, Mary needed a savior! However, Mary was “saved” from sin in a most sublime manner. She was given the grace to be “saved” completely from sin so that she never committed even the slightest transgression. Protestants tend to emphasize God’s “salvation” almost exclusively to the forgiveness of sins actually committed. However, Sacred Scripture indicates that salvation can also refer to man being protected from sinning before the fact:

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. (Jude 24–25)

Six hundred years ago, the great Franciscan theologian Duns Scotus explained that falling into sin could be likened to a man approaching

unaware a deep ditch. If he falls into the ditch, he needs someone to lower a rope and save him. But if someone were to warn him of the danger ahead, preventing the man from falling into the ditch at all, he would be saved from falling in the first place. Likewise, Mary was saved from sin by receiving the grace to be preserved from it. But she was still saved.

All Have Sinned Except . . .

But what about “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and “if any man says he has no sin he is a liar and the truth is not in him” (1 John 1:8)? Wouldn’t “all” and “any man” include Mary? On the surface, this sounds reasonable. But this way of thinking carried to its logical conclusion would list Jesus Christ in the company of sinners as well. No faithful Christian would dare say that. Yet no Christian can deny the plain texts of Scripture declaring Christ’s full humanity either. Thus, to take 1 John 1:8 in a strict, literal sense would apply “any man” to Jesus as well.

The truth is Jesus Christ was an exception to Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8. And the Bible tells us he was

in Hebrews 4:15: “Christ was tempted in all points even as we are and yet he was without sin.” The question now is: Are there any other exceptions to this rule? Yes—millions of them.

Both Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8 deal with personal rather than original sin. (Romans 5 deals with original sin.) And there are two exceptions to that general biblical norm as well. But for now, we will simply deal with Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8. First John 1:8 obviously refers to personal sin because in the very next verse, John tells us, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins . . .” We do not confess original sin; we confess personal sins.

The context of Romans 3:23 makes clear that it too refers to personal sin:

None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. (Rom. 3:10–14)

Original sin is not something we do; it is something we’ve inherited. Romans chapter three deals with personal sin because it speaks of sins committed by the sinner. With this in mind, consider this: Has a baby in the womb or a child of two ever committed a personal sin? No. To sin a person has to know the act he is about to perform is sinful while freely engaging

his will in carrying it out. Without the proper faculties to enable them to sin, children before the age of accountability and anyone who does not have the use of his intellect and will cannot sin. So, there are and have been millions of exceptions to Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8.

Still, how do we know Mary is an exception to the norm of “all have sinned?” And more specifically, is there biblical support for this claim? Yes, there is much biblical support.

The Name Says it All

And [the angel Gabriel] came to [Mary] and said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” (Luke 1:28-30)

Many Protestants will insist this text to be little more than a common greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary. “What does this have to do with Mary being without sin?” Yet, the truth is, according to Mary herself, this was no common greeting. The text reveals Mary to have been “greatly troubled at the saying and considered in her mind *what sort of greeting this might be*” (Luke 1:29, emphasis added). What was it about this greeting that was so uncommon for Mary to react this way? We can consider at least two key aspects.

First, according to biblical scholars (as well as Pope John Paul II), the angel did more than simply greet Mary. The angel actually communicated a new name or title to her (cf. *Redemptoris Mater*, 8, 9). In Greek, the greeting was *kaire, kekaritomene*, or “Hail, full of grace.” Generally speaking, when one greeted another with *kaire*, a name or title would be found in the immediate context. “Hail, king of the Jews” in John 19:3 and “Claudias Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greeting” (Acts 23:26) are two biblical examples of

this. The fact that the angel replaces Mary’s name in the greeting with “full of grace” was anything but common. This would be analogous to my speaking to one of our tech guys at Catholic Answers and saying, “Hello, he who fixes computers.” In Hebrew culture, names and name changes tell us something permanent about the character and calling of the one named. Just recall the name changes of Abram to Abraham (from “father” to “father of the multitudes”) in Genesis 17:5, Saray to Sarah (“my princess” to “princess”) in Genesis 17:15, and Jacob to Israel (“supplanter” to “he who prevails with God”) in Genesis 32:28.

In each case, the names reveal something permanent about the one named. Abraham and Sarah transition from being a “father” and “princess” of one family to being “father” and “princess” or “mother” of the entire people of God (see Rom. 4:1-18; Is. 51:1-2). They become patriarch and matriarch of God’s people forever. Jacob/Israel becomes the patriarch whose name, “he who prevails with God,” continues forever in the Church, which is called “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). The People of God will forever “prevail with God” in the image of the patriarch Jacob.

What’s in a name? According to Scripture, quite a lot.

St. Luke uses the perfect passive participle, *kekaritomene*, as his “name” for Mary. This word literally means “she who has been graced” in a completed sense. This verbal adjective, “graced,” is not just describing a simple past action. Greek has another tense for that. The perfect tense is used to indicate that an action has been completed in the past resulting in a present state of being. “Full of grace” is Mary’s name. So what does it tell us about Mary? Well, the average Christian is not completed in grace and in a permanent sense (see Phil. 3:8-12). But according to the angel, Mary is. You and I sin, not because of grace, but because of a lack of grace, or a lack of our cooperation with grace, in our lives. This greeting

of the angel is one clue into the unique character and calling of the Mother of God. Only Mary is given the name “full of grace” and in the perfect tense, indicating that this permanent state of Mary was completed.

Ark of the (New) Covenant

The Old Testament Ark of the Covenant was a true icon of the sacred. Because it contained the presence of God symbolized by three types of the coming Messiah—the manna, the Ten Commandments, and Aaron’s rod—it had to be pure and untouched by sinful man (see 2 Sam. 6:1-9 and Ex. 25:10ff; Num. 4:15).

In the New Testament, the new Ark is not an inanimate object, but a person: the Blessed Mother. How much more pure would the new Ark be when we consider the old ark was a mere “shadow” in relation to it (see Heb. 10:1)? This image of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant is an indicator that Mary would fittingly be free from all contagion of sin to be a worthy vessel to bear God in her womb. And most importantly, just as the Old Covenant Ark was pristine from the moment it was constructed with explicit divine instructions in Exodus 25, so would Mary be pure from the moment of her conception. God, in a sense, prepared his own dwelling place in both the Old and New Testaments.

1. The Ark of the Covenant contained three “types” of Jesus inside: manna, Aaron’s rod, and the Ten Commandments. In Hebrew, commandment (*dabar*) can be translated “word.” Compare: Mary carried the fulfillment of all these types in her body. Jesus is the “true [manna] from heaven” (John 6:32), the true “High Priest” (Heb. 3:1), and “the word made flesh” (John 1:14).
2. The glory cloud (Hebrew *Anan*) was representative of the Holy Spirit, and it “overshadowed” the Ark when Moses consecrated it in Ex. 40:32-33. The Greek word for “overshadow” found in the Septuagint is a form of *episkiasai*. Compare: “The Holy Spirit will

Mary was saved from sin by receiving the grace to be preserved from it. But she was still saved.

- come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The Greek word for "overshadow" is *episkiasei*.
3. David "leapt and danced" before the Ark when it was being carried into Jerusalem in procession in 2 Sam. 6:14-16. Compare: As soon as Elizabeth heard the sound of Mary's salutation, John the Baptist "leaped for joy" in her womb (cf. Luke 1:41-44).
 4. After a manifestation of the power of God working through the Ark, David exclaims, "How can the Ark of the Lord come unto me?" Compare: After the revelation to Elizabeth about the true calling of Mary, who was carrying God in her womb, Elizabeth exclaims, "Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43)
 5. The Ark of the Lord "remained in the house of Obededom . . . three months" in 2 Sam. 6:11. Compare: "Mary remained with [Elizabeth] for about three months" (Luke 1:56).

The New Eve

It is important for us to recall that New Covenant fulfillments are always more glorious and more perfect than their Old Testament types, which are "but a shadow of the good things to come" in the New Covenant (Heb. 10:1). With this in mind, let us consider the revelation of Mary as the "New Eve." After the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, God promised the advent of another "woman" in Genesis 3:15, or a "New Eve" who would oppose Lucifer, and whose "seed" would crush his head. This "woman" and "her seed" would reverse the curse, so to speak, that the original "man" and "woman" had

brought upon humanity through their disobedience.

It is most significant here to note "Adam" and "Eve" are revealed simply as "the man" and "the woman" before the woman's name was changed to "Eve" (Hebrew, "mother of the living") after the fall (see Gen. 2:21ff). When we then look at the New Covenant, Jesus is explicitly referred to as the "last Adam," or the "New Adam" in 1 Cor. 15:45. And Jesus himself indicates that Mary is the prophetic "woman" or "New Eve" of Genesis 3:15 when he refers to his mother as "woman" in John 2:4 and 19:26. Moreover, St. John refers to Mary as "woman" eight times in Revelation 12. As the first Eve brought death to all of her children through disobedience and heeding the words of the ancient serpent, the

devil, the "New Eve" of Revelation 12 brings life and salvation to all of her children through her obedience. The same "serpent" who deceived the original woman of Genesis is revealed, in Revelation 12, to fail in his attempt to overcome this new woman. The New Eve overcomes the serpent and as a result, "The serpent is angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God, and bear testimony to Jesus" (Rev. 12:17).

If Mary is the New Eve and New Testament fulfillments are always more glorious than their Old Testament antecedents, it would be unthinkable for Mary to be conceived in sin. If she were, she would be inferior to Eve who was created in a perfect state, free from all sin. ■

Refinance, Purchase, Cash-out or Consolidate Your Bills

A portion of our profits is given to charities chosen by you



800-270-8565
catholichomeloan.com

Catholic Home Loan is a registered service mark of Catholic Home Loan, LLC. Not all loans are available in all states.

Catholic Home Loan is a national lender. Restrictions apply. Equal housing lender.



Is Abortion the Only “Choice”?

ALCORN ANSWERS ABORTION ARGUMENTS

“The circumstances of many women leave them no choice but to have an abortion.”

a. Saying they have no choice is not being pro-choice but pro-abortion.

One of the great ironies of the pro-choice movement is that it has left many women feeling that they have no choice but abortion. This is because abortion is constantly portrayed as the preferred choice. Having been taught that abortion is the easiest way out of a difficulty, fathers, mothers, boyfriends, husbands, teachers, school counselors, doctors, nurses, media, and peers often pressure the pregnant woman into making a choice that is more theirs than hers. . . .

Studies confirm that many women feel pressured into abortions:

Altogether, fully 64 percent of the aborted women surveyed described themselves as “forced into abortion because of their particular circumstances at that time.” . . . Abortion was simply the most obvious and fastest way to escape from their dilemmas. Over 84 percent state that they would have kept their babies “under better circumstances.”

b. Those who are truly pro-choice must present a woman with a number of possible choices instead of just selling the choice of abortion.

If we are pro-choice, why are doctors, schools, family planning clinics, and abortion clinics not required to present women with facts about available choices, including adoption? A friend of mine who was formerly an abortion clinic counselor said this:

I was totally uninformed of available alternatives to abortion. I never recommended adoption or keeping the child. Furthermore, I was completely unaware of the medical facts, including the development of the fetus. I received no training in factual matters—my job was just to keep women happy and make sure they went through with an abortion.

With this kind of “counseling,” how many women will choose anything other than abortion? Former owners and employees of abortion clinics have stated it was their job to “sell abortions” to pregnant women. Some clinics even hire professional marketing experts to train their staff in abortion sales. . . .

c. “Abortion or misery” is a false portrayal of the options; it keeps women from pursuing—and society from providing—positive alternatives.

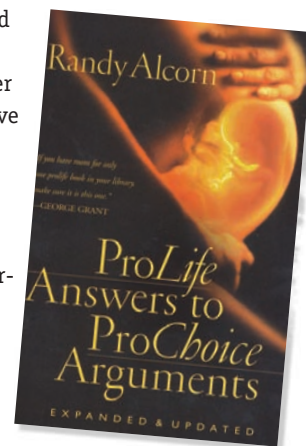
It is a terrible thing to present pregnant women with inadequate choices, leaving them in an apparent no-win situation. . . .

We must reject this trap of presenting the choice between abortion

and misery, as if there were no misery in abortion, and as if there were no alternatives. Why does Planned Parenthood, with all its hundreds of millions of dollars from tax revenues and foundations, not devote itself to a third alternative, such as adoption? Instead of helping with adoptions, why is Planned Parenthood the largest abortion provider in the country? And because it makes millions of dollars from abortions every year, giving it huge vested interests in abortion, how can Planned Parenthood be expected to offer real and objective choices to pregnant women in need?

We cannot improve the abortion alternative; it will always result in the death of an innocent child.

But we can surely work to promote adoption and to free adoption agencies from the red tape that sometimes clogs the process. We can work to improve the quality of children’s services and aid to unmarried mothers. We can open our homes to women in crisis pregnancies. To not do so is to leave women with the tragic perception that abortion is their only choice.



Let Your Face Shine on Us

By Michael Schrauzer

WE ALL KNOW WHAT JESUS LOOKS LIKE, RIGHT? WE'VE SEEN HIS face countless times. It has been portrayed by countless artists, using every artistic technique and medium. His is probably the most depicted and most easily recognizable face in history. But do any of these portraits actually look like him? Nobody alive today has ever seen Jesus in the flesh, and no artist we know of was blessed to have had him sit as a model, so is there any sense in which these depictions can be called portraits? Do they show us the “real” face of Jesus, or are they creations of the artists’ imagination? In short, does any trustworthy description or definitive portrayal of Jesus exist?



Not Even a Verbal Portrait

The Bible is no help. The New Testament writers seem perfectly oblivious to our curiosity about Jesus’ physical appearance, and one searches their words in vain for even the slightest reference to it—or anyone else’s, for that matter. The inspired writers knew that their appointed business was to give us an account of who Jesus was and what he did, not to draw a verbal portrait of him. Similarly, while the Church fathers occasionally debated whether Jesus was beautiful or ugly—“someone from whom men hide their faces”—they offer no specific details.

There are, however, dozens of apocryphal descriptions of Jesus to be found in Gnostic and other non-canonical texts—notably, in spurious letters from Pontius Pilate’s predecessor, a certain “Publius Lentullus,” and another, supposedly from Pilate himself. These indeed may have provided the basis for early portrayals of Jesus, or they themselves may have derived from paintings the writers had seen,

but either way, their accuracy cannot be relied upon.

What about Inspired Images?

What of putatively miraculous images like the Shroud of Turin, or those made in response to private revelations like St. Faustina’s image of Divine Mercy? While these depictions of Jesus enjoy an undeniable authority and prestige, and may be approached with the eyes of faith, it doesn’t seem possible to confirm their verisimilitude.

On the other hand, it could be expected that the inspired tradition of icons would provide the most accurate likeness possible: What could be better than a divinely revealed portrait of Jesus? But icons, like the Scriptures, are not interested in recording the superficial details of someone’s physical appearance. They downplay and abstract the shifting visible features of the person in order to reveal the eternal, invisible essence—the soul. *That* is the “real” person, the real portrait.

Nevertheless, icons display a familiar, if not completely realistic-looking Jesus: oval-faced, bearded (though not heavily so), with long dark hair parted in the middle, a small mouth, large forehead, and large, “soulful” eyes. It is a face in fact strikingly similar to the one on the Shroud of Turin. Over the centuries, it is this bearded Jesus that has become the *de facto* model for artists in both the iconographic and non-iconographic traditions.

There are competing non-iconographic forms, however, that depart from this standard. One of the earliest is a youthful and beardless Jesus, depicted in the second-century catacombs under Rome. He is usually dressed in a toga, and looks distinctly Roman or Hellenistic, presumably something like the artists themselves. Later variants include the heroically muscular Renaissance Jesus and the “historically accurate” Semitic Jesus.

In no case, however, can there be any question of an authentic likeness. These are all “made up” portraits. Jesus is shown abstractly in icons,

Clockwise from top left:

Christ Pantocrator (ca. 1261), mosaic located in Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey.

Jesus, detail of the St. Lucas Altarpiece by Andrea Mantegna (b. 1431)

God the Son by Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov (1848-1926/7); located in St. Vladimir Cathedral, Moscow.

Salvator Mundi by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528); located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



according to tradition, and with conventional or idealized features in non-iconographic images. Each artist gives him a different face (sometimes based on the artist's own), and the variety seems limitless: He has been portrayed in the guise of blonde Caucasians, Africans, Asians, and every other ethnicity. Remarkably, this doesn't seem strange—imagine if, say, Pope John Paul II were depicted with the same freedom—although there is a danger of transforming the particular man Jesus into a sort of generic “human.” It's even conceivable that among these manifold portraits one or two actually have a chance resemblance to the real Jesus.

Appearance—or Essence?

But does it matter? Augustine regards it as completely irrelevant to our salvation what we imagine Jesus to look like. Although he was manifested in the flesh, with a specific form and features that could have been photographed, Jesus was “all things to all people.” Artists depict a Jesus that “looks like us” in order to convey a lively and immediate impression of who he was, or they use iconographic abstraction to represent his essential nature. It is perhaps only in the modern era, when a skeptical and critical distance from the spiritual is expected, that a preoccupation with finding the physical face of Jesus has developed.

We say that a good portrait captures the “real person,” the essence of who he is. No form of art can show us with certainty what Jesus really looked like, but art can show us who Jesus really is. ■

Top right:

The Shroud of Turin, detail; located in Turin, Italy.

Right:

Jesus, detail from The Calling of St. Matthew (1599-1600) by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio; located in the Contarelli Chapel of the church of St. Louis of France, Rome.



How to Find a Good Husband

WOOD GIVES WOMEN WISDOM FOR WEDDING

The right way to attract a man

It's incredibly easy for a woman to attract attention from men. Just wear skin-tight, thigh-length, revealing clothing. You'll get lots of male attention. Guaranteed. But will it be the kind of attention you want?

Modesty protects you from immature men

Fishermen insist that the fish you catch is determined by the bait you use. Do you want to fend off the playboys incapable of real love?

Then don't dress like a playgirl. Do you want to be the type of woman who's attractive to a good man who'll want to bring you home to meet his folks? Then dress like one. You'll largely determine how a man will relate to you through your modesty, or lack thereof.

Challenges attract the best men

Men have always been internally wired to love a *real* challenge. Some contemporary "experts" think that modern men have lost this basic male drive. They're crazy.

Have you ever wondered why one particular branch of the U.S. military never seems to have a problem meeting its recruiting quotas? The Marines demand the most from their recruits, and they never

fail to attract highly committed young men. You, too, can attract a highly committed husband by keeping your standards high.

Your "hinge" relationship

Your relationship with your parents is a "hinge relationship" that colors all your other personal relationships. Look at the order of the Ten Commandments: The fourth commandment to honor father and mother is the "hinge" between those dealing with the love of God and those dealing with the love of other people. Similarly, your ability to love each other in your marriage is related to how you honor your parents.

Targeting problems rather than each other

Just because you fight doesn't mean that your marriage will be doomed. In fact, the opposite may be true. Secular marriage research has found the habitual *avoidance* of conflict is the number-one predictor of divorce. Amazingly, the couples who stay married don't have fewer differences or fights than couples who divorce. Both sets of couples disagree about the same types of things (money, kids, sexual relations, housework, in-laws). The big difference between the two groups of couples is *how* they handle their disagreement. For instance, biting sarcasm and stonewalling during arguments are high predictors of divorce.

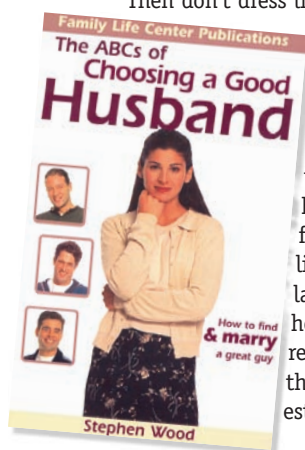
Real married life, engagements, courtships, and even honeymoons

have occasional fights. Such times, though trying, aren't signs of the end of your relationship. They are actually opportunities for deepening your love, strengthening your communication, and learning the meaning of the twelve most important words for family life spoken by Jesus: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (see Matthew 6:12).

Contraception: the ultimate marriage buster

The divorce rate has increased 500 percent since the ultimate marriage buster started gaining popular acceptance early in the twentieth century. The ultimate marriage buster was given a big boost by medical technology in the 1960s, and the divorce rate has doubled since then. In fact, the divorce rate for new marriages hovers at 50 percent. In stark contrast, those married couples wise enough to keep the marriage buster out of their bedrooms have a divorce rate under 5 percent.

Christians during the twentieth century were foolish enough to imagine that abandoning God's design for marital love would bring liberation and happiness. In your selection of a husband, be certain that you have a solemn agreement with your fiancé to keep the ultimate marriage buster completely out of your marriage. You don't want to repeat the last century's mistakes.



To order *The ABC's of Choosing a Good Husband*, call 1-888-291-8000 or visit shop.catholic.com.

An Inquisition Primer

By Robert P. Lockwood

CATHOLIC URBAN LEGENDS ARE MYTHS of history created in the fervor of anti-Catholic passions. Unfortunately, they long ago became part of our cultural framework and are accepted today as undeniable truths.

Though centuries old, Catholic urban legends usually crop up as rhetorical devices meant to undermine positions taken by the Church on current public issues. That's why Catholics questioning the morality and ethics of embryonic stem cell research, for example, will suddenly have



Galileo thrown in their face. Rather than argue the issue at hand, those opposed to the Church position dust off a non-historical legend from the trial of Galileo to make the case that the contemporary Church opposes any and all scientific advances.

There is perhaps no better trump card in the deck of anti-Catholic urban legends than "The Inquisition." The Inquisition is raised as banner proof that the Church is the intolerant, oppressive enemy of modern thought, science, and freedom.

Many people know nothing about what inquisition courts were or what purpose they served within different societies and at different periods in history. The only thing they know about the Inquisition is the caricature

in Catholic urban legends. This is frequently the Catholic understanding as well.

Following is a short primer on the Inquisition.

Where did the inquisition courts come from?

From its inception, the Church had to confront those who persisted in representing their beliefs as Christian when what they said or did contradicted the faith of the apostles. Early accounts contained in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters describe the leadership of the infant church responding to those falsely representing the faith. We speak today of the primary role of Church leadership in preserving the Deposit of Faith passed down from the apostles.

The early Church usually depended on admonition, avoidance and, if persistent, expulsion from the community for those who persisted in false teaching. As Christianity became the faith of the Roman Empire and the nascent European kingdoms, the faith was understood as the fundamental, unifying principle of culture and community. To step outside that faith was not only viewed as a violation of Christian unity, but also as a fundamental denial of the meaning of humanity and the right ordering of the world.

To act against "heresy" was not considered enforcing church discipline or imposing doctrinal conformity. Heresy was seen as an evil that

threatened both the salvation of souls and the very heart of the community. Heresy was not an individual acting alone; heresy was an attack on the whole community and the whole purpose of life.

It was out of this fundamental understanding—shared by secular as well as religious authorities—that society would look for a means to preserve unity of faith and culture.

The difficulty in all this was the state's role. While the Church always struggled to remain free of the control of local secular officials, severe abuses arose when the Church's concern for the purity of the apostolic faith was trumped by the motivations of secular authorities.

What was "The Inquisition"?

There was never really something we could call "The Inquisition"—a clear, unified, consistent inquisition functioning throughout Europe and elsewhere down through the centuries. By definition, inquisitions were local "ecclesial investigations." Particularly in the beginning, they were investigations and trials conducted or overseen by the Church through a papal representative, the local bishop, or a member of a religious order appointed by the pope for the task. These inquisitions were rarely ongoing, and decades could go by without a given region resorting to any such trials. In England, inquisition courts waxed and waned; in the German states they were even rarer.

Inquisitions typically involved a judicial process that aimed at confession and conversion. Local bishops working with local authorities under local circumstances usually conducted the inquisitorial courts. Their goal was to secure a person's repentance for heretical views or for engaging in activities contrary to the faith. If that

Heresy is an attack on the whole community and the whole purpose of life.

goal was not achieved and the person persisted in serious heresy, he would be turned over to the secular authorities.

The Church conducted the investigations and trials. Punishment was left to the hands of the secular authorities. In Protestant states after the Reformation, the state conducted the investigation and trial and imposed punishment.

An inquisition as a formal Church process was not codified until the thirteenth century. This formal institution was primarily to reserve to the Church the right to address heresy, as opposed to mob rule and the oft-incoherent secular courts that had frequently handled heresy over the previous two hundred years. It was a particular response, however, to the Albigensian Crusade of the early part of the thirteenth century that led the Church to formalize the inquisition courts.

What was the Albigensian Crusade?

The Albigensian movement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was a heresy that grew in southern France. Albigensians rejected the sacraments and believed that the “evil god” of the Old Testament had created the physical world. In 1208, they killed a papal representative, and Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) called for a “crusade” against the heretical sect. Unfortunately, that’s what he got. Innocent had stressed education, confession, clerical reform and solid preaching as an answer to heresy, but the “Albigensian Crusade” quickly deteriorated into attacks by mobs, petty rulers, vindictive local bishops, and armies from northern France over the next twenty years, destroying the Albigensians.

The papacy realized that it had to exercise greater control over the

treatment of heresy. This would allow for some measure of persuasion and conversion, rather than prosecution and slaughter by secular courts or mob rule.

In 1231, Pope Gregory appointed the Dominican order to act as papal judges of heresy and to take control away from the local secular authorities. Over the next two decades, a series of canonical instructions were drawn up for conducting medieval inquisition courts.

By the mid- to late-fourteenth century, however, these papal-commissioned inquisitors had disappeared from many parts of Europe. Inquisition courts themselves varied in use from prince to prince, kingdom to kingdom over the years. Though succeeding popes would attempt to exercise some control over these courts, a vast, papal-controlled singular inquisition never really existed in Europe.

How did these medieval courts function?

The medieval inquisition courts functioned like circuit courts. Sermons would be preached on the dangers of heresy and the accused was allowed a period of grace for confession and repentance. Those who refused to recant were tried. Those found guilty and still refusing to recant would be excommunicated and turned over to the secular authorities for punishment. For the most part, these courts functioned similarly to secular courts, but their sentences and penances were usually far less harsh.

Did medieval inquisition courts employ torture?

Common to judicial practice going back to Roman times, torture was used at times to obtain proof of accu-

sations. But, again, the goal was not conviction of heretics but the salvation of their souls. Very often, the general laity simply wanted the heretic destroyed, while secular authorities wanted to punish. The courts of the inquisition hoped to bring the heretic back into the fold, and guidelines were strict against using torture as punishment. Numerous works of popular art notwithstanding, no priest or religious was allowed to take an active role in torture.

Although no such action can be justified today, it is important to note that the courts of the medieval inquisition were actually modifying and limiting a practice common to secular judicial proceedings of the time. The use of torture in inquisition courts was much less extensive, and far less violent, than the norms of secular courts.

What “crimes” were tried in courts of inquisition?

Sixteenth-century Protestant reformers propagandized that inquisition courts were historically aimed at simple, Bible-believing Christians. For the most part, however, those prosecuted in the courts of the inquisition were not people with any organized theology of religious dissent. For the most part, they were the ignorant, the troublemakers, the braggarts and, all-too-often, the drunkards belching out foolishness when under the influence.

Much like any court today, the inquisition courts often functioned as a form of social control, aimed at those who publicly lived in a way contrary to accepted norms. In most countries, those on trial rarely were advocates of a contradictory or heretical theological system of beliefs. Fornication, adultery, refusal to

Numerous works of popular art notwithstanding, no priest or religious was allowed to take an active role in torture.

receive the sacraments, and disregard of common devotional practices were the common practices investigated by the inquisition courts. In fact, in many inquisition courts a major focus was on clergy living dissolute lifestyles, rather than laity.

Were inquisition courts aimed at scientists?

No. Inquisitions rarely involved themselves in the area of science, despite the well-known case of Galileo. Most cases involved aspects of everyday life.

Galileo's trial in 1633 created its own wealth of Catholic urban legends, most notably the idea that the Church stood in oppressive opposition to scientific advancement. The historical reality was not that Galileo was condemned because he could not prove scientifically a theory that appeared to violate Scripture, but rather that he presented that theory as fact in his public writings. Additionally, he had lectured Church authorities publicly about the true meaning of Scripture.

In fact, the few "scientists" that fell under the courts of inquisition were generally in trouble because of their attempts to make theological pronouncements, as had Galileo. Their trials had little or nothing to do with their scientific studies.

Where does the Spanish Inquisition fit into all of this?

The Spanish Inquisition is the source of most of the myths surrounding "The Inquisition." But the Spanish Inquisition was actually a mid-fifteenth century adoption of inquisition courts for a very specific political purpose. It was a government-controlled inquisition aimed primarily at faithful

Catholics of Jewish ancestry. The image of a Spanish Inquisition burnings hundreds of thousands of Protestant heretics has no basis in fact—there were few if any Protestants in Spain.

Though first established with papal approval, the Spanish Inquisition quickly came to be dominated by the Spanish monarchy—not the Church. It had strong and ugly racial overtones as it was aimed at those of Jewish and, later, Muslim ancestry. While it certainly was a force that kept Protestant thought out of Spain in the Reformation and post-Reformation era, the number of those actually prosecuted for such theological dissent was very small.

The last major outburst of the inquisition in Spain was again aimed at Jewish converts in the 1720s. The Spanish Inquisition was formally ended by the monarchy in 1834, though it had effectively ended years earlier.

The Spanish Inquisition became the primary source of the myths and Reformation propaganda that created the Catholic urban legend of the Inquisition. This is the urban legend of an all-embracing, papally dominated Inquisition that lasted from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries, supposedly aimed at a hidden, Bible-believing Church.

This myth of the Inquisition grew out of sixteenth-century Reformation propaganda. It served as a means to generate anti-Catholic sentiment, particularly during the revolt of Netherlands against Spain that began in 1548. The myth of the Inquisition created a black legend that circulated throughout sixteenth-century Europe. It portrayed Spain as a symbol of repression, brutality, intolerance, and backwardness for

centuries. This image became inextricably tied to the Church in general.

Oddly enough, the building of the myth of the Spanish Inquisition had little to do with the actual racial persecution in Spain against Jewish converts to the faith. That real tragedy of the Spanish Inquisition would not be rediscovered until unbiased historical studies of the late nineteenth century.

If the inquisition was not quite the horror that the Catholic urban legend suggests, does that mean we should simply ignore it?

History—and its lessons—should never be ignored. There can be no denying that the inquisition courts existed. As described in the papal apology of Pope John Paul II at the beginning of the New Millennium, "Men of the church, in the name of faith and morals, have sometimes used methods not in keeping with the Gospels in the solemn duty of defending truth."

The Inquisition is classic proof that the Church includes sinners who do sinful things, and that good people can make wrong decisions. It is also a classic example of what happens when those who represent the Church are caught up in the norms and ethics of the society in which they live. They can far too easily judge the Gospel with the eyes of culture, rather than the culture by the Gospel.

That said, it also has to be remembered that the Inquisition as presented in the Catholic urban legend is far from the reality of history. It is unfair to use it as a cudgel against contemporary Catholic positions, and it is pure bigotry to present it as a defining element of Catholic faith, yesterday or today. ■

HELP YOUR SON BECOME THE MAN GOD WANTS HIM TO BE

For decades, our culture has taught young boys that sexual conquest is what truly makes a man. So is it any wonder that so many teenage boys give in to temptation and begin living lives of sexual impurity?

But, as Catholic Answers apologist Jason Evert points out in his new booklet, **Pure Manhood**, your son was made for something better. He has a higher calling—a calling to authentic manhood.

And in **Pure Manhood**, Evert not only shows your son how to achieve this ideal, but also presents convincing, clearheaded arguments as to why he should.

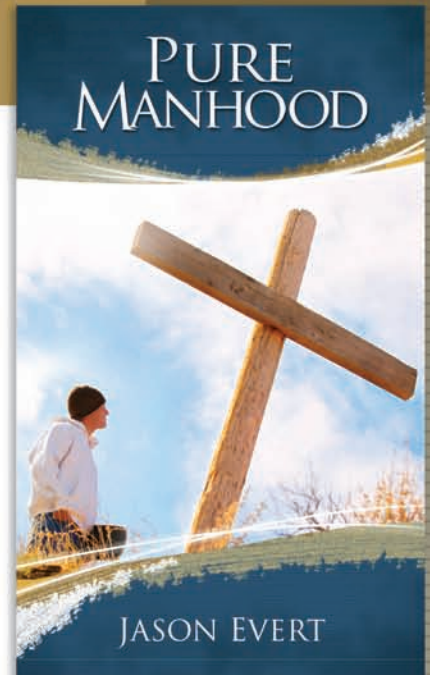
Here's just some of what your son will discover in **Pure Manhood**:

- A proven game plan for staying sexually pure
- Why sexual purity makes young men *more attractive* to women
- The #1 quality high school and college girls most want in a man
- What girls *really* think about guys who are virgins
- The crucial difference between sexual desire and lust
- How to make sexual temptations less frequent and easier to overcome
- A powerful remedy for overcoming the temptation to lust after a woman
- Why young men should forget about "protecting themselves" with a condom and focus on protecting something far more important—their future wives and children

And much, much more

Every day your son is bombarded with messages that encourage him to make sexual impurity a way of life.

But Jason Evert's **Pure Manhood**, will help your son see things in a new light. He'll discover the real and powerful benefits of sexual purity, along with the high cost impurity brings. So put a copy of this powerful booklet into the hands of all the young men in your life. It will be a gift to both them and their future families, bringing benefits for decades to come.



Pure Manhood

\$2.95

(Bulk discounts available)

TR0907A

To order, visit shop.catholic.com or call 1-888-291-8000.

*(Mention that you saw the ad in this month's issue of **This Rock**.)*

What to Do When Mormons Come Calling



MICHELLE ARNOLD

Someone in my Bible study used 2 John 10-11 to argue that Catholics should not invite Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses into their homes. How are we to understand this verse?

"If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (that Christ does not have God) do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work" (2 John 10-11).

The 1953 *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture* says the following:

2 John 10-11: Warning against false teachers: A firm faith in the divinity and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ is needed to preserve true Christian charity. Many seducers are seeking to undermine this faith. These men should be avoided, because they have the spirit of the Antichrist, and may cause them to lose the full reward for their past good deeds. They profess to advance beyond the teachings of Christ, as if our Lord had not taught the full truth. Now, whosoever follows their teaching cuts himself off from God. In order to prevent this threatening danger to the faith, the Apostle enjoins that the customary hospitality is not to be extended to teachers of false doctrines. These men ought not even to receive usual greeting, lest this be interpreted as a sign of recognition and approval.

The same warning should be heeded by Catholics today, especially those who are either weak in faith, do not have a strong working knowledge of their Catholic faith, or both. In his book *When Mormons Call*, Isaiah Bennett exhorts Catholics to think hard before inviting a Mormon missionary into their home. He says, "If you let them in and listen to their presentation, you've taken the first step they want you to take . . . Mormon leaders have made it clear that

each member is to seek potential recruits. It's part of their work to 'spread the gospel' to every person." He goes on to say:

Before discussing faith with anyone, be sure to know, love and practice your own. You don't have to be a religious expert with an answer to every problem that's raised. But you do need to have a firm understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church, their foundations in reason, Scripture and Tradition, and a desire to live a life committed to Christ . . . You also need inner peace. (14-16)

Without those two ingredients, he says, you should not invite dialogue.

— Peggy Frye

My husband and I found out a little while back that we are expecting our first child. I spent a short time questioning God's decision to send us a child just then, and I prayed for a miscarriage, that he "reconsider." I did not do anything that would endanger the life of my baby. Still, was praying for a miscarriage a grave sin? I wonder if the surprise of becoming pregnant and the unstable moods of the first trimester played a role, as I no longer am worried—in fact, I'm very happy.

I suggest that you mention it in confession. I can't know what your state of mind was and therefore how culpable you were. Of course, all mortal sins can be completely forgiven through the sacrament of penance. If you have been honest in what you have confessed, you will walk out of the confessional free of all sin—no matter what the nature of the sin was. When Jesus told his apostles: "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven" (John 20:23), he meant it.

— Fr. Vincent Serpa



JIM BLACKBURN



PEGGY FRYE



FR. VINCENT SERPA

Why do Catholics mark their doorways with chalk at the start of every year?

Marking the doorways with blessed chalk is an old Catholic custom to honor the feast of the Epiphany, which celebrates the manifestation of the Christ child to the Magi. The inscription that is made is as follows: 20 + C + M + B + 07.

The “20” and “07” stand for the current year. The plus signs are crosses. The acronym “CMB” stands for the first initials of the names that tradition has assigned to the Magi (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar).

— Michelle Arnold

Does drinking coffee with cream break the fast?

Even coffee without cream breaks the one-hour Eucharistic fast. But it does not break the fast on a day of fast and abstinence.

— Fr. Vincent Serpa

How old is the Catholic Church?

Although the Church as we know it today did not become “visible” until the day of Pentecost shortly after Jesus’ resurrection, the Church was in formation from the beginning of time. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains,

[A]lready present in figure at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvelous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and the old Alliance. Established in this last age of the world and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time. (CCC 759)

— Jim Blackburn

My godson is marrying outside the Church. I want to tell him why he must marry in the Church, but I don’t know how much pressure to apply. My friends suggest I insist he marry in the Church. What do I do?

The Church teaches that

Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local ordinary or parish priest or of the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who, in the presence of two witnesses, assists, in accordance however with the rules set out in the following canons. (CIC 1108 §1)

Of course you shouldn’t try to force the couple to marry in the Church. But that doesn’t mean that they shouldn’t marry in the Church, or that you should not make your position known. It means only that the responsibility to marry in the Church is theirs and not yours.

I encourage you to inform your godchild of his obligation to marry in the Church. Perhaps you can offer him some reading materials on the importance of being validly married. If he refuses to listen to you, then at least you did your best.

— Peggy Frye

A member of a tribunal told me that a valid, consummated, sacramental marriage can be annulled on the basis of “incompatibility of faith” even though *Handbook of Prayers* (Scepter Publishers, 1995), published by the authority of the NCCB, states: “The Church does not have the power to dissolve a valid sacramental marriage that has been consummated” (23). What can you tell me?

The *Handbook of Prayers* is correct. The Church’s *Code of Canon Law* agrees: “A marriage that is *ratum et consummatum* [meaning valid, sacramental, and consummated] can be dissolved by no human power and by no cause, except death” (CIC 1141).

I suspect that you misunderstood the tribunal member. To say that a valid marriage can be annulled makes no sense. An annulment never invalidates a marriage—it simply recognizes and declares that a valid marriage never existed. There are cases, however, in which a valid marriage

that is either (1) not sacramental or (2) not consummated may be dissolved, but dissolution is very different from annulment in that dissolution actually ends marriage.

— Jim Blackburn

My husband and I are farmers. We would like to shut down our farming operation on Sundays except for feeding the cows. His parents do a lot of work on Sunday. My husband tries his best to not work on Sunday but out of respect for his father will take a turn in a harvest rotation if his father asks him. Can farm operations continue on a Sunday?

A lot rides on what is considered “necessary” work. If the work is truly necessary, then it is allowed on Sunday. If it is not necessary, but you can make a lot more money with it, then one should put God first and not work. God is never outdone with generosity. He deserves our time and attention.

— Fr. Vincent Serpa

Are parents allowed to select the sex of their children? My husband and I have two girls and would like to try for a boy to complete our family.

Even if one had a way to select for sex that did not involve aborting children of the “wrong” sex or otherwise violating the integrity of the marital act (e.g., by using invitro fertilization), it can be argued that to do so may open a couple to the temptation to treat children in a utilitarian fashion rather than treating them as gifts from God possessing inherent human dignity. The Church expects parents to remain open to life and to lovingly accept the children God entrusts to them, regardless of their sex.

Donum Vitae states: “The child is not an object to which one has a right, nor can he be considered as an object of ownership; rather, a child is a gift, ‘the supreme gift’ and the most gratuitous gift of marriage, and is a living testimony of the mutual giving of his parents” (DV 8).

— Michelle Arnold

If I decide to wear a scapular, and then choose not to wear it for no good reason, have I sinned?

The Church does not oblige anyone to wear a scapular. It is a voluntary matter. To choose not to wear one is not a sin. However, one could have a sinful reason for not wearing it, such as disdain for God or the Blessed Virgin.

— Fr. Vincent Serpa

If it was God's will for a couple to have six children, but instead they practiced family planning so that these children were never born, would God see to it that these children were born to different parents, or would they not be born at all?

Your question seems to assume that the six hypothetical children's souls exist somewhere waiting for their bodies to be conceived by their parents—it doesn't work that way. A child's soul does not come into existence until conception at which point it is created immediately by God (see *Catechism*, 366). Therefore, if someone chooses not to conceive children, children never exist.

—Jim Blackburn

Are the Knights of Peter Claver a Catholic group?

The Knights of Peter Claver (www.kofpc.org) is a lay organization of African-American Catholics similar to the Knights of Columbus. The group takes its name from St. Peter Claver (1581–1654), a Jesuit missionary who is said to have converted over 300,000 slaves to Catholicism.

— Michelle Arnold

Are there different levels of heaven? I've heard the analogy about different size glasses being "full," but what does the Church teach on this?

"The degree of perfection of the beatific vision granted to the just is proportioned to each one's merits" (Ludwig Ott). This is a dogma of the faith. In his book *Fundamentals of*

Catholic Dogma Ludwig Ott explains, "The Decretum pro Graecis of the Union Council of Florence (1439) declared: The souls of the perfectly just 'clearly behold the Triune and One God as he is, but corresponding to the difference of their merits, the one more perfectly than the other'" (479).

Here are some Scripture verses which provide evidence for this teaching:

"In my Father's house are many rooms" (John 14:2).

"[The Son of man] will repay every man for what he has done" (Matt. 16:27).

"[E]ach shall receive his wages according to his labor" (1 Cor. 3:8).

"[H]e who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6).

—Jim Blackburn

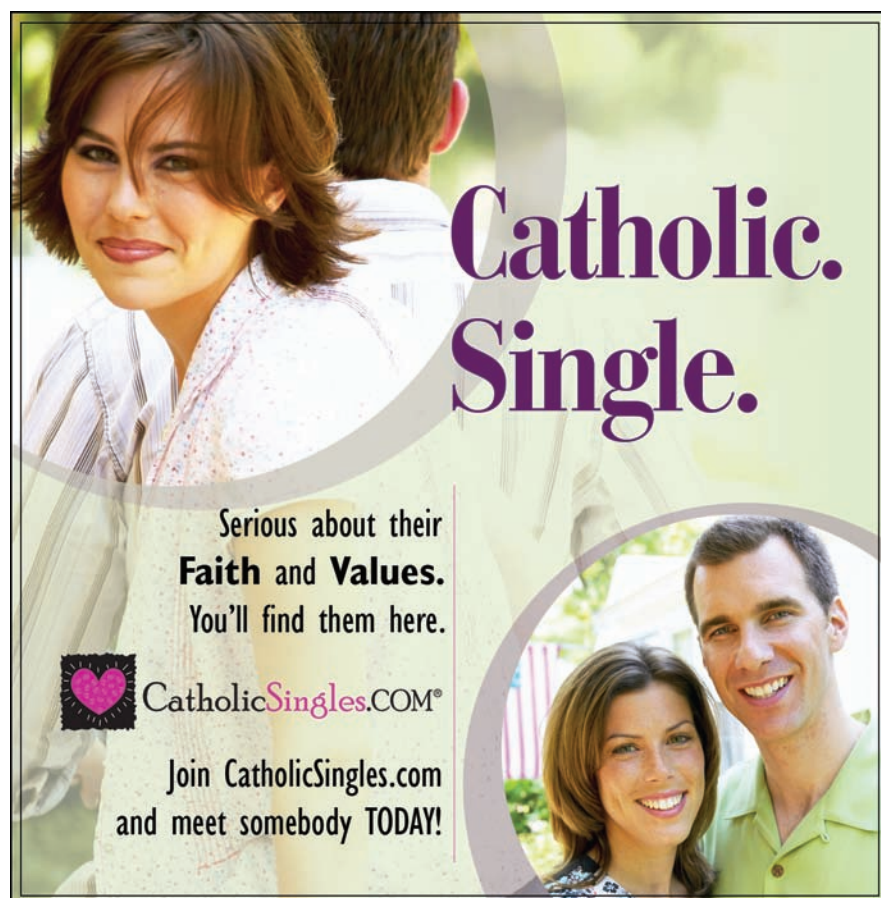
pertaining to Jesus' commissioning of Peter in Matthew 16:18: "You are the rock. . ." Why wouldn't this be recorded in Mark since Mark was recording directly from Peter? It just seems strange that this important justification for Peter as first pope is only in Matthew.

Matthew's special focus is in presenting the Good News to Jews, so he takes great pains to show how Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Thus he writes of the keys given to Peter, which hearken back to Isaiah 22, where Eliakim is invested with authority: "I place the key of David on his shoulder; should he open, no one shall close, should he close, no one shall open" (Is. 22:22). Eliakim is seen as a type of the Messiah. This simply was not Mark's focus. Our prayer is that you will reach Easter with the joy of being home!

— Fr. Vincent Serpa


I am in RCIA and have a question

My priest leaves the sanctuary to



**Catholic.
Single.**

Serious about their
Faith and Values.
You'll find them here.

 **CatholicSingles.COM®**

Join **CatholicSingles.com**
and meet somebody **TODAY!**

exchange the sign of peace with the congregation. This encourages people to leave their pews and wander all over the church shaking hands and giving hugs. Is this allowed? If not, where can I find the documentation?

During Sunday Mass, except on special occasions, the priest is not permitted to leave the sanctuary to exchange the sign of peace with members of the congregation. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 154:

The priest may give the sign of peace to the ministers but always remains within the sanctuary, so as not to disturb the celebration. In the dioceses of the United States of America, for a good reason, on special occasions (for example, in the case of a funeral, a wedding, or when civic leaders are present) the priest may offer the sign of peace to a few of the faithful near the sanctuary. At the same time, in accord with the decisions of the Conference of Bishops, all offer one another a sign that expresses peace, communion, and charity. While the sign of peace is being given, one may say, *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum (the peace of the Lord be with you always)*, to which the response is *Amen*.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 82:

As for the sign of peace to be given, the manner is to be established by Conferences of Bishops in accordance with the culture and customs of the peoples. It is, however, appropriate that each person offer the sign of peace only to those who are nearest and in a sober manner.

—Peggy Frye

My brother just became engaged. His Protestant fiancée wants an outdoor wedding. We have been told that the Catholic Church does not perform outdoor weddings, so our uncle, who is a priest and my brother's godfather, will not be able to perform the cere-

mony. My uncle's efforts to convince them to have the wedding in a church have been unsuccessful. What does the Church expect my uncle to do?

Your brother needs to see his parish priest about this right away. It may be possible to get a dispensation that would allow them to have a Protestant wedding in deference to the Protestant bride. Since there are no restrictions about outdoor weddings for Protestants, the wedding could be outside. But—and this is a big but—they have to get permission from the diocese for the Church to recognize the marriage as valid. I hope this works, because if it doesn't, you can't support your brother if he chooses to enter into an invalid marriage. Your family does not have to respect his decision if he chooses to sin!

—Fr. Vincent Serpa

Is gambling a sin?

Gambling is not in itself immoral but it can lead to immoral behavior if practiced without prudence and temperance. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains,

Games of chance (card games, etc.) or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement. Unfair wagers and cheating at games constitute grave matter, unless the damage inflicted is so slight that the one who suffers it cannot reasonably consider it significant. (CCC 2413)

—Jim Blackburn

Every Sunday a Protestant service is held in a local Catholic high school chapel. Is this permitted?

Yes, provided the school complies with the following guidelines from *Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*:

Catholic churches are consecrated or blessed buildings which have an important theological and liturgical significance for the Catholic community. They are therefore generally reserved for Catholic worship. However, if priests, ministers or communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church do not have a place or the liturgical objects necessary for celebrating worthily their religious ceremonies, the diocesan bishop may allow them the use of a church or a Catholic building and also lend them what may be necessary for their services. PNE 137)

—Peggy Frye

Does the hour fast begin an hour before Mass begins or an hour before receiving Communion?

The Eucharistic fast is to be observed for one hour prior to the reception of the Eucharist, not prior to the beginning of Mass. *Code of Canon Law* states, "A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before holy communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine" (CIC 919 §1).

—Jim Blackburn

Is it a sacrilege if my ferret drinks holy water? I tried to stop him.

No, it is not a sin for a pet to drink holy water, so long as you are not deliberately giving the water to it for a sacrilegious purpose. After all, pets are sprinkled with holy water when they are blessed. Are you aware that in some parts of the country it is illegal to have a ferret? Just a thought.

—Fr. Vincent Serpa

Quick Questions

This Rock
P.O. Box 199000
San Diego, CA
92159-9000

Pop Quiz Redux

By Karl Keating

IN 1993 I COMPOSED FOR *THIS ROCK* “THE WORLD’S TOUGHEST CATHOLIC Quiz.” I first had given it to members of Legatus, an organization of well-to-do Catholic business leaders and their spouses. Even with *sub rosa* “sharing” between spouses, few got more than half of the twenty questions right. The high score was seventeen, which was impressively good. Some folks got seventeen questions wrong.



Later I gave the quiz to other groups, with similar results. After the quiz appeared in the magazine, a few people wrote in to say they had aced it, but thousands of subscribers did not reveal their scores at all, which made me think that most readers had reason to keep the results to themselves.

Let me give you just one of the questions—the one that caused the most consternation among readers. Let’s see how you do. Here it is:

At the Crucifixion

- Jesus’ human nature died on the cross.
- Only the human person of Jesus, not the divine person of Jesus, died on the cross.
- God died on the cross.
- Jesus’ human and divine natures both died on the cross, but the universe was kept going by the Father and the Holy Spirit until Jesus’ Resurrection.
- None of the above.

Here is the answer I provided:

- Wrong, because natures aren’t put to death—persons are. When you die, it is not your

human nature which dies but you as a distinct person.

- Wrong, because there is no human person in Jesus. There is only one Person, the divine, who already (by definition) had a divine nature and who took on a human nature.
- Correct, because the Person who died on the cross was a divine Person, commonly called the Son of God. Since that Person *is* God, it is proper to say that God died on the cross, even though that sounds odd and may make some unthinking people conclude that it means that God ceased to exist, which, of course, was not the case. (If you were sure this answer could not be right, don’t fret—you’re in good company. Most people miss this question because the

correct answer “just doesn’t sound right.”)

- Wrong, first because natures don’t die, persons do, and second because the answers suggests Jesus couldn’t keep the universe going, as though he ceased to be God between the time of his death and his Resurrection.

- Wrong, because (c) is correct.

So how did you do on this one-question quiz? Did you ace it, or did you say to yourself, as so many people did over the years, that (c) was the most obviously false possibility?

Don’t fret. This was the toughest question in “The World’s Toughest Catholic Quiz,” and I deliberately made it so because I wanted to startle quiz takers and to help them see that we need to parse arguments carefully. When it comes to theology, nuances really do matter. ■

Confused no more!

Do you ever feel like Mass has become a performance—something to which you should have had to buy a ticket—as opposed to the Holy Sacrifice that it was intended to be?

Perhaps you're tired of liturgical dancers prancing around the altar during Mass, lectors changing the words of sacred Scripture to eliminate male references, or the priest changing the words of Consecration to suit his own theological ideas.

If you've seen or heard about these or any other liturgical abuses, and you'd like to know what you can do to help protect the sacred dignity of the Mass, then you're going to love *Mass Confusion*, the book that authoritatively defines the do's and don'ts of Catholic worship.

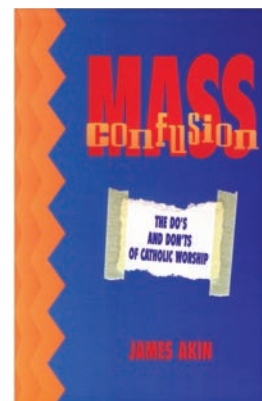
Written by Catholic Answers director of apologetics Jimmy Akin, *Mass Confusion* is a well-respected source of clear, concise, easy-to-understand answers about today's most common questions concerning the liturgy (especially liturgical abuses).

In this book, you'll discover the answers to these (and many other) commonly asked questions:

- What are the proper times to stand, sit, or kneel during Mass?
- How much liberty does a priest have with the words of the Mass?
- Where does the tabernacle go, and should there even be one?
- Is the priest allowed to give a general absolution during the penitential rite?
- What about altar girls—not to mention dancing girls?
- Can someone other than a priest or deacon give the homily at Mass?
- Can the priest refuse to give you Communion on the tongue?
- May an image of the resurrected Christ be used in place of a crucifix?
- Can Communion be given to Protestants at weddings and funerals?
- May lay people stand around the altar during the Consecration?

Nothing has generated more controversy within the Church over the past 30 years than the changes in the liturgy. But now, with *Mass Confusion* in your hands, you can fight back and help restore reverence and dignity to the Mass whenever and wherever you find liturgical abuses.

Order *Mass Confusion* today. No Catholic's personal library would be complete without it.



**MASS
CONFUSION**
\$18.95

**To order, visit
shop.catholic.com or
call 1-888-291-8000.**

TR0507B

(MENTION THAT YOU
SAW THE AD IN THIS MONTH'S
ISSUE OF *THIS ROCK*.)

Catholic Answers Seminars

**Schedule one
of our dynamic
speakers now
by calling
619-387-7200**

Arizona Phoenix

October 29

Jason Evert

Xavier College Prep
High School Chastity
Presentation
602-277-3772

October 29

Jason Evert

St. Mary's High School
High School
Chastity Presentation
602-277-3772

California Madera

September 22

Rosalind Moss

St. Joachim
Catholic Church
Catholic Women's
Conference and
Luncheon
559-673-3690

Santa Maria

September 15

Tim Staples

St. Louis
De Montfort
Catholic Church
Congress
805-937-4555

Connecticut Bridgeport

March 9-12, 2008

Rosalind Moss

St. Ann Roman
Catholic Church
Parish Renewal
Retreat
203-368-1607

Illinois

Carlinville

September 8

Rosalind Moss

Sts. Mary and Joseph
Catholic Church
Marian Eucharistic
Conference
217-227-4137

Kansas Wichita

February 9, 2008

Marcellino D'Ambrosio

Beech Activity Center
Pre-Lenten Conference
316-320-1360

Michigan Livonia

November 13

Rosalind Moss

St. Michael
the Archangel
Catholic Church
Adult Faith
Formation
734-261-1455

Oklahoma Yukon

November 10-11

Tim Staples

St. John Nepomuk
Catholic Church
Parish Conference
405-354-2743

Pennsylvania Reading

September 18

Jason Evert

St. Catherine of Siena
Catholic Church
High School Chastity
Presentation
610-370-1799

September 19

Jason Evert

Central
Catholic High School
High School Chastity
Presentation
610-370-1799

September 19

Jason Evert

Holy Name High
School
High School Chastity
Presentation
610-370-1799

Texas Grapevine

September 22

Tim Staples

DFW Hilton
Magnificat Breakfast
972-383-2518

Sugar Land

December 7-8

Rosalind Moss and

Tim Staples

St. Theresa
Catholic Church
Advent Mission
281-494-2717



Jason Evert is one of the most in-demand speakers in the country today on the subject of chastity. He also appears on radio

(Catholic Answers Live) and television (EWTN's Life on the Rock). As a staff apologist at Catholic Answers, he responds to thousands of questions each year concerning the faith. Evert holds a master's degree in theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville. He is author of the booklet Pure Love and the book Answering Jehovah's Witnesses.



Ray Guarendi is a father, clinical psychologist, and author whose expertise has been tapped by school districts, Head Start programs, mental health centers, substance abuse programs, and juvenile courts. He's appeared as an expert on shows such as Oprah and CBS This Morning. His books include You're a Better Parent than You Think! Dr. Guarendi also hosts his own national radio show in concert with Ave Maria Radio and writes a syndicated parenting column.

Rosalind Moss, a convert from Judaism by way of Evangelical Protestantism, is a dynamic witness to the truth of the Catholic faith. She left a career as a businesswoman to earn a master's degree in ministry from Talbot Theological Seminary, and finally converted to Catholicism in 1995 when she came to realize that the Catholic Church is the true Church established by Christ. Moss co-hosts with Kristine Franklin a series on EWTN called Household of Faith.