



WOMEN FOR FAITH & FAMILY

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Joanna Bogle

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Juli Loesch Wiley

Production & Web Manager:

Gina Caulfield

Communications Manager:

Sean Cullen

Contact Information

Mailing Address:

PO Box 300411

St. Louis, MO 63130

Phone: 314 863-8385

Fax: 314 863-5858

E-mail: info@wf-f.org

Editorial e-mail: editor@wf-f.org

Web site: www.wf-f.org

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Voices

Upholding the teachings of the Catholic Church

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CONTENTS:

- 2 **INSIDE VOICES:** *Joy and Hope* — Helen Hull Hitchcock
- 3 *Prayer to the Holy Family for the Families of the World*
 — Pope Francis
- 4 *In Pursuit of Peace: Diplomacy and the Holy See*
 — Ronald Rychlak
- 8 *Refuting the Anonymity of Eugenic Abortion*
 — Rita Joseph
- 13 *Special Message on Religious Liberty & HHS Mandate*
 — US Conference of Catholic Bishops
- 14 **BIOETHICS WATCH:**
- What Do Pro-lifers Really Do?* — Nancy Valko, RN
- 16 *Following Francis* — Sheila Liaugminas
- 19 *Pondering — Path to Holiness* — Jeannette Flood
- 22 *Papal Pleas and Prayers for Peace*
 — Kenneth D. Whitehead
- 24 *Year of Faith, Hitting Reboot* — Kathryn Jean Lopez
- 26 *Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization*
 — Preparatory Document for Synod of Bishops
- 30 *Address to Pilgrimage of Families* — Pope Francis
- 32 *Charter of the Rights of the Family*
 — Pontifical Council for the Family
- 35 **DONORS AND MEMORIALS**

COVER ILLUSTRATION:

Rest on the Flight into Egypt (ca. 1510), oil on panel, by Gerard David (Netherlandish ca. 1460-1523)

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

See page 6 for more information on this painting.



Joy and Hope

JOY. If Christmas and all that it means can be summed up in a single word, it is surely joy.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.” (Zech 9:9)

“Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:11)

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say: rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

You can think of a hundred examples of expressions of Christmas joy — especially from Christmas hymns and carols. What these Bible verses and hymn phrases all seem to have in common is that the birth of Christ is a world-changing event that should make everyone in every age extremely happy, cheerful, glad, exultant, gleeful, blissful, ecstatic.

While these emotions are certainly what we may anticipate experiencing (and hope our children will experience when they see the Christmas tree on Christmas morning), doesn't this limit what joy really means?

The joy at the birth of our savior — true Christian joy — goes beyond emotions of the moment. It's not just cheerfulness and excitement, though that can be part of it. It's something far deeper, I think, and it involves other spiritual realities. True joy is rooted in — is dependent on — faith, hope, and love. And *this* joy does not exclude difficulties and suffering.

Realizing this is comforting — especially when we are surrounded daily with reports of evils and suffering of all kinds: sickness, poverty, war, senseless murder of innocent children. And include in that list natural disasters like typhoons and hurricanes. Just look at any news outlet and it seems that distress and suffering of all kinds are what human life is all about. And many Christians in the world today suffer persecution — even death — because of their faith.

How can we “rejoice greatly” in circumstances like these?

In his homily on *Gaudete* Sunday (“Rejoice” Sunday), Pope Francis reflected on the meaning of Christian joy — and its source:

Often in the liturgy [this Sunday] we hear the invitation to rejoice, to be happy. Why? Because the Lord is near. Christmas is near. The Christian message is called “gospel,” that is, “glad tidings,” an announcement of joy for the whole people...

But the joy of the Gospel is not just any joy. It is caused by our finding ourselves embraced and loved by God. As the prophet Isaiah (cf. 35:1-6a, 8a, 10) reminds us, God is He who comes to save us, and give succor especially to the fearful of heart. His coming among us strengthens, solidifies, encourages, lifts up and makes the desert and plain bloom, that is, our life when it becomes arid ...

when it lacks the water of the Word of God and His Spirit of love. However great are our limits and our dismay, we are not permitted to be downhearted and vacillating in the face of our infirmities. On the contrary, we are invited to get a grip and straighten our weak knees, to have courage and not be afraid because our God always shows us the greatness of His mercy...

Christian joy, like hope, has its foundation in God's fidelity, in the certainty that He always keeps His promises.

Pope Francis stressed that “Those who have met Jesus along the way have experienced a joy that nothing and no one can take away. Jesus Christ is our joy! His faithful love is inexhaustible!”

“Christmas for me is hope and tenderness,” Pope Francis said in an interview a few days later (*La Stampa*, December 14). “It is the encounter with Jesus” — an encounter between God and His people, and it is also a consolation: “a mystery of consolation,” he said.

It seems to me that this is what Pope Francis had in mind in his apostolic exhortation *Evangeliium Gaudium* — The Joy of Evangelization. Pope Francis begins by explaining this joy:

The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept His offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.

This kind of joy is a grace that only comes from God. This joy transcends, supercedes, and underlies all superficial earthly joy and happiness — this grace that is given to us makes it possible for us to bear earthly sorrows, distress, sickness, and every evil of this world through the joy of faith, the joy of hope, and most of all the joy of the love of our God and savior, Jesus Christ.

Saint Matthew had this grace in mind when he wrote:

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matt 11:28-30)

It was this joy and hope that Saint Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Romans — many of whom would suffer the most cruel martyrdom, but who went to their deaths singing with joy:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing. (Romans 15:13)

May the joy and hope of Christmas abound in your hearts.

Helen Hull Hitchcock

December 2013

Prayer to the Holy Family for the Families of the World



JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH
to you, Holy Family of Nazareth,
today we turn our gaze
with admiration and confidence;
in you we contemplate
the beauty of communion in true love;
to you we commend our families,
so that in them marvels of grace be renewed.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
alluring school of the Gospel:
teach us to imitate your virtues
with a wise spiritual discipline,
grant us a clear vision
that recognizes the work of Providence
in the daily realities of life.

— Holy Family of Nazareth,
faithful custodian of the mystery of salvation:
help us to regain an appreciation for silence,
make our families cenacles of prayer
and transform them into little domestic
Churches,
renew the desire for sanctity,
sustain the noble toil of work, of education,
of listening, of mutual understanding and of
forgiveness.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
reawaken in our society the consciousness
of the sacred and inviolable character of the
family,
an inestimable and irreplaceable good.

May every family be a place where goodness
and peace are welcomed
for children and for the elderly,
for those who are sick and alone,
for those who are poor and needy.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
we pray to you with confidence, we entrust
ourselves to you with joy. AMEN.



Pope Francis's prayer for families was offered during the pilgrimage of families held in the Vatican in October. His address to the pilgrimage is on page 30.

Translation by Joseph Trabbic, Zenit.org

Illustration by Helen Hull Hitchcock, "Holy Family Flight into Egypt, after Gerard David."

In Pursuit of Peace: Diplomacy and the Holy See

by Ronald J. Rychlak

Following is Dr. Rychlak's address to the Thomas More Society in St. Louis given September 9, 2013. It appears here with his kind permission.

THANK YOU for inviting me here today. I am happy to be here to discuss the role of lawyers, lawmakers, and the diplomacy of the Holy See in the quest for peace.

According to Pope Paul VI, diplomacy is “the art of creating and maintaining international order, that is to say peace, not by means of force or the balancing of material interests, but by way of open and responsible settlements.”

Robert Frost said “A diplomat always remembers your birthday, but never remembers your age.”

All attorneys — at least all good ones — engage in diplomacy on one scale or another. Have you ever had someone say to you: “young Suzy is going to be a great lawyer; she argues so well!”? That’s a common misconception. The ability to argue is not the marker of a good attorney; the best lawyers negotiate. They help parties reach accord. That is the ability most important to lawyers, and that is also a form of diplomacy.

Whether it is a matter of international disagreement or more common domestic dispute, we’re not talking about a football or basketball game. The best victories are those where all parties feel that they have gained something — where everyone is happy.

Of course, the threat of litigation often lies behind the negotiations in which attorneys commonly take part. A serious threat — the threat of war — sometimes lies behind diplomatic work. Please rest assured that your peace and security has never relied upon my limited diplomatic skills. The Holy See has, however, often played a very important role in preserving world peace.

Perhaps I should first explain that “The Holy See” is the universal government of the Catholic Church. It operates from the Vatican City State, a sovereign, independent territory, but the Holy See acts and speaks for the whole Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church has over 1.1 billion adherents (17.5% of the world’s population). The Vatican — or the Vatican City State — is much smaller. It covers only about 108 acres. The Vatican’s population consists primarily of employees of the Holy See. Once, Pope John XXIII was asked how many people work in the Vatican. He said “about half of them.”

If you think about it, when the president speaks, the world may listen, but he is really speaking to American citizens. When the pope speaks, everyone may listen, but he is not addressing the relative handful of people who live and work in Vatican City. He is addressing Catholics worldwide, and that entity — the Holy See — is the one that has a Permanent Observer at the United

Nations.

The Holy See is the oldest continuing international organization in the world today. The Holy See’s Secretary of State office was established in 1486, and that is also when the first permanent representatives were established — in Venice, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and France. Today, the Holy See has a highly respected diplomatic corps, and a well-established diplomatic viewpoint. If you doubt the importance of the Holy See to international relations, Pope John Paul II’s funeral brought together the single largest gathering of heads of state in world history.

The Holy See’s diplomatic prowess was tested severely during the 20th century. In 1917, Pope Benedict XV sent the future Pope Pius XII to Germany in an effort to bring the First World War to an end. The future pope presented a peace plan to the leaders of Germany. He then settled in Munich (later Berlin) as the papal representative. He was soon a common fixture about town, distributing food and other necessities to those who were suffering. He also helped tens of thousands of prisoners of war and other displaced persons return home.

Pope Pius XI believed in assuring human rights and protecting the Church with diplomatic agreements (concordats) instead of political parties that were sometimes corrupted by local influence. As such, during his papacy the Holy See reached agreements with dozens of nations, including France, Italy, and Germany.

World War II obviously presented great difficulties to the Church. Not only were there terrible human rights abuses all around, but the Church itself was a victim. If we take generally accepted numbers, about three million Catholics died in the Holocaust. Twenty-five hundred Catholic priests died at Dachau alone. Churches were closed, and church property was confiscated not only by the Nazis but also by the Soviets. Across the continent, those in pain and those in harm’s way looked to the Vatican for aid, and the Catholic Church responded in a multi-layered way, with diplomacy as a cornerstone.

Just recently I was asked to write a foreword to a book about Catholic bishops in Europe during WWII. Reading over the manuscript, I was struck by how often these religious leaders carried out diplomatic missions. They arranged for safe passage of Jews and others; obtained visas from sometimes reluctant nations; shipped food to those in hiding; negotiated with occupying forces, sometimes obtaining a level of relief; provided baptismal certificates that Jews would show to the Nazis to avoid persecution (future John XXIII was particularly known for doing this as a papal representative in Turkey); and more.

Pius himself was involved in some particularly difficult

negotiations. Early in the war, disgruntled Germans decided to oust Hitler, but the reaction by other nations was a serious concern. If the conspirators were to stage a revolt the British and French might take military advantage of it, occupy Germany, and mete out harsh justice to the German people even though they had deposed Hitler. It was therefore necessary to reach an understanding with the Allies.

Pope Pius XII was the only leader of a neutral government who was trusted by the German resistance. They recruited Dr. Josef Müller, a leading Munich lawyer and a devout Catholic, to travel to the Vatican to ask the pope to broker a peace agreement between Britain and the anti-Nazi Germans. Although he was concerned about breaching neutrality, Pius said that “the German opposition must be heard in Britain,” and the voice would be his. According to Müller, Pius said “his conscience not only allows but obliged him to offer his life and the Church for peace.”

Over the course of several months, the pope relayed messages between Müller and the British Minister to the Holy See. On several occasions Müller also brought messages to Pius concerning German military plans and movements. Pius forwarded these warnings to the threatened governments. As others have noted, “Never in all history had a pope engaged so delicately in a conspiracy to overthrow a tyrant by force.”

In his autobiography, Müller wrote that it was obvious “how dearly the Holy Father wished to restore a Germany of law, order and peace, which ceased to be the nightmare of its neighbors — a Germany without Hitler.”

When Pius sent open telegrams to leaders of nations that had been recently overrun by the Germans, not only was Hitler outraged, but also Mussolini and Stalin too. Learning of the pope’s cooperation with the Allies, Stalin (who at that time had a working arrangement with Hitler) reportedly said: “How many battalions does the pope have?” When word got to him, the pope reportedly replied: “Tell my brother Joseph that he will meet our troops in heaven.”

In July 1943 the Italians overthrew Mussolini. Hitler heard of this over the radio. He was furious with the pope, whom he thought had a hand in it. Rome was not stormed by Panzer divisions, and the Vatican was never invaded, but Hitler did send his troops into Rome. They took the city after just two days of fighting.

Upwards of 60,000 German soldiers entered Rome. A white line on the ground separated occupied Rome from neutral Vatican City. On one side of that line, German soldiers carried their machine guns. On the other side, the Vatican’s Swiss Guards stood at attention with their largely decorative pikes.

On September 27, S.S. officials summoned representatives of Rome’s Jewish community and demanded 50 kilograms of gold (or the equivalent in dollars or sterling) within 36 hours. Israel

Zolli, the chief rabbi of Rome, went to the Vatican to ask for a loan of gold so that the ransom could be paid. Pius XII promised as much as was needed for as long as it was needed. Following the war, Rabbi Zolli converted to Catholicism, and he adopted the Christian name Eugenio to honor the man who had done so much to protect others during the war.

Unfortunately, the ransom paid to the Germans merely bought a bit of time. On Saturday October 16, the Gestapo rounded up about 2,000 Jews (having received an order from Berlin to get 8,000). Pius used three different routes to make diplomatic protests, including having the Cardinal Secretary of State demand of the German Ambassador that the Germans “stop these arrests at once.” He was successful in obtaining release of about half of those arrested. Unfortunately, of the rest only a relative handful survived the war.

At the post-war trials at Nuremberg, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop testified that he had a “whole deskfull” of diplomatic protests that had been filed by the Holy See. Many of them related to unjust treatment of Jews.

Was this approach effective? Pinchas E. Lapide, the Israeli consul in Italy, spent six months studying the archives at Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust authority. He concluded that “The Catholic Church saved more Jewish lives during the war than all other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations put together.”

The Chief Rabbi of Denmark said that if the pope had been more confrontational — less of a diplomat — “Hitler would have probably massacred more than six million Jews and perhaps ten times ten million Catholics.”

One of my favorite stories about this era involves US Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy. He had been a diplomat in Germany during the mid-1920s, at the same time that Pius XII had been there as a papal representative. When they met after the war, Murphy reminisced about how they both had reported to their governments that Hitler would never amount to anything. In response, the pope smiled, raised a finger, and joked: “Remember, back then I was not infallible.”

During the Cold War, the Holy See and the Soviet Union had a very difficult time. Catholic leaders in the new areas of Soviet control were suppressed. Bishops and cardinals were given show trials and sent to prisons in Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Eventually, the Soviets engaged in covert activities to undermine the papacy itself by promoting the slander of Pius XII as “Hitler’s Pope.” That outrageous lie continues today as one of the most significant weapons against the Catholic Church.

Despite the slings and arrows directed against it, the Vatican continued to play a crucial role in assuring peace. In October 1962 American spy planes discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba,

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only minutes away from the United States. President John F. Kennedy insisted they be removed. When Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev ignored his ultimatum, JFK set up a blockade. Millions watched the showdown on TV — the Russian ships approaching Cuba, the US blockade standing firm and ready.

Behind the scenes, Vatican diplomacy was at work. On October 23, JFK sent a message to Rome. The next day, Pope John XXIII sent a message to the Kremlin. In part it read, “I beg heads of state not to remain insensitive to the cry of humanity: peace, peace. Let them do all that is in their power to save peace; in this way they will avoid the horrors of a war, the appalling consequences of which no one could predict. Let them continue to negotiate....”

This created a path to peace. John’s message appeared on October 26 in *Pravda*, the official Communist newspaper, under the headline: “We beg all rulers not to be deaf to the cry of humanity.” The pope had given Khrushchev a way out. By withdrawing he would be known as a man of peace. Two days later, Khrushchev, an atheist who was in the middle of a propaganda war with the Vatican, agreed to withdraw the missiles.

Of course, Blessed Pope John Paul II used the power of his office and played a very significant role in bringing down the Soviet Union. George Weigel has written an amazing account of John Paul’s first trip back to Poland. It was 1979 — nine days that changed the world.

The pope never uttered a word that might lead directly to a confrontation between Church and state, between the party and Christian believers. But through him the Church demanded respect for human rights as well as for Christian values. Poland’s puppet leader trembled in the presence of the late pope. It was not due to any kind of fear of military action; it was about moral authority and the strength of the truth. It was Vatican diplomacy.

Pope Benedict XVI recently said:

Those who know how to kneel before the Eucharist, those who receive the body of Christ, cannot fail to be attentive, in the unfolding of the day, to situations unworthy of man and know firsthand how to bend over the needy, how to break bread with the hungry, how to share water with the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned.

That is why the Holy See engages in diplomacy.

As you know, Pope Francis called for a day of prayer and fasting to avoid war in Syria. Like his predecessors, our new pope is using the moral authority of his office, and he is doing it without taking sides or issuing condemnations. He is calling for peace.

Today, the Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with 176 states. My work has primarily been with its mission at the United Nations. I’ve worked with them since 2000. The pay’s not great, but they tell me the benefits are out of this world.

Currently, the Holy See is one of only two Permanent

Observer States at the UN. It also participates in various UN organizations. The Holy See is neutral, but not silent. Common concerns include: protection of life (the unborn), prevention of hostilities, just treatment for all (especially women and the handicapped), euthanasia, modern slavery, religious liberty, and education.

The United Nations is a man-made institution; as such it is far from perfect. It has failed to assure peace, it has been misused to advance espionage, and it has been at the center of a great deal of scandal. In fact, the Church has criticized the UN on numerous occasions, particularly on family-related themes. Still, The UN seeks international peace and security; friendly relations among nations; and cooperation among nations on economic, social, cultural, and human rights issues. That is completely consistent with spiritual and moral mission of the Holy See

Today, the United Nations needs the Holy See’s presence perhaps more than at any other time in history. At the beginning of the 20th century, a bare majority of the world’s population (50%) were Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, or Hindu. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, nearly 64% of the world’s people belonged to one of those four religious groups. Moreover, many of today’s most important political and international issues at least surround issues of religion.

In 2005 I went to Israel as part of a program studying counterterrorism. Also on that trip were many professors who taught counterterrorism courses.

They told me that too many American diplomats did not understand religion. Moreover, even if they did understand, they were constrained in what they could say due to our separation of Church and State. (Can you imagine an American diplomat trying to explain that someone else has the incorrect interpretation of Holy Scripture?) One author of a textbook was told by his publisher he could not mention Islam or the book would not be printed.

The Holy See can and does talk to these issues. In 2006, at Regensburg University, Pope Benedict spoke about the spread of Islam by the sword. Many people thought he made a mistake or that he did not know what he was getting into. Those people were wrong. The pope well understood that someone had to put these issues out on the table. He was perhaps the only world leader who could do so, and he did it in the context of inviting a dialogue. That is another reflection of why the Holy See is so important in peace negotiations — it can help us develop shared values.

In the United States, we have the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. These reflect values that Americans all share. What similar thing do we have in the world? Judeo-Christian values? The UN Charter? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Consider this: In 2004, the US Department of State asked me to go to Paris to address a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the importance of free

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Holy Family Rest on the Flight into Egypt by Gerard David

The biblical account of the holy family's flight into Egypt is found in Matthew 2:13-23, which begins with the angel appearing to Joseph in a dream, saying "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him." Legends grew about this journey — and one included a pause on the journey after three days, during which the Virgin longed for fruit of the date tree, but the branches were too high for Joseph to reach, so the Christ Child made the tree bow low so Joseph could pick the fruit. (The "Cherry Tree Carol" is a version of this legend.) In Gerard David's painting, the tree is actually a Flemish chestnut tree; but people would have recognized the story.

The artist creates an atmosphere of peace and calm through the use of colors — predominately blues, and the composition centered on the Virgin and Child seated on a rock, with Joseph and his stick at the upper right, and the distant bluish landscape. The grapes in the very center of the composition, held both by Mary and the infant Jesus, symbolize the Eucharist.

speech on the internet. I spoke about the American idea of a "marketplace of ideas," and competition leading to truth. The other nations there also said they agreed with the concept of free speech, but their understanding is very different from our own. They criminally outlaw hate speech.

A delegate from a non-governmental organization, for instance, professed a belief in free speech but said that Evangelical Christian sites that reach out to Jews are anti-Semitic and must be removed from the internet. Even more stunning was when the Russian delegate argued that Jehovah's Witnesses and Hare Krishnas had to be removed from the internet because they profess to know "the truth" and anyone who claims to know the truth must, *ipso facto*, be engaged in hate speech. Not many religions would remain online if that were the test. Of course, the whole time, this delegate insisted that he supported free speech.

In 2006, I was part of another delegation that met in Rome with Iranian Ayatollahs. My job was to talk about free speech in context of the riots that had recently been inspired by cartoons that were published in Denmark. I noted that this was not a campaign against Islam. The television show *South Park* is far more offensive to Christians than most of those political cartoons were to Islam. The result of my presentation was an Ayatollah shaking a finger in my face and saying (in a raised voice) that Islam would never tolerate insults to the Prophet Muhammad.

So, do we have shared values? Maybe the best thing we have is the United Nations. We need to talk. We need to develop shared values, and the Holy See has a crucial role to play in that development.

There have been some interesting moments at the UN. We sit alphabetically, so the Holy See is right by Iran, Iraq, and Israel. You might wonder about the neighborhood, but everyone there is very diplomatic.

A few years ago, my wife brought my two oldest daughters up to New York to watch their daddy work at the United Nations.

That particular day, we were working on the International Criminal Court, and we were talking about buying trash cans for the new court building. My wife always says that the representative from France sounded quite impressive when (in French) he said: "Can't we just go over to Office Depot where trash cans cost five Euros?"

So it goes from the ridiculous to the sublime — because we are all in this human condition together. But as lawyers and lawmakers, we do have a special calling: Luke 12:48 says "to whom much has been given, much will be required."

Lawyers have special training and status. We must use those talents to work for justice, for what is right. Thomas More, the patron saint of lawyers, politicians, and statesmen explained that we cannot create a utopia, but we can and must work for a just society.

As Blessed Pope John Paul II said in 1995:

We must not be afraid of the future. We must not be afraid of man. It is no accident that we are here. Each and every human person has been created in the "image and likeness" of the One who is the origin of all that is. We have within us the capacities for wisdom and virtue. With these gifts, and with the help of God's grace, we can build ... a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so!

Thank you and God bless you. 🍀

Ronald J. Rychlak is professor of law and associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Mississippi School of Law. He is an advisor to the Vatican's delegation to the United Nations and has received papal medals for his diplomatic service to the Holy See. Professor Rychlak is the author of *Hitler, the War, and the Pope*, and has written for many legal, political, and historical journals. The Rychlaks live in Oxford, Mississippi.

Refuting the Anonymity of Eugenic Abortion

by Rita Joseph

*“I have called you by your name; you are Mine”
Isaiah 43:1*

This article was originally an address to the “Rise Up Together in the Service of Life” conference, held September 29, 2013, in Auckland, New Zealand. It has been edited slightly for publication in Voices.

WHEN POPE FRANCIS ADDRESSED the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations on September 20, he condemned eugenic selection of human beings as a “widespread mentality of the useful.” He warned, “The ‘throw away culture’ which today enslaves the hearts and intelligences of so many, has a very high cost: it requires eliminating human beings, especially if physically or socially weaker.”¹

Eugenic abortion is a part of that “culture of waste.” Currently around the world some 90% of human beings diagnosed prenatally with conditions such as Down syndrome are aborted. Eugenic abortion has deep utilitarian roots. Way back in 1920, two distinguished German professors — the jurist Karl Binding, and Alfred Hoche, a professor of psychiatry — published *The Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life*. Hoche and Binding argued that “... the principle of ‘allowable killing’ should be extended ... to retarded and deformed children... The right to live must be earned and justified... Theirs is not a life worth living; hence their destruction is not only tolerable but humane.”² They stressed the therapeutic goal: destroying life unworthy of life is “purely a healing treatment ... a healing work.”³

Those today who promote eugenic abortion make the same claims. They do not see that each child is a unique human being — they insist that children with disabilities can be easily *replaced* by superior children who will have greater well-being and be less trouble for parents, families, and authorities. Eugenic abortion is promoted by the medical profession as a reasonable “reproductive choice” for mothers to make and as a humane or necessary “quality of life” decision.

Reason and science

So it is timely that Pope Francis has asked all medical personnel to remember that human life is “always, in all its phases and at every age, sacred and is always of quality ... There is no human life that is more sacred than another, as there is no human life that is qualitatively more significant than another.”

And in saying this, the pope appealed to “reason and science.” And he is right.

Both reason and science confirm that each unborn child is already in existence, being protected and nurtured in his/her mother’s womb. With astonishing accuracy, we can locate the child within definite coordinates of space and time. The child is not a generic, anonymous fetus. We can identify the child’s father, and whether the child is a son or a daughter. We can ascertain long before birth that the child is a unique member of the human family, biologically, genetically, and genealogically.

Protecting innocent human lives from lethal “treatments” is a matter of justice — it does not need to rely on any particular brand of religion. It’s an irrevocable part of universal human rights law that is recognized by all rational human beings.

The human embryo is a living human being. Every human being has a right everywhere to equal protection of the law, including in utero, where the child is temporarily living. This new human being is not out there in the ether, not in some lawless limbo land beyond our universe, beyond the reach of the law, beyond the law’s jurisdiction and responsibility to protect.

It is a very old principle of legal justice that if there is to be a preferential option it should be for the voiceless, for the defenseless. Justice should not be weighted towards the articulate, the more powerful individuals or groups. This is a grave juridical obligation required by the rule of law.

The law must never condone the obliteration of a child’s identity. When the law legalizes eugenic abortion, that is exactly what the law condones. The child is all too often incinerated or disposed of as toxic medical waste.

The child is given no name, no memorial.

A mother with child goes into the hospital or abortion clinic and only the mother leaves alive.

The records omit the names of the children aborted.

But these children *were* here.

They *were* on earth.

They *were* photographed by ultrasound technicians, their

heartbeats monitored.

They *were* a real and lively presence in their mothers' wombs.

Every unborn child is already here, has a right to exist, a right to be born. Every child has the inherent and inalienable right to membership of the human family. That membership is inclusive of all the billions of natural variations of abilities and appearances and personalities and problems. Though we are not endowed with equal abilities, we each have an equal right to be born, a right to be given, before as well as after birth, equal protection of the law against lethal medical interventions.

With or without disabilities, every unborn child is a human being. Disability is a mere externality to a child's inherent humanity. It can neither impinge on the core humanity of each child nor deter, disrupt, prevent, or degrade the inherent value owed to each and every child as an equal member of the human family.

It is not age or size or independence or being "perfect" that confers inherent dignity and inalienable rights, it is just being a human.

This is the irrevocable legal basis of all human rights.

The transcendent dimension

In the pope's address to doctors September 20, the Holy Father asked them to help "recognize in human life the transcendent dimension, the imprint of the creative work of God, from the first instance of conception."

Here today I am going to try to do my bit to help recognize that transcendent dimension. It is this dimension that provides the truth to enable us to defend and to rescue a little unborn child diagnosed with Down syndrome, spina bifida, or some other condition targeted for eugenic abortion by a "culture of waste," to use Pope Francis's phrase. It is transcendental truth that holds the potential to recognize and reinstate that child as "the creative work of God," always "sacred ... always quality."

When we contemplate the immensity of God, our first reaction is humbleness. It is as humble human beings that we mark our own place on this speck-like planet spinning in the cosmic vastness of a seemingly indifferent universe. It is with humbleness that we register our own presence within this tiny sliver of time in the infinite lengths of eternity.

And yet, we come into existence as privileged creatures. In the vastness of the created universe, we alone are called by name. Of all creatures living we alone are privileged with free will and intellect. We alone are created in the image of God. The gift of intellect equips us to search, to explore for truth, to marvel at, to appreciate the exquisitely ordered universe that makes life on earth possible and good. And how precious the gift of free will to fragile human beings set amidst the awesome mathematical precision of a formidably imposing universe!

In Jeremiah 1:5, God says to each one of us: "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you..." And in Isaiah 43:1: "I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

And God named Himself to Moses and to us: "I Am Who Am."

Each one of us conceived is made in the image of God, each one is called by name. Each shares in the "I" and the "Who" and the "AM" of God's name. Each one is conceived as "who" not "what."

"Things have a price ... but persons have a dignity"

When we speak of each embryonic human being, we must call each by name. We must use the personal pronouns *I, you, he, she*, never *it*. Never, never, never "it"! Each tiny new human being is a person, a subject never an object, a somebody, never a mere "thing."

As Pope Francis said in his address to doctors: "Things have a price and are saleable, but persons have a dignity, they are worth more than things and they have no price."

This is the truth that we have to proclaim to the world today. Because in a sense, the root of all the evils in our world stem from our failure to recognize our true human dignity, which doesn't come from *what we do* or *what we are able to do* but from *who we are*.

Free will privileges us to belong to God. We are not "things" to be owned, but are gifted with intellect to recognize God and with free will to choose to belong to Him.

Each unborn child in light of the grandeur and purposefulness of the universe

Yet, we are tempted to downsize God. We tend to doubt the possibility of His extraordinary love and concern for each one of us. We tend to be misled by the impossibly inadequate calculus of our own extremely limited capacities.

Nevertheless, to even begin to get a true inkling of God's infinite love and personal care for each one of us, perhaps we need to use the intellectual gift of imagination fired by the knowledge that science has brought to us, knowledge of the grandeur of the universe and its purposefulness.

Last March, the Planck space probe looked back at the afterglow of the Big Bang, and reported results that added about 80 million years to the universe's age, putting it at 13.81 billion years old.

The probe enabled further corrections: the cosmos is expanding a little more slowly than originally thought, has a little less than estimated of that mysterious dark energy. Scientists assure us that these are small corrections in calculations about the universe, whose numbers are so massive.

Brian Greene, a Columbia University physicist, called the findings "a wonderful triumph of the mathematical approach to

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describing nature... It's an amazing story of discovery. The precision is breathtaking ... measuring temperature variations in space — which arose from processes that took place almost 14 billion years ago — to one part in a million. Amazing.”⁴

It is amazing indeed. The object and purpose of our intellect is to seek the truth. We are able to see now far beyond our own little backyards, past small creeks, past mighty rivers, beyond the fertile valleys and plains, across fearful deserts, far beyond the great oceans and the tallest mountain ranges. With increasing clarity now we see beyond earth's boundaries, beyond even the sun and the moon and the stars of our little galaxy, beyond the boundaries of our solar system even to the edges of the universe.

And we see that it is good.

And when we come back to earth, we see the same awesome order in quantum physics, in the smallest particles of the tiniest molecules.

And we see it in a tiny human being, newly conceived in his/her mother's womb.

And we remember:

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Mt 10:29-31) And again, we remember the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 to rescue the one. “In the same way it is not the will of your Father in heaven that not one of these little ones should be lost.” (Mt 18:12-14)

For God's infinite love, for His Divine providence, immense numbers present no difficulty for bringing good, even out of suffering.

Each child conceived and born is a reaffirmation of life, of the goodness of life. Each child — a gift of inestimable value. Even an imperfect, pain-ridden, pathetically shortened human life is yet a triumph over nothingness, a triumph of a heroic will to live. Each of these more easily wounded children have defied immense odds just to be alive and to stay alive. Each one is a hero.

As are the parents who love and care for these heroes — they have loved them and suffered for them and with them, and day after day, night after night, have affirmed each fragile presence here. They have supported their children's will to live and kept their children from deadly harm. They have acknowledged them as their sons and daughters and comforted them. Their triumph has been to love them and to go on loving them in an all too often hostile world.

This is heroism in the true sense of the word. Our world would be poorer without them.

A little less than the angels

Human life is “always sacred ... always of quality.” Truly abortion of one of these little ones on the grounds of disability is

utterly repulsive — it is a sacrilege.

You see, each little child conceived in a mother's womb is sacred — twice-blessed — sacred not just because the child is created in the image of God but because God Himself once took on the image of this little child.

Because of this double image, every child is truly sacred.

Because once upon a time, in *real* time and at a *real* place, the Son of God took on the image of His created ones. He became a human being.

In taking on our human nature, He is conceived, and grows in His mother's womb for nine months, He is born and lives and dies among us, for us, as one of us.

In this incomparable mystery of the Incarnation, God visits His people, not only sharing our human lives but sanctifying them, making each life sacred, raising every human being to a dignity and worth greater even than that given us originally in the Garden of Eden, before the first sin. Remember what we sing in the Easter Vigil? “O happy fault to have won for us so great a Savior!”

In the mystery of the Incarnation, we see our Father's magnanimity, we see this extraordinarily generous gesture: we see the divine ease and grace and power and beauty with which God transcends the limits of our human understanding of what is scientifically possible...

In this magnificent mystery of the Incarnation, the Infinite One becomes small in His mother's womb — so, so small — as small as each one of us when we were conceived.

And so the Old Testament asks: “What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor: and hast set him over the works of thy hands. (Ps 8:4-6)

But the New Testament asks and answers a different question: “Who is man?”

The question was answered once and forever by Jesus from the Cross. We are truly the beloved sons and daughters of God, each of us called into being by name to be redeemed by the personal love of a personal Savior, and destined for resurrection and eternal life.

No child is ever conceived without God's “yes”

And so there is nothing so amazing, so wonderful in this amazing, wonderful universe than a man and a woman in an act of love co-creating with God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, a tiny new human being, an exquisite new little son or daughter created in the image and likeness of God Himself.

In this deep existential truth about the inimitable preciousness of every unborn child, there is no room for rejection on grounds of some temporal disability or other.

Our answer to the mentality of the “throw away culture,” says Pope Francis, is “a decisive and unhesitant ‘yes’ to life.” “The

first right of a human person is his/her life. He/she has other goods and some of them are more precious [than others]; but life is the fundamental good, condition for all the others.”⁵

This is true.

No child is ever conceived without God’s “yes.”

No human being comes into this world as a mistake. Every human being is created. No one comes by accident or by chance into an indifferent, higgledy-piggledy world. Each one comes always purposefully, into an exquisitely ordered universe. Each one comes into being at conception with a divine blueprint that is unique, an individualized vocation to love and to be loved, to live a life of meaning, of value, to live a difficult life with grace and courage in profound defiance of the suffering, moral chaos, and evil visited upon us for the time being by the evil one through the Fall of our first parents.

The object and purpose of free will — to choose the good

The problem of evil is perennial. The temptation to consign the frail and the disabled to destruction instead of to human care grows stronger. It threatens to destroy our own humanity as we begin to lose our most truly human capabilities — the capacity for altruism, for compassion, and for unconditional love. And shattering once again our hard-earned human solidarity, the evils of abortion and euthanasia threaten to plunge us all back to jungle law, survival of the fittest, to regenerate ruthless contempt for the smallest and the weakest by the strongest, the most articulate, the most powerful.

When nations were shattered after World War II, people of all races were shocked by the “barbarous acts,” the pogroms, the “disregard and contempt for human lives.”⁶ Science had no answers to dispelling evil and restoring good. Science has plenty to tell us about what we are but not about who we are and what we ought to do as moral beings privileged by our Creator with intellect and free will.

For almost a hundred years leading up to World War II, while huge advances in science were being made, Western civilization had turned away from natural law principles and developed a positivist law built on an ever-changing social consensus with few fixed moral standards. Moral laws were easily changed by manipulating subjective public opinion: they were based on utilitarianism and relativism, not on universal principles.

When Nazi authorities responsible for the eugenic abortion and euthanasia programs were brought before the Nuremberg judges, the Nazis admitted that they were moral relativists, and they challenged their accusers to be consistent with the moral relativism widely accepted in pre-World War II jurisprudence.⁷

Today we have reverted to the very same positivist legal basis upon which the entire Nazi enterprise of “necessary killing” was mounted and justified as lawful. When the judges at Nuremberg studied the utilitarian focus of the Nazi legal system, they recog-

nized and identified very clearly the truth that positivist law provides woefully inadequate protection for human beings in vulnerable situations. The Nazis’ ideological reinterpretation of laws that should have protected the weakest and the most vulnerable were rationalized on grounds of necessity. The utilitarianism of the Nazis’ positivist laws was rejected and condemned at the Nuremberg trials.

And so all the countries of the world came together to draft the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in which they agreed to return to recognition of natural law principles as the true basis for justice.

All the human rights of the *Universal Declaration* are premised on the second preambular paragraph of the *UN Charter of Human Rights* (1945), which reads: “... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person.”

Spurred by the scarifying experience of Nazi depravity, nations agreed that human rights are grounded in respect for human nature. Charles Malik, rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights, which drafted the *Universal Declaration*, confirmed this: “The doctrine of natural law is woven ... into the intent of the Declaration.” If rights were merely products of positive law, he said, they could change but if they “express my *nature* as a human being, then there is a certain compulsion about them: they are metaphysically prior to any positive law.”⁸

And so for a short time — post-World War II and pre-Cold War — in a moment of grace and chastened honesty, the nations of our troubled world did unite to recognize natural-law rights and responsibilities.

Here at last was universal consensus that we could no longer live as though there is no natural law. And for many this was realization also of the more profound truth that we could no longer live as though God does not exist.

Our Creator delights in the discoveries of our human intellect

Our Creator delights in right use of human intellect to discover truth that advances the common good. There are many truths — scientific discoveries of a material nature — discoveries in medicine like the polio vaccine and antibiotics are good, as are the discoveries in cosmology by the Planck space probe.

But they can’t hold a candle to the timeless moral truths rediscovered conscientiously and set down in the *Universal Declaration* principles: that each human being has equal dignity and worth, that everyone shall have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law, the inalienable right to be treated as a person, never as an object, a means, or a thing.

And then there are the most valuable truths of all, the discovery of transcendental truths, the truths that bridge earth and heaven, time and eternity.

No human being comes into this world as a mistake.

Every human being is created. No one comes by accident or by chance into an indifferent, higgledy-piggledy world. Each one comes always purposefully, into an exquisitely ordered universe.

And Pope Francis shall have the last word on one of these truths: “Every unborn child, condemned unjustly to being aborted, has the face of the Lord, who before being born, and then when he was just born, experienced the rejection of the world. And every elderly person, even if he or she is sick or at the end of his or her days, bears in himself or herself the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded!”

That, indeed, is one of the most important truths of all. ☺

NOTES

¹ Pope Francis, Address to International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, September 29, 2013.

² Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 178.

³ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), p. 46.

⁴ “Universe is older than we thought, Planck telescope reveals,” Associated Press, March 21, 2013. cbc.ca/news/technology/universe-is-older-than-we-thought-planck-telescope-reveals-1.1354988.

⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Procured Abortion, November 18, 1974, 11.

⁶ “Whereas disregard and contempt for human lives have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind...” *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Preamble.

⁷ See closing statements by the defense lawyers and the defendants in Nuremberg trials record, especially in the RuSHA/

Greifelt case.

⁸ From a speech on human rights to the US Chamber of Commerce Committee on International, Political, and Social Problems held at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, November 4, 1949. The *Universal Declaration* begins with “recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family ... the foundation ... of justice ... in the world.” This was recognized at the time as “... a statement of general principle which was independent of the existence of the United Nations and had an intrinsic value of its own.” A consensus was established that “human rights constitute a law anterior and superior to the positive law of civil society.”

Rita Joseph, of Canberra, Australia, is a member of the editorial board of *Voices*, and has represented family concerns at United Nations conferences. She writes and lectures on social issues, with a special interest in the universally agreed natural law foundations of modern international human rights law. She has lectured at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family Studies in Melbourne. She is author of *Human Rights and the Unborn Child* (Leiden & Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2009.)

Correction:

In the essay by Joanna Bogle “Mary, Mother of the Church,” which appeared in our Michaelmas 2013 edition, a sentence on page 7 read:

The period immediately before the Second Vatican Council was a strongly “Marian” one in the Church, with the declaration of the doctrine of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII in 1958 and the marking of that whole year as a “Marian Year.”

It should have said:

The period immediately before the Second Vatican Council was a strongly “Marian” one in the Church, with the declaration of the doctrine of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII in 1950. With the encyclical *Fulgens Corona* in 1953, Pope Pius designated 1954 as a “Marian Year,” the first in the Church’s history.

We apologize for the error. The online version is correct.

— Editor

Special Message from the Bishops of the United States on the HHS Mandate

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a “Special Message” at the conclusion of their fall General Assembly, November 13, in Baltimore.

This message concerned the controversy over the Affordable Care Act and the mandate of the US Department of Health and Human Services, which requires employers to provide insurance coverage for contraception and abortion-inducing drugs. The HHS mandate requires that all employers, irrespective of their beliefs, to provide this coverage, which contradicts Catholic teaching. If they refuse, huge penalties will be required to be paid to the government. This imperils Catholic institutions and individuals who cannot, in conscience, provide such coverage. This especially threatens Catholic hospitals and health care providers, as well as other Catholic institutions and individuals. Fundamentally, the issue involves religious freedom.

USCCB regulations regarding statements and publications define a Special Message as a statement, only issued at general meetings, that the general membership considers appropriate in view of the circumstances at the time.

The US bishops’ message was passed unanimously.

— Editor

THE BISHOPS OF THIS COUNTRY have just concluded their traditional fall meeting in Baltimore and have spent time on issues important to them and their people: help to those suffering from Typhoon Haiyan; an update on the situation in Haiti; matters of worship and teaching; service to the poor; and comprehensive immigration reform. Among those priorities is the protection of religious freedom, especially as threatened by the HHS [Health and Human Services] mandate.

Pope Francis has reminded us that “In the context of society, there is only one thing which the Church quite clearly demands: the freedom to proclaim the Gospel in its entirety, even when it runs counter to the world, even when it goes against the tide.”

We stand together as pastors charged with proclaiming the Gospel in its entirety. That Gospel calls us to feed the poor, heal the sick, and educate the young, and in so doing witness to our faith in its fullness. Our great ministries of service and our clergy, religious sisters and brothers, and lay faithful, especially those involved in Church apostolates, strive to answer this call every day, and the Constitution and the law protect our freedom to do so.

Yet with its coercive HHS mandate, the government is refusing to uphold its obligation to respect the rights of religious believers. Beginning in March 2012, in United for Religious

Freedom, we identified three basic problems with the HHS mandate: it establishes a false architecture of religious liberty that excludes our ministries and so reduces freedom of religion to freedom of worship; it compels our ministries to participate in providing employees with abortifacient drugs and devices, sterilization, and contraception, which violates our deeply-held beliefs; and it compels our faithful people in business to act against our teachings, failing to provide them any exemption at all.

Despite our repeated efforts to work and dialogue toward a solution, those problems remain. Not only does the mandate undermine our ministries’ ability to witness to our faith, which is their core mission, but the penalties it imposes also lay a great burden on those ministries, threatening their very ability to survive and to serve the many who rely on their care.

The current impasse is all the more frustrating because the Catholic Church has long been a leading provider of, and advocate for, accessible, life-affirming health care. We would have preferred to spend these recent past years working toward this shared goal instead of resisting this intrusion into our religious liberty. We have been forced to devote time and resources to a conflict we did not start nor seek.

As the government’s implementation of the mandate against us approaches, we bishops stand united in our resolve to resist this heavy burden and protect our religious freedom. Even as each bishop struggles to address the mandate, together we are striving to develop alternate avenues of response to this difficult situation. We seek to answer the Gospel call to serve our neighbors, meet our obligation to provide our people with just health insurance, protect our religious freedom, and not be coerced to violate our consciences. We remain grateful for the unity we share in this endeavor with Americans of all other faiths, and even with those of no faith at all. It is our hope that our ministries and lay faithful will be able to continue providing insurance in a manner consistent with the faith of our Church. We will continue our efforts in Congress and especially with the promising initiatives in the courts to protect the religious freedom that ensures our ability to fulfill the Gospel by serving the common good.

This resolve is particularly providential on this feast of the patroness of immigrants, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini. She was a brave woman who brought the full vigor of her deep religious faith to the service of the sick, the poor, children, the elderly, and the immigrant. We count on her intercession, as united we obey the command of Jesus to serve the least of our brothers and sisters.



What Do Pro-lifers Really Do?

by Nancy Valko, RN



“**P**RO-LIFE GROUPS DON’T Really Protect the Unborn,”¹ blared the headline of an opinion article that appeared September 4, 2013 on the Yahoo news site. The author was Elizabeth Jahr, described as a senior at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, majoring in politics and theology and religious studies. Obviously, this Yahoo opinion piece, which also appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* the same day, was especially aimed at young people.

Ms. Jahr states bluntly that “Religious and political groups that funnel tremendous resources into a legal war to limit and even ban abortion in America are at best, wasting time, and at worst, damaging efforts to protect the unborn.”

The comments that appeared on the Yahoo version of the article were outrageous — applauding the author for exposing people in the pro-life movement as politically aggressive morons.

This is stunning, especially when you consider that Planned Parenthood, the most visible face of abortion in the US, received 542.4 million taxpayer dollars in 2012 alone² while nonprofit and volunteer groups like Birthright and Our Lady’s Inn here in St. Louis struggle to help countless women in crisis pregnancies and even after birth.

It is no accident that too many good people feel intimidated about expressing their pro-life beliefs, sometimes even with friends and family members. Ridicule, anger and scorn are difficult to handle but, as the old adage goes “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”

If any group ever needed a great publicity agent or public relations firm, it would certainly be the pro-life movement. However, the pro-life movement never has had the time, money, or inclination to burnish its image. People in the pro-life movement have been too busy saving lives and assisting the vulnerable to defend their work and motivations.

One of the Greatest Volunteer Movements Ever

I consider myself a latecomer and draftee to the pro-life movement. I was a 23-year-old intensive care unit nurse when the *Roe v. Wade* decision came down. Like most people, I was shocked when abortion was legalized. I was vaguely aware of the *Roe* case, but, like most people I knew, I didn’t believe the case had a chance. Abortion was a nasty business only whispered

about when I was growing up. As a medical professional, I couldn’t imagine good doctors and nurses condoning — much less participating in — such a brutal act. And I couldn’t imagine that *Roe* and its companion case *Doe v. Bolton* would extend abortion for the entire pregnancy.

However, I was professionally offended by the pro-life argument that legalizing abortion would lead to the legalization of infanticide and euthanasia. It was one thing to deny the truth with an early and unseen unborn baby but it was quite another to imagine any doctor or nurse looking a born human being in the eye and killing him or her. So I remained relatively silent but supportive except with people I knew well until almost 10 years later. It was 1982 when I found that my newborn daughter with Down syndrome almost became a victim of lethal medical discrimination because of the abortion mentality generated by *Roe*. I finally discovered the truth that the pro-life movement had predicted years before. It was then that I discovered that no group was fighting harder for people like my daughter as well as the inherent right to life of all of us than the growing pro-life movement.

What I found when I finally joined the pro-life movement was a large and diverse group of people committed to serving as well as saving the most vulnerable among us. I saw people who volunteered time and personal effort to ensuring that pregnant women had the resources to give birth and raise their children as well as find real help after the trauma of an abortion. Others were involved in programs assisting the poor and elderly. Some were caring for large families or ill family members themselves but still made the time to help in some way. To this day, I never met a pro-life person who was not involved in actively helping others. The pro-life movement is committed to people and principle, not politics.

Pro-Life Legislation

I was also impressed by how much the pro-life movement was doing at the state and national level to legally protect the vulnerable as much as possible. Over the years, I saw pro-life laws — like informed consent, safety regulations for abortion clinics, the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act, laws against assisted suicide, etc. — proposed and even passed with great time and effort

by pro-life people.

Although I was impressed with how much the pro-life movement was doing, I was initially discouraged to discover that even duly passed common sense pro-life laws are routinely held up — sometimes for years — by judges and special interest groups with deep pockets, like Planned Parenthood. For example, the widely supported Illinois parental notification law for minor girls was just now finally upheld after 18 years.³ Was it expensive? Yes! Was it worth the trouble? Of course. After all, pro-life legislation is educational for the public as well as protective for women and others at risk. Even when legislation fails, more and more people find out important truths about the abortion and euthanasia issues from the discussion.

Enforcement of these laws can be even more challenging. For example, the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act has been widely ignored.⁴ The Kermit Gosnell post-abortion killings show the wisdom of the Act and are now putting pressure on states and government officials.

Conclusion

After staying in the pro-life movement now for more than three decades, I recognize the argument that legalized abortion would lead to infanticide and euthanasia was absolutely true. As a nurse as well as a mother, I have been horrified to see the ever-increasing expansion of what we now call the Culture of Death to include the disabled, elderly, frail and seriously ill as well as the unborn.

But pro-life people are nothing if not resilient and creative.

With dedication and commitment, I have seen the pro-life movement increase in numbers and rise up to meet every new challenge to the right to life. I see smiling, positive people who refused to be permanently discouraged by setbacks or media stereotypes.

As a result of those initial efforts, today we see more and more abortion clinics closing (a record 44 so far this year!)⁵, waiting lists for adoption of babies with disabilities, few doctors and nurses jumping on the assisted suicide bandwagon, and other signs of progress. Despite the media hype and propaganda like Ms. Jahr's article, the pro-life movement is alive, well, and growing.

And most importantly, hearts and minds are being opened and thus lives are being saved! 🍀

NOTES

¹ Elizabeth Jahr, "Pro-life groups don't really protect the unborn." September 4, 2013. Yahoo.com: news.yahoo.com/pro-life-groups-dont-really-protect-unborn-155733547-politics.html.

Editor's note: the URL above no longer leads to this article, as of October 28, 2013. The article (without reader comments) can also be accessed via: csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2013/0904/Pro-life-groups-don-t-really-protect-the-unborn.

0904/Pro-life-groups-don-t-really-protect-the-unborn.

² American Life League's STOPP International "Analysis of Planned Parenthood Federation of America Annual Report 2011-2012." January 13, 2013: stopp.org/pdfs/2012/STOPP_PPFA_2011_2012_Final.pdf.

³ Naomi Nix, "Illinois Supreme Court backs parental notification for abortions." July 11, 2013. *Chicago Tribune*: articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-07-11/news/chi-abortion-parental-notification-20130711_1_illinois-supreme-court-said-lorie-chaiten-parental-notification.

⁴ Kathryn Jean Lopez, "How About Enforcing the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act?" May 15, 2013. The Corner at the National Review Online: nationalreview.com/corner/348430/how-about-enforcing-born-alive-infant-protection-act-kathryn-jean-lopez.

⁵ Operation Rescue Staff, "Two more abortion clinics close: that makes 44 this year" LifeSiteNews.com. September 20, 2013. Online at: lifesitenews.com/news/two-abortion-clinic-closures-up-the-tally-to-44-this-year?utm_source=LifeSiteNews.com+Daily+Newsletter&utm_campaign=83c2820b88-LifeSiteNews.com_US_Full_Text_06_19_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0caba610ac-83c2820b88-326224910.

Nancy Valko, a registered nurse from St. Louis, is a spokesperson for the National Association of Pro-Life Nurses and a Voices contributing editor. She and her family live in St. Louis.

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Following Francis

New Peter, new pastor, new approach, new evangelization



by Sheila Liaugminas

IN THE FIRST WEEKS AND MONTHS after Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio took the Chair of Peter, the Church and secular world — media included — followed him with fascination. Many of them delighted in his very different persona and pastoral style and spontaneity, different from his immediate predecessors. Different even from John XXIII, happy and outgoing as he was. Though they didn't look into who he was and how that made him different in style, tone, and approach.

This is the first “American” pope, with his ebullient embrace of life in spontaneous encounter everywhere and all the time. From the beginning of his pontificate, he broke out of Vatican protocol and into the sea of people around him, even getting out of the Popemobile to walk and to embrace people along the way, especially the disabled and infirm and those seemingly marginalized by society.

And the more he's done so, the more we can picture the original Peter, a very earthy fisherman, probably unprepared for the mission bestowed upon him by the Lord Himself. He was so human in his robust embrace of his encounter with Jesus. And so flawed in his fear of the consequences of that embrace.

New Peter

Which gets to who Jorge Bergoglio is. That was the first thing Antonio Spadaro, SJ asked the pope in the famous interview published in September in *La Civiltà Cattolica* and simultaneously in several other Jesuit journals around the world. The English version was carried by *America* magazine.¹ The pope's considered, reflective response was: “I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner ... I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon.”

Vatican expert George Weigel² pointed to that and the pope's fuller response to that question as the key to understanding him and his pontificate.

That is who Jorge Mario Bergoglio is: a radically converted Christian disciple who has felt the mercy of God in his own life and who describes himself, without intending any dramatic effect, as “a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon.” Having heard the call to conversion and responded to it, Bergoglio wants to facilitate others' hearing of that call, which never ceases to come from God through Christ and the Church.

And that, Bergoglio insists, is what the Church is for: The Church is for evangelization and conversion. Those who have found the new pope's criticism of a “self-referential Church” puzzling, and those who will find something shockingly new in his critical comments, in his recent interview, about a Church reduced “to a nest protecting our mediocrity,” haven't been paying sufficient attention. Six years ago, when the Catholic bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean met at the Brazilian shrine of Aparecida to consider the future, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Bergoglio, was one of the principal intellectual architects of the bishops' call to put evangelization at the center of Catholic life, and to put Jesus Christ at the center of evangelization. The Latin American Church, long used to being “kept,” once by legal establishment and then by cultural tradition, had to rediscover missionary zeal by rediscovering the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the Latin American bishops, led by Bergoglio, made in their final report a dramatic proposal that amounted to a stinging challenge to decades, if not centuries, of ecclesiastical complacency:

“The Church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission.... It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats.... What is required is confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the newness of the Gospel ... out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries....”

Thus Pope Francis, the pastor who is urging a new pastoral style on his fellow bishops and fellow priests, insists that every time the Church says “no,” it does so on the basis of a higher and more compelling “yes”: yes to the dignity and value of every human life, which the Church affirms because it has embraced Jesus as Lord and proclaims him to a world increasingly tempted to measure human beings by their utility rather than their dignity.

Sooner or later, that world may “get” Pope Francis's message and meaning. But as soon as this interview hit the press, it kept reverberating through the media world — including the Catholic media and the social networking media. They were filled with analyses, reactions, explanations, and plenty of spin. Pope Francis was being hijacked by a lot of people, misunderstood by many, and distorted by a great many. But he got their attention, with the basic Gospel message and teaching of the Magisterium and fundamentals from the Catechism and documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Pope Francis showed

the world Christ, and they didn't know how to take it, or him.

Father Robert Barron — founder of the global media ministry Word On Fire and the groundbreaking *Catholicism* series — has been devoted to that very project for many years, showing the world Christ and His mercy, calling the world to a personal encounter with Him through unprecedented new evangelization outreach. His insight³ on Pope Francis as pastor and new evangelist is lively and engaging.

To judge by the headlines in *The New York Times* and on CNN, the Catholic Church is in the midst of a moral and doctrinal revolution, led by a maverick Pope bent on dragging the old institution into the modern world. I might recommend that everyone take a deep breath and prayerfully (or at least thoughtfully) read what Pope Francis actually said. For what he actually said is beautiful, lyrical, spirit-filled, and in its own distinctive way, revolutionary...

One of the most commented upon remarks in the interview is the following: “This church with which we should be thinking is the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people.” What the Pope is signaling here is that the Church, as his predecessor Paul VI put it, doesn't have a mission; it is a mission, for its purpose is to cause the merciful face of Jesus to gaze upon everyone in the world. It is not an exclusive club where only the morally perfect are welcome, but rather, a home for sinners, which means a home for everybody...

The most striking analogy in the interview is this: “I see the church as a field hospital after battle.” No doctor doing triage on a battlefield is going to be fussing about his patients' cholesterol or blood sugar levels. He is going to be treating major wounds and trying desperately to stop the bleeding. What we find today, the Pope is implying, are millions of people who are, in the spiritual sense, gravely wounded. They are alienated from God, stuck in the no-man's land of moral relativism, adrift with no sense of direction, and tempted by every form of errant desire. They require, therefore, not the fine points of moral doctrine, but basic healing. Perhaps this explains why the Church's altogether valid teachings on ethics are so often met with incomprehension or hostility: far more elemental instruction is required.

Over and over, writers, priests, bishops, cardinals, and leaders in the Church were explaining Francis — both stating the obvious and clarifying the nuanced. Though with Francis, much more is obvious than nuanced.

But one thing many media commenters overlooked, along with groups of Catholics long divided on the left and right, is the *continuity* of the papal teaching, if not the style.

New Tone and Pastoral Approach

Cardinal Francis George remarked on that in his column⁴ for the Chicago Archdiocesan newspaper *Catholic New World*, “On listening to the pope.” And on the view of a pope or pastoral leader as being on the left or right, in the first place.

One of the signs of Pope Francis' pastoral impact on the church and on the world is the readiness of people to listen to what he is saying, whether by gestures or by words. Even within the church, individuals and groups that have habitually said we should ignore papal teaching, even in its solemn form of an encyclical, are now saying we should listen to Pope Francis. This is no small improvement and no meager pastoral victory!

Despite the newfound willingness of former despisers of the papal office to listen to Pope Francis, there remains a deeper challenge to

what he himself would desire. Before his election, Cardinal Bergoglio warned his brother cardinals about the danger of a “self-referential” church, a self-absorbed church that speaks more about itself than about Christ. Today, ironically, it seems that many are speaking more about the pope than about either the church or Christ!

Pope Francis himself is not a paradox, but he's reflecting one within the Church. Cardinal George makes an important point here, or set of points.

The pope is neither an American liberal nor an American conservative. He is a disciple of Jesus Christ who has experienced the forgiveness and mercy of God and who wants to tell the world about it. His words fall out of the categories of American public discourse, because the one word that cannot be spoken publicly in our society is forgiveness. “Justice” in the form of punishment is the subject of half of our TV shows and three quarters of our news broadcasts. The pope, by contrast, invites us to confess our sins and taste the mercy of God. Then, in a life dedicated to sinning no more, the doctrinal and moral teaching of the church finds its place.

This is no different from the messages of Pope Francis's predecessors. But he's getting attention by saying what he says, startlingly blunt and basic, in what's being heard as a different tone. But point is, it is being heard.

Soon after the Jesuit interview burst into global headlines, Father Robert Barron was the homilist and guest of Cardinal Timothy Dolan at a special Mass at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Cardinal Dolan took the opportunity to invite members of the media to join them for an informal press conference⁵ after the Mass. It was lively and instructive.

Cardinal Dolan started with thanking the media for their interest in Pope Francis' “magnificent interview.” The press wanted to talk about abortion and gay marriage. Cardinal Dolan talked about the importance of having “truth and love in balance.”

Father Barron was keenly fixed on the pope's words and actions as a “return to the radical core of Christianity,” which is another key point to understand about Pope Francis. Father Barron talks often and throughout his *Catholicism* series of “the radicality of the Gospel.” Now he's seeing that expressed in Pope Francis's messages and gestures, adding, “He's got a preacher's gift, in spades.”

A Catholic reporter asked about Pope Francis's reference to discernment, and Father Barron quickly pointed out that since the pope is a Jesuit and a son of Ignatius, he has Ignatian spirituality, with an emphasis on “contemplation, desolation and consolation. What's causing anxiety and so on. That's key for any leader in the Church, above all the pope,” said Father Barron. “Vatican II says ‘discern the sign of the times, what's going on in the world, how do you read it in light of the Gospel?’ I saw that as a very strong theme in this interview.”

Archbishop Charles Chaput also took the opportunity to explain and clarify Pope Francis and his remarks and teach at the same time, while addressing seminarians⁶ at Philadelphia's St. Charles Borromeo Seminary as part of a Year of Faith discussion series. It was no coincidence that he stressed something Cardinal Dolan said at the opening of that press conference.

“[Love] requires truth. Only to the extent that love is grounded in truth can it endure over time ... [And if] love needs truth, truth also

needs love. Love and truth are inseparable.”

My point is this: Anyone hoping for — or worried about — a break by Pope Francis from Catholic teaching on matters of substance is going to be mistaken. At the same time, the tone of this pontificate will certainly be distinct from anything in the past century. Pope Francis has been formed by experiences very unlike the factors that shaped John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI.

Francis said shortly after his election that the cardinals had chosen a bishop of Rome from the “[far] end of the world.” Argentina may be the most European of Latin American countries, but Pope Francis’ world as a priest and bishop has been the global South, the problems that wound it and the poor who inhabit it.

This point is critical for understanding the pope and the future of the Church, since Christianity is emerging largely in the global South and Pope Francis knows its potential and potential obstacles well. Archbishop Chaput continued:

I do want to highlight some words in the interview that struck me as a clue to the way this Pope thinks about the future. The interviewer asked Pope Francis about the relationship between the “ancient” Churches of the developed world, the global North, and the “young” Churches of the developing world, including the global South. The Holy Father answered this way:

The young Catholic Churches, as they grow, develop a synthesis of faith, culture and life, and so it is a synthesis different from the one developed by the ancient Churches. For me, the relationship between the ancient Catholic Churches and the young ones is similar to the relationship between young and elderly people in a society. They build the future, the young ones with their strength and the others with their wisdom. You always run some risks, of course. The younger Churches are likely to feel self-sufficient; the ancient ones are likely to want to impose on the younger Churches their cultural models. But we build the future together.

How that future will play out is unclear. It holds opportunity and risk; ambiguity and hope. But God is in charge. God will guide his Church. And God will fill this holy man who is our Pope with the wisdom to lead us well.⁶

Church leaders keep reassuring people of that as Pope Francis keeps turning up with messages that surprise, and many commentators speculate on what he might mean. Using the American political terminology Archbishop Chaput noted:

Pharisees come in all shapes and sizes, left and right. We need to be different. As Pope Francis said in his *La Civiltà Cattolica* interview, the Church needs to be more than “a nest protecting our mediocrity.” We prove or disprove what we claim to believe by the zeal and joy of our lives. What we need to do in the years ahead is what God has always asked us to do: forgive each other; encourage each other; protect the weak; serve the needy; raise the young in virtue; speak

with courage; and work for the truth without ceasing — always in a spirit of love...

The reason the world has paused for Pope Francis — if only for a little while — is that so many people sense in him something more than himself; not just God’s truth and God’s justice, but God’s tenderness.

They see Peter, and through him, Christ. Whether they know it or not. ❣

NOTES:

¹ “A Big Heart Open to God,” Antonio Spadaro, SJ’s interview with Pope Francis. *America*. September 30, 2013. america magazine.org/pope-interview.

² “The Christ-Centered Pope,” George Weigel. *National Review Online*. September 20, 2013. eppc.org/publications/the-christ-centered-pope/.

³ “The Pope’s Field Hospital,” Robert Barron. *Real Clear Religion*. October 2, 2013. realclearreligion.org/articles/2013/10/02/the_popes_field_hospital.html.

⁴ “On listening to the pope,” Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. *Catholic New World*. September 29-October 12, 2013. catholicnewworld.com/cnwonline/2013/0929/cardinal.aspx.

⁵ Full press conference on Pope Francis, Cardinal Dolan and Father Barron. September 22, 2013. youtube.com/watch?v=1BP8mQnwX_8.

⁶ “Fire Upon the Earth,” Charles J. Chaput. *First Things*. October 2, 2013. These remarks were delivered the evening of October 1 at Philadelphia’s St. Charles Borromeo Seminary as part of a Year of Faith discussion series. firstthings.com/onthesquare/2013/10/fire-upon-the-earth.

Sheila Liaugminas, a member of the Voices editorial board, is a Chicago journalist who covers topics on faith, culture, and politics. She is host of “A Closer Look,” an hour-long news analysis on Relevant Radio and is network news director. Her work has been published in the National Catholic Register, Catholic New World, MercatorNet, National Review Online, and elsewhere. She blogs on current events at *Inforum* (inforumblog.com/) and *Sheila Reports* (mercatornet.com/sheila_liaugminas).

Pondering — Path to Holiness

The Benefits of Meditation

by Jeanette Flood

ACCORDING to *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, “the technologies we use to find, store, and share information can literally reroute our neural pathways.” And the effects are not all positive: “We are becoming ever more adept at scanning and skimming,” reports author Nicholas Carr, “but what we are losing is our capacity for concentration, contemplation, and reflection.”

Of course, the internet is not the only challenge to deep thinking; a daily to-do list provides sufficient distraction. Back in the 1950s, long before the internet, Father Philip Dion wrote in *The Handbook of Spiritual Perfection* of the ease with which people can avoid ever thinking more deeply than on a surface level.

There’s a problem with that, and it’s not just intellectual.

As Father Dion puts it, “We judge things chiefly by their effects on our material welfare and our physical well-being. In other words, it is possible to live practically without thinking; it is possible to live a most superficial kind of animal existence without ever really tapping the resources of our spiritual mind, without ever becoming familiar with the whole thrilling world of spirit within us.”

The world of the spirit — though more important — can easily take a backseat in our lives because it’s invisible. Ironically, the things that last can’t be seen, and we’re distracted by the countless things we can see. But none of them last: “All things pass,” Saint Teresa of Ávila reminds us; “all shall pass.” (Only people pass into eternity, but all that we can see about them will pass away or be transformed.)

Because there are so many other things competing for our attention, we can easily forget the things we say we know or believe. We may know that someday we will die, but we don’t often think about it or act on the fact that it could happen any day. We may believe that we will have to render an account of our lives to our Creator on that day, but we don’t prepare for it. We say we understand that our actions and attitudes are not always pleasing to Him, but we don’t really try to change them. Instead, we act as if we’re guaranteed another fifty or sixty years and can work on that *later*.

What we assent to intellectually, what we know in our minds, has not made its way down to our hearts. This is why we can say we love God but neglect to spend time with Him. This is why when we go to church, we can sit there like we’re waiting for the

bus instead of realizing that we are mystically present at the stable, Golgotha, and the empty tomb. Or why we can say we believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, yet file up to receive Him with as much excitement as when we get in line at the grocery store.

“Use it or lose it,” the gym advertisers warn. The same could be said for the powers of our mind and, even more frighteningly, of our spirit too.

So how can we *realize* — that is, make real to ourselves — what we know and believe?

It is in taking the time to think deeply about these things — with the Holy Spirit — that they sink into our hearts. It is in pondering these truths in prayer that they take root in our lives and grow and bear fruit. Think of Our Lady. Luke tells us that she pondered all these things — all the mysteries she was witnessing in the life of Jesus — in her heart.

Meditation Commendation

While the Church offers us a whole banquet of types of prayer, many saints stress how crucial meditation is to the spiritual life. Saint Teresa of Ávila saw it as so vital as to be effectively the difference between heaven and hell: “He who neglects mental prayer needs no devil to carry him to hell, but he brings himself there,” she wrote. She also pointed out the flip side: “The devil knows that he has lost the soul that perseveringly practices mental prayer.”

Saint Alphonsus of Liguori explains: “It is impossible for him who perseveres in mental prayer to continue in sin: he will either give up meditation or renounce sin.”

I suspect another strength of mental prayer (or what today is more commonly called “meditation”) is that it is much less prone to Pharisaism than are other types of prayer. One can say a dozen devotions and attend Mass each day, but not have one’s mind engaged or heart involved. One can become so complacent or proud that one no longer tries to be present interiorly as well as exteriorly; then the graces are likely to roll right off. In such cases, one can not only fool one’s neighbors with one’s apparent piety, but one can even fool oneself. I suppose it is theoretically possible to do the same with meditation, but it would be much harder. Meditation is a one-on-one conversation with God that requires me to speak my own words, and — far more difficult — requires

me to listen. That's pretty hard to fake.

If a teenage son meets all his father's minimum rules, like coming to Sunday dinner and staying out of serious trouble, but never talks to his father other than to ask for a raise in his allowance or for the latest new gizmo, what kind of relationship is that? How well will they know each other? And how long will the son continue in his minimal obedience? Our heavenly Father wants a real, personal relationship with each of us. We can't build that through *only* rote or group prayer.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not at all disparaging vocal prayer or the Mass, both of which are very important and effective. Vocal prayers (those written by someone else) are fundamental — many are the first we learn and the last we forget. They are so helpful too when we don't know what to say or our own words seem so inadequate. And there can be no doubt that the Mass is the most powerful prayer. It is the prayer of Jesus, the re-presentation to the Father of Christ's sacrifice. It is *the* prayer par excellence.

Nor am I saying that if our minds wander during any of these forms of prayer that our prayers are therefore worthless. If that were so, then I, Maj. Space Cadet, would be in big trouble. No, what matters is our intention and our efforts. If we *want* to pray from the heart, and keep trying, the Lord will care more for that than for our success, which is a gift from Him anyway.

Rather, I am merely echoing Saint Teresa of Ávila, who wrote: "It is then of the utmost importance to bear this truth in mind, that our Lord is within us, and that we ought to strive to be there with Him."

... And Saint Alphonsus Liguori: "Mental prayer is the blessed furnace in which souls are inflamed with the love of God. All the saints have become saints by mental prayer."

... And Archbishop Fulton Sheen, who explained: "When one meditates and fills the mind ... [each] day with thoughts and resolutions bearing on the love of God ... there is a gradual seepage of love down to the level of what is called the subconscious, and finally these good thoughts emerge, of themselves, in the form of effortless good actions."

And Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, who said of mental prayer: "Holiness is impossible without it."

What Is Meditation?

Here is Archbishop Fulton Sheen's description in *Go to Heaven*:

Meditation is a little like a daydream or a reverie, but ... in meditation we do not think about the world or ourselves, but about God; and instead of using the imagination to build idle castles in Spain, we use the will to make resolutions that will draw us nearer to one of the Father's mansions.

Meditation is a more advanced spiritual act than "saying prayers"; it may be likened to the attitude of a child who breaks into the presence of a mother saying: "I'll not say a word, if you will just let me stay here and watch you."

Meditation ... silences the ego with its clamorous demands, in order that it may hear the wishes of the divine heart. It uses our faculties ... to stir up our will to conform more perfectly with His will ... and strengthens our desire that all the good things we do shall be done for His honor and glory.

Prayer Is Not Always Easy or Fun

Beyond making the time for meditation, another difficulty often arises, namely, how hard it is. Sometimes, especially when people first discover God, He blesses their prayer times in ways they can feel, such as a sense of His presence or joy or even fervor. But we don't always experience that, and it can be discouraging. It's imperative to know what's going on there. It's not that we've failed, that we don't have enough faith, that God isn't real, or that He doesn't hear us or care about us. Granted, sometimes prayer can falter when we put something ahead of God while denying it or pretending that it doesn't matter. But even prayer done well and faithfully will become difficult.

Just as in my article on the types of prayer in the Michaelmas 2013 issue of *Voices* ("Prayer — Nourishing the Soul," wf-f.org/13-3Flood.html) images of sun and rain can help here too. We have sunny prayer times and rainy prayer times. In spiritual writings, the former are traditionally called "consolations" and the latter "desolations." (*Desolation* has since taken on a darker connotation, calling to mind a condition near despair. That is not what is meant here, but something closer to "deprivation.") Their Latin origins suggest that *consolation* is the act of comforting, of being with someone, and *desolation* is the condition of being deserted, abandoned. (Note, however, that with spiritual desolation, the Lord has not actually abandoned the soul; it only feels that way.)

Just as many prefer a sunny day to a rainy one, so also we naturally much prefer consolations in prayer to desolations. However, just as the plant needs both, so do our souls. A plant that received only the sun and no rain would wither up and die. A soul that received only consolations would also get "burnt": would likely become complacent, would fail to grow, and might even die through falling into spiritual pride, the worst sin. Too much rain, on the other hand, would drown both the plant and the soul, and total deprivation of the sun would prevent any growth. So the Lord wisely sends us both sun and rain.

We can see why He sends us the sunny times. During them, we feel encouraged and eager to do His will and help our neighbor. We have new insights into the spiritual life and are on fire with love for Him. But why do we need those rainy desolations? Because they too are critical to our growth.

It is during times of desolation that we discover or re-discover how much we need God and how little we can do on our own. Thus we have the chance to deepen our humility and our dependence on God. And it is while we are enduring desolation that we can really grow in virtue. Do we build muscle when we're being carted around? No. We build muscle when our muscles work, when they are challenged, as in resistance exercises. Similarly, our faith grows when it has to work, when it's challenged, even resisted.

A saint once pointed out that when we feel close to God in our prayer time and ready to do anything for Him, that is His gift to us. When prayer is dry and dull and seems pointless, and we persevere in it anyway, that is our gift to Him. Mother Angelica, founder of Catholic television network EWTN, echoes this in *Dawn on the Mountain: The Gift of Dryness in Prayer*:

Only through the pain of dryness — where we decrease and He increases — can we begin to love God in the way He wishes us to love. When we pray we are doing so on our will power for our poor

human nature receives no compensation for its efforts.

Faith tells us that God is present when we pray and Hope tells us He listens, but only Love makes us continue to pray when darkness, boredom and even disgust fill our souls to overflowing. Only a true love will persevere in praying despite darkness and confusion.

To get through the cold, rainy times, it's important to use the sunny times well. Just as we shouldn't just lounge around, but "make hay while the sun shines," we need to gather the fruits of our sunny prayer times to save them up for the storms ahead. One effective way to do this is to record in a prayer journal the insights and gifts that God has given. Otherwise, it's all too easy to forget them or misremember and spurn them when the feelings have gone.

We don't know all the ways that God is working in us when we are faithful to prayer in times of desolation. Just as the rain is sinking into the earth to reach the plant's roots, desolations are feeding our souls in unseen ways.

Contemplation

On the other hand, God sometimes lifts one to the heights of contemplation. The works of Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint John of the Cross describe their profound experiences of God in prayer. True contemplation — this supernatural union with God — is not something we can cause; it is wholly a gift from God. We can not

make it happen, but we should not give up hope of it ever happening. These Carmelite mystics both say that God desires everyone to enter into contemplation. And we can open ourselves to His bestowing it upon us by being faithful in seeking Him in meditation, for it is in meditation that God usually gives the gift of contemplation.

Growing in Holiness

All in all, meditation is a sure and simple (though challenging) means to growing in holiness, one that is available to everyone. Sometimes we can be like the Naaman the Syrian, seeking the extraordinary and disdaining the plain and unimpressive method that God offers.

But once one knows how vital meditation is, one can respond with Archbishop Fulton Sheen to the question "Why do you pray?" with "Why do you breathe?" ❧

Jeanette Amestoy Flood, wife and mother of six, is a freelance writer and teacher. Her work has also appeared in Faith and Family, St. Austin Review, Franciscan Way, and OSV Weekly. She blogs at *Where the Rubber Hits the Road: where-the-rubber-hits-the-road.blogspot.com*.

How to Meditate:

Don't know how? Here are some pointers:

1. **Commit to a time for prayer.** Schedule it. Mornings are preferable: a giving one's "first fruits" to the Lord by putting Him first in the day. (If that simply isn't feasible, say a morning offering and meditate later, when you can best listen). A good time goal is fifteen minutes.
2. **Put yourself in the presence of God.** Of course, He is always with us, but we need to become aware of His presence.
 - A. The ideal **place** is in His physical presence: a church or chapel with the Blessed Sacrament. This is not practical for most of us much of the time, however; so find a quiet space without distractions.
 - B. Acknowledge His presence by confirming your **faith, hope, and love** for Him, by **worshipping** and **thanking** Him. Don't breeze through this step; it can lead to real closeness to Him. It's a potent reminder of His greatness and our littleness, of our need of Him and all we owe Him.
3. **Invoke the Holy Spirit:** You can use a traditional prayer such as "Come Holy Spirit" or your own words. Open your heart and mind to *Him*. You don't want to have a conversation with yourself, or mistake the voice of the world, the flesh, or the devil for His.
4. **Read a passage** from Scripture or the writing of a saint or trustworthy spiritual writer. Try the readings for Mass that day or in the Liturgy of the Hours. (Sometimes, though, the best "text" will be something in your own life.) Read for just a few minutes; reading is the springboard for the conversation, not a substitute for it.
5. **Reflect** on the text. Talk to God about it. Ask Him what He's

trying to tell you through this. Ask Him to help you to be open to Him and truly listen.

Many find the Ignatian method of Scripture meditation to be helpful. Saint Ignatius of Loyola recommends picturing yourself in the scene, as one of those there — e.g., a disciple, a leper, a bystander. Enter into the story first by imagining the scenery, the weather, the smells, the sounds, how the people looked, what they said, and so forth.

One can also write *during* the reflection. Writing actually produces thought. Just start writing to the Lord about the text, and new thoughts will spring forth. Some personalities find this method very fruitful.

The main thing is to try to be still and listen. (This is *hard*, but don't give up. Keep trying.) Listening is the heart of meditation. Saint Francis de Sales advises that we think of ourselves as courtiers waiting on the King.

6. **Make a resolution.** Our prayer life, to be effective, must change the rest of our life. Try to think of something specific that you can do that day to put into practice what the Lord is saying to you. (Examples: visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; compliment a coworker whom you find difficult; refrain from complaining and "offer it up" instead; praise your child rather than noticing only the things that need correcting.)

7. Optional: If possible, write down any insights you gained from the meditation and your resolution.

8. **Thank** the Lord for this time together (we so often think we're doing *Him* a favor by praying). Thank Him for the loving gifts He gave — whether you perceive them or not — and the grace to serve Him and love Him better each day.

Papal Pleas and Prayers for Peace

By Kenneth D. Whitehead

THE INTENSE PERIOD FOLLOWING the media reporting on “wars and rumors of wars” (Mt 24:6; Mk 13:7) leading up to the eventual agreement between the United States and Russia — whereby Syria’s stock of chemical weapons is supposed to be inventoried and turned over to international control — proved to be especially intense for Catholics when Pope Francis himself decided to intervene, declaring September 7, 2013 — the vigil of the Feast of the Birth of Mary, Queen of Peace — to be a “day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria, the Middle East, and throughout the world.”

That the Holy Father was in favor of peace was hardly surprising, but coming as it did amid the fast-breaking developments that followed the Bashar Al-Assad government’s August 2 sarin gas attack that killed some 1400 Syrian civilians, including children, the pope’s initiative instantly got the world’s attention.

Pope Francis issued his call to the whole world, but it was addressed in particular to Catholics and to “our non-Catholic Christian brothers and followers of other religions, and all men of good will.” He thus invited everybody to join Catholics in fasting and prayers for peace. “Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake,” he declared. “War begets war; violence begets violence.”

The pope’s call came at a critical juncture when it looked as if the United States was going to launch a retaliatory air strike against Syria for resorting to the use of chemical weapons.

While all the intense back-and-forth discussions were going on, Pope Francis proceeded with his planned prayer vigil on September 7, as announced. More than 100,000 faithful crowded into St. Peter’s Square to join their prayers to those of the pontiff. The Scripture reading was from the Gospel according to John describing the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection to His apostles in the closed upper room (cf. Jn 20:19, 26), where Jesus invoked peace on them, using the standard Hebrew (and Semitic) formula and greeting, *Shalom aleichem* (“Peace be on you”). So it was not just “peace” as opposed to “war,” but peace in all its dimensions.

Pope Francis had the image of the Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, enthroned in St. Peter’s Square. The Holy Father led the Rosary and spoke movingly of the need for all to look to Christ on the cross, where “we can see God’s reply: violence is not answered with violence. Death is not answered with the silence of death. In the silence of the cross the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace is spo-

ken” — hardly the language typically employed in international relations; the pope manifestly employs a different vocabulary.

The pope’s heartfelt plea and prayer were echoed in hundreds of individual prayer vigils and events organized in churches and homes around the world in response to his request. His call for prayers for peace obviously resonated both widely and deeply. In Syria itself the Grand Mufti led Sunni Muslims in prayer at the Umayyad Mosque. Hardly anybody welcomed the prospect of a wider war.

No sooner was the postponement of the American air strike announced, however, than a priest at a prayer vigil that I myself attended in northern Virginia confidently declared that the averting of a wider war had definitely been brought about *because* of the prayers that the pope had asked for. It was not plainly specified whether this was truly an answer to prayers that came from above, but it certainly was presented as definitely an “answer”! And there actually were a couple of news stories describing Pope Francis as the “leader” of the forces that had prevented the United States from intervening in another war in the Middle East. There may well even have been some truth to this, in fact.

The Church generally — and wisely — discourages identifying concrete and immediate results as answers to prayers in such *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* (“after this therefore because of this”) situations. But the fact that the pope had stirred up such a widespread negative response to the threat of a wider war was surely noticed by — and perhaps even had some influence on — the movers and shakers involved in the Syrian situation.

Even with the postponement of an air strike, however, the war in Syria was still very far from over. Far more than the 1400 innocent victims of the sarin gas attack, there had been up to 100,000 deaths in all in the two years of war, along with some 2 million refugees driven out of Syria and as many as 5 million displaced inside. However efficacious the prayers called for by the pope may have been, only American involvement in the war, not the war itself, was halted — and then only for the moment. While this may in the long run prove to have been a more abundant blessing than we can possibly know at present, it most definitely should *not* be taken as a one-for-one answer to papal prayers.

So what is the point, then, of such papal pleas and prayers for peace? In fact, such pleas and prayers for peace represent no new phenomenon in the world. In modern times alone, the efforts of Pope Benedict XV to turn hearts and minds against World War I — like those of Popes Pius XI and Pius XII against World War II

— are instances that quickly come to mind. Nor were these papal efforts and prayers entirely in vain, even though both wars continued on anyway. Yet in no way did this seem to discourage the popes themselves. We may recall in particular, for example, the plea and prayer of Pope Paul VI at the United Nations in 1965, when he cried out, *jamais plus la guerre!* — variously translated as “No more war!” or “War never again!” Pope Francis repeated this same cry in his own call for prayer vigils against the war in Syria. Similarly and inevitably, his words also recalled those of Blessed Pope John XXIII in the latter’s famous 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, “Peace on Earth,” a title taken from the Gospel itself.

In spite of all this considerable effort and prayer on the part of the popes, however, wars have continuously gone on. To name some of the most salient of them since Pope Paul VI cried out, “war never again,” though, we only need mention Afghanistan, Algeria, the Balkans, the Congo, Georgia, India-Pakistan, Iran-Iraq, Nigeria, Rwanda-Burundi, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and on and on. We are almost never, it seems, *without* a war somewhere, as a matter of fact.

Yet it is precisely *because* wars do go on and on in this fashion that the popes, the vicars of Christ on earth, are called to be advocates and messengers of peace in a harsh and warlike world — a world apparently as prone to violence and to war as it is prone to *sin*. In a world in which, as the prophet Jeremiah long ago pointed out that “there is no peace” (Jer 6:14), there is nevertheless an urgent need for *somebody* to stand up and bear witness against this whole unholy state of affairs.

Why should it not be the popes, the successors of Peter, upon whom Christ founded His holy Church? The popes *should* continue to plead and call for prayers for peace, even against the odds. Moreover, it seems that the popes in the modern world *have* effectively already decided that it is an integral part of their Christ-appointed mission, namely, to serve as voices for peace in the world, a world too often — though not always — little inclined to hear and heed their voices. While they cannot in the end always, or perhaps even often, succeed and prevent actual war, they can at least bear witness against it; they can remind the world what the reign of Christ *should* be like.

And this is precisely the papal policy and practice that Pope Francis confirmed on October 3 in an address to a conference marking the 50th anniversary of Blessed Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. This encyclical, issued in the midst of the Cold War, “bore fruit,” according to Pope Francis, even though the quest for lasting peace based on justice and solidarity must continue. Advocacy for the continuation of this quest for peace now indeed does seem to be a fixed and unalterable policy and practice of the modern popes. ❧

Kenneth D. Whitehead is the author of, among other books, *The Renewed Church: The Second Vatican Council’s Enduring Teaching about the Church* (Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009). He is married to Margaret Whitehead, of the Voices editorial board, and lives in Falls Church, Virginia.

Pope Francis

from *Fraternity, The Foundation and Pathway to Peace*

Message for the World Day of Peace 2014

In this, my first Message for the World Day of Peace, I wish to offer to everyone, individuals and peoples, my best wishes for a life filled with joy and hope. In the heart of every man and woman is the desire for a full life, including that irrepressible longing for fraternity which draws us to fellowship with others and enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced.

...

We Christians believe that in the Church we are all members of a single body, all mutually necessary, because each has been given a grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, for the common good (cf. Eph 4:7,25; I Cor 12:7). Christ has come to the world so as to bring us divine grace, that is, the possibility of sharing in His life. This entails weaving a fabric of fraternal relationships marked by reciprocity, forgiveness and complete self-giving, according to the breadth and the depth of the love of God offered to humanity in the One who, crucified and risen, draws all to Himself: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35). This is the good news that demands from each one a step forward, a perennial exercise of empathy, of listening to the suffering and the hopes of others, even those furthest away from me, and walking the demanding path of that love which knows how to give and spend itself freely for the good of all our brothers and sisters.

Year of Faith, Hitting Reboot

by Kathryn Jean Lopez



The problem is not secularism, it is our secularism.

IT WAS A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO NOW that I looked into the face of a father at peace. Pope Benedict XVI was wearing a beautiful miter of Christ the Teacher — an image that I, the daughter of two Catholic schoolteachers, have always treasured. It was the opening Mass of the Year of Faith on October 12, 2012; and I had been blessed to receive from the Holy Father a copy of the message from the Second Vatican Council for every woman throughout the world.

It was a moment of reset, and at the time, I had no idea just how dramatic. Pope Benedict beamed with a peace and a joy and a love. His face betrayed a certainty. About hope. About love. About mercy.

I happened to be in Rome in December (these were treasured opportunities, I'm not actually a frequent flier there), and this time Pope Benedict had that same peace about him as I captured his fatherly gaze on my iPad (such is the life and times of a tweeter). He was also admonishing the gathered "Catholic leaders" of the Americas.

On that unforgettable morning in February when I woke to the news Pope Benedict had resigned, I understood that October morning outside St. Peter's more. His look was about hope and love and mercy. And it betrayed a discernment. It was the look of a man who lives the encounter with Christ he talks and writes about.

A friend who had also been in Rome last December said that a session on the state of marriage in the West confirmed his conviction that the greatest challenge Christians need to confront is not the tsunami of secularization, real as it is, but "our secularism." How many of us, even those of us who go to daily Mass, live lives of practical atheism at scattered moments of the day? As we make decisions, as we gossip, as we fail to make decisions, as we give in to temptation and sin? As we don't live our lives differently, counterculturally, in Christ?

This November there has been a celebration of the life of John F. Kennedy, Jr., who was assassinated 50 years ago now. But this first Catholic president also preached a political gospel of

dichotomy, presenting faith and politics as separate spheres in the life of the politician. He's not to blame, but he's an icon of our secularization.

Our task at this moment is not recriminations. It's conversion. Of the most radical sort. Of the most intimate and the most noticeable sort.

The opening Mass of the Year of Faith last October coincided with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the second Vatican Council. Bishops from throughout the world joined in the commemoration at St. Peter's — including my own, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Cardinal Dolan had taken a leading role in educating Americans about our stewardship responsibilities to our First Freedom — religious freedom — a gift from God whose protection has been enshrined in our constitutional tradition here in the United States.

For Catholics in America, this was a moment of unity like we've never known since the days of the Know-Nothing discrimination against an immigrant Church — of pride, tribal, if not baptismal — as bishops stood in unanimity. Catholics in the pew have new opportunities to consider and share just what *faith* means in civic life, and what a difference real faith can make in our politics, as it shapes our lives beyond Sunday worship.

In Rome last October, as I walked to and from the Chair of Peter past the rows of bishops, priests and shepherds, men and sons of God, I had the overwhelming feeling that something had to break. Months later, like that moment in a storm when the heavens open, the uncertainty and unsettling nature of Pope Benedict's shocking announcement — that "with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter" — has served as a flood of mercy.

Pope Francis's unmistakable brotherly love for the pope emeritus is not mere kindness or diplomacy. It's deference to the Holy Spirit. It's confirmation that he simply has to be the chief counsel at the Vatican and in our individual lives.

That was the point Pope Benedict was making to the Americans last December. No evangelical plan is worth much of anything if its leaders are not living an awareness of Trinitarian reality. The love of the Father must be trusted, Christ must be encountered. The Holy Spirit must guide. "The Holy Spirit is

working miracles in front of the Blessed Sacrament,” as many participants expressed in different ways about their own apostolic works.

I’ve seen that. That’s the only way to live our lives as Catholics here on earth.

A great evangelical gift has been the Catholic Voices model Austen Ivereigh and Jack Valero founded in the United Kingdom. When friends of mine and I did our first big communications event in Virginia last year with Austen and Jack, I kept tripping over people in the makeshift Blessed Sacrament chapel. The goal of the work of Catholic Voices USA is to help Catholics better articulate their faith in the public square — which may be on television, radio, a secular magazine, in a letter to the editor, or — maybe more likely — the Christmas dinner table or a happy hour. How to make it a holy hour? Holy hours! Prayer. Real Catholicism. Living an integrated life of faith, ever growing deeper in union with the Trinity.

People want this life. It just can seem impossible. The longings we have in our hearts to build the Kingdom here — with our vocational lives, with our works and words, in the deepest groaning prayers of our souls — often seem unreal to this world, impractical.

They are, in truth, our only way to live. We know too much to do otherwise.

At World Youth Day in Rio this summer, Pope Francis told volunteers:

God calls each of us to be holy, to live His life, but He has a particular path for each one of us. Some are called to holiness through family life in the Sacrament of Marriage. Today, there are those who say that marriage is out of fashion. Is it out of fashion? In a culture of relativism and the ephemeral, many preach the importance of “enjoying” the moment. They say that it is not worth making a life-long commitment, making a definitive decision, “forever,” because we do not know what tomorrow will bring. I ask you, instead, to be revolutionaries, I ask you to swim against the tide; yes, I am asking you to rebel against this culture that sees everything as temporary and that ultimately believes you are incapable of responsibility, that believes you are incapable of true love. I have confidence in you and I pray for you. Have the courage “to swim against the tide.” And also have the courage to be happy.¹

Earlier in his trip, during the Stations of the Cross he asked: Do you want to be like Pilate, who did not have the courage to go against the tide to save Jesus’ life, and instead washed his hands? Tell me: are you one of those who wash their hands, who feign ignorance and look the other way? Or are you like Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus to carry that heavy wood, or like Mary and the other women, who were not afraid to accompany Jesus all

the way to the end, with love and tenderness? And you, who do you want to be? Like Pilate? Like Simon? Like Mary? Jesus is looking at you now and is asking you: do you want to help me carry the Cross? Brothers and sisters, with all the strength of your youth, how will you respond to Him?²

These are the questions that will make the difference in our lives.

“How will you respond to Him?” That’s the question that, if answered in faithfulness to a genuine and persistent encounter with Christ, will be *unmistakably different* from the surrender to secularism of so many Catholics, who have been not only *living* but even *heralding* a perverse “gospel” — a surrender to fallen indifference — on full and scandalous display to the world

Let us help one another live the Trinitarian life, so that we might find ourselves together where we desire, where we belong, that glorious destination — oh blessed relief! — where the Sacramental life leads.

And for the *sisters* among us brothers and sisters, that message Pope Benedict gave me at the opening of this Year of Faith — a repeat of a message to women delivered by another pope at the end of Vatican Council II — said that “women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling.”

Waste not. Fear not. Live in the love and mercy of Christ and be not afraid, nurturing a culture of encounter that would be lost without our surrender to Christ, modeling our lives on the “yes” of His own mother. ☺

NOTES

¹ Meeting with the Volunteers of the XXVIII WYD. Address of Pope Francis. Rio de Janeiro. July 28, 2013. vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_gmg-rio-volontari_en.html.

² Apostolic Journey to Rio De Janeiro on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day Way of the Cross with the Young People. Address of Pope Francis. Rio de Janeiro. July 26, 2013. vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130726_gmg-via-crucis-rio_en.html

Kathryn Jean Lopez (klopez@nationalreview.com), a member of the Voices editorial board, is editor-at-large of National Review Online, a nationally syndicated columnist, and co-founder and a director of Catholic Voices USA.

Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization

Preparatory Document for the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

On November 5, 2013, the Vatican released the preparatory document for the third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held October 5-19, 2014. Both the 2014 synod next October and the regular synod to be held in 2015 will be dedicated to “pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelization.”

The preparatory document summarizes Church teaching about marriage, family, reproduction, and related matters, before outlining a series of eight major areas of concern. The ninth and concluding section is open-ended: “Other Challenges and Proposals.” Discussions of the preparatory document’s questions have taken place in several dioceses to aid the bishops in forming suggestions or proposals for the synod’s consideration. — Editor

I. Synod: Family and Evangelization

The mission of preaching the Gospel to all creation, entrusted directly by the Lord to His disciples, has continued in the Church throughout history. The social and spiritual crisis, so evident in today’s world, is becoming a pastoral challenge in the Church’s evangelizing mission concerning the family, the vital building-block of society and the ecclesial community. Never before has proclaiming the Gospel on the family in this context been more urgent and necessary. The importance of the subject is reflected in the fact that the Holy Father has decided to call for a Synod of Bishops, which is to have a two-staged itinerary: firstly, an Extraordinary General Assembly in 2014, intended to define the “*status quaestionis*” and to collect the bishops’ experiences and proposals in proclaiming and living the Gospel of the family in a credible manner; and secondly, an Ordinary General Assembly in 2015 to seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.

Concerns which were unheard of until a few years ago have arisen today as a result of different situations, from the widespread practice of cohabitation, which does not lead to marriage, and sometimes even excludes the idea of it, to same-sex unions between persons, who are, not infrequently, permitted to adopt children. The many new situations requiring the Church’s attention and pastoral care include: mixed or inter-religious marriages; the single-parent family; polygamy; marriages with the consequent problem of a dowry, sometimes understood as the purchase price of the woman; the caste system; a culture of non-commitment and a presumption that the marriage bond can be temporary;

forms of feminism hostile to the Church; migration and the reformulation of the very concept of the family; relativist pluralism in the conception of marriage; the influence of the media on popular culture in its understanding of marriage and family life; underlying trends of thought in legislative proposals which devalue the idea of permanence and faithfulness in the marriage covenant; an increase in the practice of surrogate motherhood (wombs for hire); and new interpretations of what is considered a human right. Within the Church, faith in the sacramentality of marriage and the healing power of the Sacrament of Penance show signs of weakness or total abandonment.

Consequently, we can well understand the urgency with which the worldwide episcopate is called upon to gather *cum et sub Petro* [with and under Peter] to address these challenges. For example, by simply calling to mind the fact that, as a result of the current situation, many children and young people will never see their parents receive the sacraments, then we understand just how urgent are the challenges to evangelization arising from the current situation, which can be seen in almost every part of the “global village.” Corresponding in a particular manner to this reality today is the wide acceptance of the teaching on divine mercy and concern towards people who suffer on the periphery of societies, globally and in existential situations. Consequently, vast expectations exist concerning the decisions which are to be made pastorally regarding the family. A reflection on these issues by the Synod of Bishops, in addition to it being much needed and urgent, is a dutiful expression of charity towards those entrusted to the bishops’ care and the entire human family.

II. The Church and the Gospel on the Family

The good news of divine love is to be proclaimed to all those personally living this basic human experience of couples and of a communion open to the gift of children, which is the family community. The teachings of the faith on marriage is to be presented in an articulate and efficacious manner, so that it might reach hearts and transform them in accordance with God’s will, made manifest in Jesus Christ.

The citation of biblical sources on marriage and family in this document are essential references only. The same is true for documentation from the Magisterium which is limited to that of a universal character, including some texts from the Pontifical Council for the Family. It will be left to the bishop-participants at the synod to cite documents from their own episcopal assemblies.

In every age, and in the many different cultures, the teaching

Pastoral Challenges to the Family

of the Pastors has been clear nor has there been lacking the concrete testimony of believers — men and women — in very diverse circumstances who have lived the Gospel of the family as an inestimable gift for their life and their children. The commitment for the next Extraordinary Synod is inspired and sustained by the desire to communicate this message with greater incisiveness, in the hope that “the treasure of revelation, entrusted to the Church, more and more fill the hearts of each person” (DV, 26).

The Plan of God, Creator and Redeemer

The beauty of the biblical message on the family has its roots in the creation of man and woman, both made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:24-31; 2:4-25). Bound together by an indissoluble sacramental bond, those who are married experience the beauty of love, fatherhood, motherhood, and the supreme dignity of participating in this way in the creative work of God.

In the gift of the fruit of their union, they assume the responsibility of raising and educating other persons for the future of humankind. Through procreation, man and woman fulfill in faith the vocation of being God’s collaborators in the protection of creation and the growth of the human family.

Blessed Pope John Paul II commented on this aspect in *Familiaris consortio*: “God created man in His own image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26, 27): calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love. God is love (cf. I Jn 4:8) and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion (*Gaudium et spes*, 12). Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” (FC, 11).

The plan of God the creator, which was disrupted by original sin (cf. Gen 3:1-24), has revealed itself throughout history in the events of the chosen people up to the fullness of time, when, with the incarnation of the Son of God, not only was the divine will for salvation confirmed, but also the redemption offering the grace to follow this same will.

The Son of God, the Word made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14) in the womb of the Virgin Mother, lived and grew up in the family of Nazareth and participated at the wedding at Cana, where He added importance to the festivities with the first of His “signs” (cf. Jn 2:1-11). In joy, He welcomed His reception in the families of His disciples (cf. Mk 1:29-31; 2:13-17) and consoled the bereaved family of His friends in Bethany (cf. Lk 10:38-42; Jn 11:1-44).

Jesus Christ restored the beauty of matrimony, proposing once again the one plan of God which was abandoned because of the hardness of the human heart, even within the tradition of the people of Israel (cf. Mt 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mk 10:1-12; Lk 16:18). Returning to the beginning, Jesus taught the unity and faithfulness of the husband and wife, refuting the practice of repudiation and adultery.

Precisely through the extraordinary beauty of human love — already celebrated in a heightened manner inspired by the Song of

Songs, and the bond of marriage called for and defended by the prophets like Hosea (cf. Hosea 1:2, 3:3) and Malachi (cf. Mal 2:13-16) — Jesus affirmed the original dignity of the married love of man and woman.

The Church’s Teaching on the Family

Even in the early Christian community the family appeared as the “domestic church” (cf. CCC, 1655): In the so-called “family canons” of the Apostolic letters of the New Testament, the great family of the ancient world is identified as the place of a profound solidarity between husbands and wives, between parents and children, and between the wealthy and the poor (cf. Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1; I Tim 2:8-15; Titus 2:1-10; I Pt 2:13-3:7; cf. also the Letter to Philemon). In particular, the Letter to the Ephesians recognized the nuptial love between man and woman as “the great mystery,” making present in the world the love of Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:31-32).

Over the centuries, especially in modern times to the present, the Church has not failed to continually teach and develop her doctrine on the family and marriage which founded her. One of its highest expressions has been proposed by the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, which, in treating certain pressing problems, dedicated an entire chapter to the promotion of the dignity of marriage and the family, as seen in the description of their value for the constitution of society: “the family, in which the various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the very foundation of society” (GS, 52). Particularly striking is its appeal for a Christ-centered spirituality in the spouses’ life of faith: “Let the spouses themselves, made to the image of the living God and enjoying the authentic dignity of persons, be joined to one another in equal affection, harmony of mind and the work of mutual sanctification. Thus, following Christ who is the principle of life, by the sacrifices and joys of their vocation and through their faithful love, married people can become witnesses of the mystery of love which the Lord revealed to the world by His dying and His rising up to life again” (GS, 52).

After the Second Vatican Council, the successors of St. Peter enriched this teaching on marriage and the family, especially Pope Paul VI with the Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, which offers specific principles and guidelines. Subsequently, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Pope John Paul II insisted on proposing the divine plan in the basic truths of married love and the family: “The only ‘place’ in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 48) which only in this light manifests its true meaning. The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order

Pastoral Challenges to the Family

to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom" (FC, 11).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gathers together the fundamental aspects of this teaching: "The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament [cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 48; Code of Canon Law, 1055, 1]" (CCC 1660).

The doctrine presented in the Catechism touches on both theological principles and moral behaviors, developed under two separate headings: The Sacrament of Matrimony (nos. 1601-1658) and The Sixth Commandment (nos. 2331-2391). An attentive reading of these sections of the Catechism provides an updated understanding of the doctrine of faith, which supports the Church's work in the face of modern-day challenges. The Church's pastoral ministry finds inspiration in the truth of marriage viewed as part of the plan of God, who created man and woman and, in the fullness of time, revealed in Jesus the completeness of spousal love elevated to the level of sacrament. Christian marriage founded on consensus is also endowed with its own effects such as the goods and duties of the spouses. At the same time, marriage is not immune from the effects of sin (cf. Gen 3:1-24), which can cause deep wounds and even abuses to the dignity of the sacrament.

The recent encyclical of Pope Francis, *Lumen fidei*, speaks of the family in the context of a reflection on how faith reveals "just how firm the bonds between people can be when God is present in their midst" (LF, 50). "The first setting in which faith enlightens the human city is the family. I think first and foremost of the stable union of man and woman in marriage. This union is born of their love, as a sign and presence of God's own love, and of the acknowledgment and acceptance of the goodness of sexual differentiation, whereby spouses can become one flesh (cf. Gen 2:24) and are enabled to give birth to a new life, a manifestation of the Creator's goodness, wisdom and loving plan. Grounded in this love, a man and a woman can promise each other mutual love in a gesture which engages their entire lives and mirrors many features of faith. Promising love for ever is possible when we perceive a plan bigger than our own ideas and undertakings, a plan which sustains us and enables us to surrender our future entirely to the one we love" (LF, 52). "Faith is no refuge for the faint-hearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God's faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness" (LF, 53).

III. Questions

The following series of questions allows the particular Churches to participate actively in the preparation of the Extraordinary Synod, whose purpose is to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the pastoral challenges facing the family today.

1. The Diffusion of the Teachings on the Family in Sacred Scripture and the Church's Magisterium

- a) Describe how the Catholic Church's teachings on the value of the family contained in the Bible, *Gaudium et spes*, *Familiaris consortio* and other documents of the post-conciliar Magisterium is understood by people today? What formation is given to our people on the Church's teaching on family life?
- b) In those cases where the Church's teaching is known, is it accepted fully or are there difficulties in putting it into practice? If so, what are they?
- c) How widespread is the Church's teaching in pastoral programs at the national, diocesan and parish levels? What catechesis is done on the family?
- d) To what extent — and what aspects in particular — is this teaching actually known, accepted, rejected and/or criticized in areas outside the Church? What are the cultural factors which hinder the full reception of the Church's teaching on the family?

2. Marriage According to the Natural Law

- a) What place does the idea of the natural law have in the cultural areas of society: in institutions, education, academic circles and among the people at large? What anthropological ideas underlie the discussion on the natural basis of the family?
- b) Is the idea of the natural law in the union between a man and a woman commonly accepted as such by the baptized in general?
- c) How is the theory and practice of natural law in the union between man and woman challenged in light of the formation of a family? How is it proposed and developed in civil and Church institutions?
- d) In cases where non-practicing Catholics or declared non-believers request the celebration of marriage, describe how this pastoral challenge is dealt with?

3. The Pastoral Care of the Family in Evangelization

- a) What experiences have emerged in recent decades regarding marriage preparation? What efforts are there to stimulate the task of evangelization of the couple and of the family? How can an awareness of the family as the "domestic Church" be promoted?
- b) How successful have you been in proposing a manner of praying within the family which can withstand life's complexities and today's culture?
- c) In the current generational crisis, how have Christian families been able to fulfill their vocation of transmitting the faith?
- d) In what way have the local Churches and movements on family spirituality been able to create ways of acting which are exemplary?
- e) What specific contribution can couples and families make to

Pastoral Challenges to the Family

spreading a credible and holistic idea of the couple and the Christian family today?

f) What pastoral care has the Church provided in supporting couples in formation and couples in crisis situations?

4. Pastoral Care in Certain Difficult Marital Situations

a) Is cohabitation *ad experimentum* a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage?

b) Do unions which are not recognized either religiously or civilly exist? Are reliable statistics available?

c) Are separated couples and those divorced and remarried a pastoral reality in your particular Church? Can you approximate a percentage? How do you deal with this situation in appropriate pastoral programs?

d) In all the above cases, how do the baptized live in this irregular situation? Are they aware of it? Are they simply indifferent? Do they feel marginalized or suffer from the impossibility of receiving the sacraments?

e) What questions do divorced and remarried people pose to the Church concerning the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation? Among those persons who find themselves in these situations, how many ask for these sacraments?

f) Could a simplification of canonical practice in recognizing a declaration of nullity of the marriage bond provide a positive contribution to solving the problems of the persons involved? If yes, what form would it take?

g) Does a ministry exist to attend to these cases? Describe this pastoral ministry? Do such programs exist on the national and diocesan levels? How is God's mercy proclaimed to separated couples and those divorced and remarried and how does the Church put into practice her support for them in their journey of faith?

5. On Unions of Persons of the Same Sex

a) Is there a law in your country recognizing civil unions for people of the same sex and equating it in some way to marriage?

b) What is the attitude of the local and particular Churches towards both the State as the promoter of civil unions between persons of the same sex and the people involved in this type of union?

c) What pastoral attention can be given to people who have chosen to live in these types of union?

d) In the case of unions of persons of the same sex who have adopted children, what can be done pastorally in light of transmitting the faith?

6. The Education of Children in Irregular Marriages

a) What is the estimated proportion of children and adolescents in these cases, as regards children who are born and raised in regularly constituted families?

b) How do parents in these situations approach the Church? What do they ask? Do they request the sacraments only or do they also want catechesis and the general teaching of religion?

c) How do the particular Churches attempt to meet the needs of the parents of these children to provide them with a Christian education?

d) What is the sacramental practice in these cases: preparation, administration of the sacrament and the accompaniment?

7. The Openness of the Married Couple to Life

a) What knowledge do Christians have today of the teachings of *Humanae vitae* on responsible parenthood? Are they aware of how morally to evaluate the different methods of family planning? Could any insights be suggested in this regard pastorally?

b) Is this moral teaching accepted? What aspects pose the most difficulties in a large majority of couple's accepting this teaching?

c) What natural methods are promoted by the particular Churches to help spouses put into practice the teachings of *Humanae vitae*?

d) What is your experience on this subject in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance and participation at the Eucharist?

e) What differences are seen in this regard between the Church's teaching and civic education?

f) How can a more open attitude towards having children be fostered? How can an increase in births be promoted?

8. The Relationship Between the Family and the Person

a) Jesus Christ reveals the mystery and vocation of the human person. How can the family be a privileged place for this to happen?

b) What critical situations in the family today can obstruct a person's encounter with Christ?

c) To what extent do the many crises of faith which people can experience affect family life?

9. Other Challenges and Proposals

What other challenges or proposals related to the topics in the above questions do you consider urgent and useful to treat?



Address of Pope Francis to the Pilgrimage of Families During the Year of Faith

Thousands of families gathered at the Vatican October 26-27 for a special pilgrimage observing the Year of Faith by Catholic families. The pilgrimage of families followed a meeting of the Pontifical Council on the Family (PCF) held the day before, at which the pope received in audience the participants in the XXI Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family, observing the 30th Anniversary of the Holy See's 1983 Charter on the Rights of the Family. The theme of the PCF meeting and the pilgrimage was "Family, Live the Joy of Faith." In his address to the PCF, most of whose members are married couples, Pope Francis stressed that "The family is where one learns to love, the natural center of human life. The family is made of faces, of people that love, that talk, that sacrifice for each other, and protect life, specially the most fragile, the weakest." Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, prefect of the PCF, presented an icon of the Holy Family to the pope on this occasion.

Pope Francis addressed the pilgrimage of families held in St. Peter's Square on Saturday, October 26, and on Sunday, October 27, he celebrated special Mass for families in St. Peter's basilica.

Following is Pope Francis's address to the families on October 26.

Dear Families!

Good evening and welcome to Rome!

You have come as pilgrims from many parts of the world to profess your faith before the tomb of Saint Peter. This square welcomes you and embraces you: we are one people, with one heart and soul, gathered by the Lord who loves and sustains us. I also greet the families who have joined us through television and the internet: this square has expanded in every direction!

You have given this meeting a title: "Family, Live the Joy of Faith!" I like that title. I have listened to your experiences and the stories you have shared. I have seen so many children, so many grandparents... I have felt the pain of families living in situations of poverty and war. I have listened to the young people who want to be married

even though they face numerous difficulties. And so, let us ask ourselves: how is it possible to live the joy which comes from faith, in the family, today? But I ask you also: is it possible to live this joy or is it not possible?

1. A saying of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew speaks to us: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Life is often wearisome, and many times tragically so. We have heard this recently... Work is tiring; looking for work is exhausting. And finding work today requires much effort. But what is most burdensome in life is not this: what weighs more than all of these things is a lack of love. It weighs upon us never to receive a smile, not to be welcomed. Certain silences are oppressive, even at times within families, between husbands and wives, between parents and children, among siblings. Without love, the burden becomes even heavier, intolerable. I think of elderly people living alone, and families who receive no help in caring for someone at home with special needs. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden," Jesus says.

Dear families, the Lord knows our struggles: He knows them. He knows the burdens we have in our lives. But the Lord also knows our great desire to find joy and rest! Do you remember? Jesus said, "... that your joy may be complete" (cf. Jn 15:11). Jesus wants our joy to be complete! He said this to the apostles and today He says it to us. Here, then, is the first thing I would like to share with you this evening, and it is a saying of Jesus: Come to me, families from around the world — Jesus says — and I will give you rest, so that your joy may be complete. Take home this Word of Jesus, carry it in your hearts, share it with the family. It invites us to come to Jesus so that He may give this joy to us and to everyone.

2. The second thing which I would share with you is an expression taken from the Rite of Marriage. Those who celebrate the sacrament say, "I promise to be true to you, in joy and in sadness, in sickness and in health; I will love you and honor you all the days of my life." At that moment, the couple does not know what will happen, nor what joys and pains await them. They are setting out, like Abraham, on a

journey together. And that is what marriage is! Setting out and walking together, hand in hand, putting yourselves in the Lord's powerful hands. Hand in hand, always and for the rest of your lives. And do not pay attention to this makeshift culture, which can shatter our lives.

With trust in God's faithfulness, everything can be faced responsibly and without fear. Christian spouses are not naïve; they know life's problems and temptations. But they are not afraid to be responsible before God and before society. They do not run away, they do not hide, they do not shirk the mission of forming a family and bringing children into the world. But today, Father, it is difficult... Of course it is difficult! That is why we need the grace, the grace that comes from the sacrament! The sacraments are not decorations in life — what a beautiful marriage, what a beautiful ceremony, what a beautiful banquet... But that is not the sacrament of marriage. That is a decoration! Grace is not given to decorate life but rather to make us strong in life, giving us courage to go forward! And without isolating oneself but always staying together. Christians celebrate the sacrament of marriage because they know they need it! They need it to stay together and to carry out their mission as parents. "In joy and in sadness, in sickness and in health." This is what the spouses say to one another during the celebration of the sacrament and in their marriage they pray with one another and with the community. Why? Because it is helpful to do so? No! They do so because they need to, for the long journey they are making together: it is a long journey, not for a brief spell but for an entire life! And they need Jesus' help to walk beside one another in trust, to accept one another each day, and daily to forgive one another. And this is important! To know how to forgive one another in families because we all make mistakes, all of us! Sometimes we do things which are not good and which harm others. It is important to have the courage to ask for forgiveness when we are at fault in the family.

Some weeks ago, in this very square, I said that in order to have a healthy family, three words need to be used. And I want to repeat these three words: please, thank you, sorry. Three essential words! We say please so as not to be forceful in family life: "May I please do this? Would you be happy if I did this?" We do this with a language that seeks agreement. We say thank you, thank you for love! But be honest with me, how many times do you say thank you to your wife, and you to your husband? How many days go by without uttering this word, thanks! And the last word: sorry. We all make mistakes and on occasion someone gets offended in the marriage, in the family, and sometimes — I say — plates are smashed, harsh words are spoken but please listen to my advice: don't ever let the sun set without reconciling. Peace is made each day in the family:

"Please forgive me," and then you start over. Please, thank you, sorry! Shall we say them together? [They reply "yes"] Please, thank you and sorry. Let us say these words in our families! To forgive one another each day!

The life of a family is filled with beautiful moments: rest, meals together, walks in the park or the countryside, visits to grandparents or to a sick person... But if love is missing, joy is missing, nothing is fun. Jesus always gives us that love: He is its endless source. In the sacrament He gives us His word and He gives us the bread of life, so that our joy may be complete.

3. Finally, here before us is the icon of Jesus' Presentation in the Temple. It is a beautiful and meaningful picture. Let us contemplate it and let it help us. Like all of you, the persons depicted in this scene have a journey to make: Mary and Joseph have traveled as pilgrims to Jerusalem in obedience to the Law of the Lord; the aged Simeon and the elderly prophetess Anna have come to the Temple led by the Holy Spirit. In this scene three generations come together, the interweaving of three generations: Simeon holds in his arms the child Jesus, in whom he recognizes the Messiah, while Anna is shown praising God and proclaiming salvation to those awaiting the redemption of Israel. These two elderly persons represent faith as memory. But let me ask you: Do you listen to your grandparents? Do you open your hearts to the memories that your grandparents pass on? Grandparents are like the wisdom of the family, they are the wisdom of a people. And a people that does not listen to grandparents is one that dies! Listen to your grandparents. Mary and Joseph are the family, sanctified by the presence of Jesus who is the fulfilment of all God's promises. Like the Holy Family of Nazareth, every family is part of the history of a people; it cannot exist without the generations who have gone before it. Therefore, today we have grandparents and children. The children learn from their grandparents, from the previous generation.

Dear families, you, too, are a part of God's people. Walk joyfully in the midst of this people. Remain ever close to Jesus and carry Him to everyone by your witness. I thank you for having come here. Together, let us make our own the words of Saint Peter, words which strengthen us and which will confirm us in times of trial: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life" (Jn 6:68). With the help of Christ's grace, live the joy of faith! May the Lord bless you, and may Mary, our Mother, protect you and be ever at your side. Thank you!

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Charter of the Rights of the Family

Pontifical Council for the Family

The well-being of families, strained today by the twin forces of individualism and state power, is acknowledged as the basis of any healthy society. In our day, because of the weakening of families, society is beset by a host of evils, from abortion and the suppression of parental rights in education, to chronic poverty and the neglect of the aged.

In response to this critical situation, the Pontifical Commission on the Family released, on October 22, 1983, a document of immediate and far-reaching significance for American society. The Charter of the Rights of the Family constitutes a blueprint for building a humane and healthy society founded on the integrity of family life. For Catholics, it should serve as a source of reflection and a guide to action in bringing the values of the Gospel to bear on secular life.

The Charter of the Rights of the Family appeared two years after Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, which contained a reference to the charter. It is intended for all families, whether or not they are Christian.

The charter was presented by the Holy See's Pontifical Council on the Family to all persons, institutions, and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today's world.

– Editor

PREAMBLE

Considering that:

- A. the rights of the person, even though they are expressed as rights of the individual, have a fundamental social dimension which finds an innate and vital expression in the family;
- B. the family is based on marriage, that intimate union of life in complementarity between a man and a woman which is constituted in the freely contracted and publicly expressed indissoluble bond of matrimony, and is open to the transmission of life;
- C. marriage is the natural institution to which the mission of transmitting life is exclusively entrusted;
- D. the family, a natural society, exists prior to the state or any other community, and possesses inherent rights which are inalienable;
- E. the family constitutes, much more than a mere judicial, social, or economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual, and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society;
- F. the family is the place where different generations come together and help one another to grow in human wisdom and to harmonize the rights of individuals with other demands of social life;

G. the family and society, which are mutually linked by vital and organic bonds, have a complimentary function in the defense and advancement of the good of every person and of humanity;

H. the experience of different cultures throughout history has shown the need for society to recognize and defend the institution of the family;

I. society, and in a particular manner the state and international organizations, must protect the family through measures of a political, economic, social and juridical character, which aim at consolidating the unity and stability of the family so that it can exercise its specific function;

J. the rights, the fundamental needs, the well-being and the values of the family, even though they are progressively safeguarded in some cases, are often ignored and not rarely undermined by laws, institutions, and socioeconomic programs;

K. many families are forced to live in situations of poverty which prevent them from carrying out their role with dignity;

L. the Catholic Church, aware that the good of the person, of society, and of the Church herself passes by way of the family, has always held it part of her mission to proclaim to all the plan of God instilled in human nature concerning marriage and the family, to promote these two institutions and to defend them against all those who attack them.

M. the Synod of Bishops celebrated in 1980 explicitly recommended that a “Charter of the Rights of the Family” be drawn up and circulated to all concerned; the Holy See, having consulted the Bishops’ conferences, now presents this **Charter of the Rights of the Family** and urges all states, international organizations, and all interested institutions and persons to promote respect for these rights, and to secure their effective recognition and observance.

ARTICLE 1 — All persons have the right to the free choice of their state of life and thus to marry and establish a family or to remain single.

a) Every man and every woman, having reached marriage age and having the necessary capacity, has the right to marry and establish a family without any discrimination whatsoever; legal restrictions to the exercise of this right, whether they be of a permanent or temporary nature, can be introduced only when they are required by grave and objective demands of the institution of marriage itself and its social and public significance; they must respect in all cases the dignity and the fundamental rights of the person.

b) Those who wish to marry and establish a family have the right to expect from society the moral, educational, social, and economic conditions which will enable them to exercise their right to marry in all maturity and responsibility.

Charter of the Rights of the Family

c) The institutional value of marriage should be upheld by the public authorities; the situation of non-married couples must not be placed on the same level as marriage duly contracted.

ARTICLE 2 — Marriage cannot be contracted except by the free and full consent of the spouses duly expressed.

a) With due respect for the traditional role of the families in certain cultures in guiding the decision of their children, all pressure which would impede the choice of a specific person as spouse is to be avoided.

b) The future spouses have the right to their religious liberty. Therefore to impose as a prior condition of marriage a denial of faith or a profession of faith which is contrary to conscience, constitutes a violation of this right.

c) The spouses, in the natural complementarity which exists between man and woman, enjoy the same dignity and equal rights regarding the marriage.

ARTICLE 3 — The spouses have the inalienable right to found a family and to decide on the spacing of births and the number of children to be born, taking into full consideration their duties towards themselves, their children already born, the family and society, in a just hierarchy of values and in accordance with the objective moral order which excludes recourse to contraception, sterilization, and abortion.

a) The activities of public authorities and private organizations which attempt in any way to limit the freedom of couples in deciding about their children constitute a grave offense against human dignity and justice.

b) In international relations, economic aid for the advancement of peoples must not be conditioned on acceptance of programs of contraception, sterilization, and abortion.

c) The family has a right to assistance by society in the bearing and rearing of children. Those married couples who have a large family have a right to adequate aid and should not be subjected to discrimination.

ARTICLE 4 — Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception.

a) Abortion is a direct violation of the fundamental right to life of the human being.

b) Respect of the dignity of the human being excludes all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo.

c) All interventions on the genetic heritage of the human person that are not aimed at correcting anomalies constitute a violation of the right to bodily integrity and contradict the good of the family.

d) Children, both before and after birth, have the right to special protection and assistance, as do their mothers during pregnancy and for a reasonable period of time after childbirth.

e) All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, enjoy the same right to social protection, with a view to their integral personal development.

f) Orphans or children who are deprived of the assistance of their parents or guardians must receive particular protection on the part of society. The state, with regard to foster-care or adoption, must provide legislation which assists suitable families to welcome into their home children who are in need of permanent or temporary care. This legislation must, at the same time, respect the natural rights of the parents.

g) Children who are handicapped have the right to find in the home and the school an environment suitable to their human development.

ARTICLE 5 — Since they have conferred life on their children, parents have the original, primary, and inalienable right to educate them; hence they must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.

a) Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural traditions of the family which favor the good and the dignity of the child; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly.

b) Parents have the right to choose freely schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions. Public authorities must ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom.

c) Parents have the right to ensure that their children are not compelled to attend classes which are not in agreement with their own moral and religious convictions. In particular, sex education is a basic right of the parents and must always be carried out under their close supervision, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them.

d) The rights of the parents are violated when a compulsory system of education is imposed by the state from which all religious formation is excluded.

e) The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers, and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the functioning of schools and in the formulation and implementation of educational policies.

f) The family has the right to expect that the means of social communication will be positive instruments for the building up of society, and will reinforce the fundamental values of the family. At the same time the family has the right to be adequately protected, especially with regard to its youngest members, from the negative effects and misuse of mass media.

ARTICLE 6 — The family has the right to exist and to progress as a family.

a) Public authorities must respect and foster the dignity, lawful independence, privacy, integrity, and stability of every family.

Charter of the Rights of the Family

b) Divorce attacks the very institution of marriage and of the family.

c) The extended family system, where it exists, should be held in esteem and helped to carry out better its traditional role of solidarity and mutual assistance, while at the same time respecting the rights of the nuclear family and the personal dignity of each member.

ARTICLE 7 — Every family has the right to live freely its own domestic religious life under the guidance of the parents, as well as the right to profess publicly and to propagate the faith, to take part in public worship and in freely chosen programs of religious instruction, without suffering discrimination.

ARTICLE 8 — The family has the right to exercise its social and political function in the construction of society.

a) Families have the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and effectively, as well as to protect the rights, foster the good, and represent the interests of the family.

b) On the economic, social, juridical, and cultural levels, the rightful role of families and family associations must be recognized in the planning and development of programs which touch on family life.

ARTICLE 9 — Families have the right to be able to rely on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities in the juridical, economic, social, and fiscal domains, without any discrimination whatsoever.

a) Families have the right to economic conditions which assure them a standard of living appropriate to their dignity and full development. They should not be impeded from acquiring and maintaining private possessions which would favor stable family life; the laws concerning inheritance or transmission of property must respect the needs and rights of family members.

b) Families have the right to measures in the social domain which take into account their needs, especially in the event of the premature death of one or both parents, of the abandonment of one of the spouses, of accident, or sickness or invalidity, in the case of unemployment, or whenever the family has to bear extra burdens on behalf of its members for reasons of old age, physical or mental handicaps, or the education of children.

c) The elderly have the right to find within their own family or, when this is not possible, in suitable institutions, an environment which will enable them to live their later years of life in serenity while pursuing those activities which are compatible with their age and which enable them to participate in social life.

d) The rights and necessities of the family, and especially the value of family unity, must be taken into consideration in penal legislation and policy, in such a way that a detainee remains in contact with his or her family and the family is adequately sustained during the period of detention.

ARTICLE 10 — Families have a right to social and economic order in which the organization of work permits the members to live together, and does not hinder the unity, well-being, health and the stability of the family, while offering also the possibility of wholesome recreation.

a) Remuneration for work must be sufficient for establishing a family with dignity, either through a suitable salary, called a "family wage," or through other social measures such as family allowances or the remuneration of the work in the home of one of the parents; it should be such that mothers will not be obliged to work outside the home to the detriment of family life and especially of the education of the children.

b) The work of the mother in the home must be recognized and respected because of its value for the family and for society.

ARTICLE 11 — The family has the right to decent housing, fitting for family life and commensurate to the number of the members, in a physical environment that provides the basic services for the life of the family and the community.

ARTICLE 12 — The families of migrants have the right to the same protection as that accorded other families.

a) The families of immigrants have the right to respect for their own culture and to receive support and assistance towards their integration into the community to which they contribute.

b) Emigrant workers have the right to see their family united as soon as possible.

c) Refugees have the right to the assistance of public authorities and international organizations in facilitating the reunion of their families.

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