

THE JOURNAL

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Celebrate The Child

In the winter season, here, in our culture, we celebrate the Child. For some people this means an overwhelming spoiling of the children in their families by an excessive showering with gifts, oblivious of the plight of other children in the world. For others this season serves to remember the dreadful conditions millions of children live in around the world and try to do something about it.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted on November 20, 1989. This Convention has its predecessors in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on November 20, 1959. The Convention has been ratified by all the countries in the UN except two: the USA and Somalia, the latter is practically without a government while the former still holds to the barbaric right to execute people for crimes committed during childhood.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child reinforces the universal rights enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 as they apply to children around the world and takes into consideration that "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care..." (Declaration, 1959). It is a landmark international agreement recognizing that every child has certain basic needs, including health and safety, education and a nurturing environment in which they can reach their fullest potential. The Convention requires governments to always act in the best interests of children and obliges them to safeguard the rights of children against any abuse of these rights even when carried out by members of the family. It emphasizes that the rights of children are not to be denied to any child even during war; children have the right to be shielded from the effects of war, they should not be recruited into the armed forces. Other crucial rights are those when people under eighteen come in contact with the law, they are entitled to a justice system that promotes their dignity and worth and encourages their reintegration into society. The Convention calls on governments to ensure that children know and can exercise their rights.

This fall, Elections Canada and UNICEF sponsored a 'Children's Rights Vote'; in schools across Canada, presenting 10 rights, based on the Convention, and asking children to discuss these rights and vote for one as the most important. It is surprising that many school principals declined to let the children in their schools discuss and vote on these rights. Children in schools, according to their level of understanding, discuss many subjects, despite their objectionability to some, like sex, homosexuality, drugs, yet children were muzzled in the discussion of their own rights. Several politicians from the Reform Party indulged in scare tactics claiming that participation in the vote would undermine 'traditional family values'; 'Traditional family values'; is just a meaningless buzzword. What 'traditional family values';? Those empowering the father or brothers to kill a daughter or sister who 'loses her virginity'; out of wedlock? Those 'traditional family values'; that uphold female genital mutilation? Those 'traditional family values'; that believe in beating the blazes out of children? Where there is violence and abuse there are no values, family or otherwise.

This winter and Christmas season I celebrate the Child by promoting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Michael Zarb, Cobble Hill, B.C.

Theology of a Christmas Fair

A butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker... and more. The event was the Homecrafter's Annual Craft Show, touted as "the big one," and it was. Booth after booth of artistically crafted wares lined miles of corridor at our local Community College.

But closer examination revealed another dimension of the event. This was more than a clustering of hobbyists filling spare hours. This was also a venue for the burgeoning phenomenon known as cottage industry. Its participant's are hardworking and serious, as serious about what they do as anyone is about earning a living by the challenging means of self-employment. In Cape Breton there is a transition taking place. Now that government is no longer sourcing the steel, mining or fishing industries, Cape Bretoners are facing a sea-change in their work identities, and many are carving out a new one, no longer as employee, but now as employer. For example, at the fair there is the booth of the soap maker/goat farmer. The goat milk soap he and his family produce comes from the goats they raise on their farm, located on the famed Mira river, whose inhabitants claim that, "if you come broken we'll see that you mend."

There is the herbalist, featuring herb plants and products, and tours of the several acres of herbal gardens located in remote, quiet surroundings. And there is the husband-wife team of candle makers, striving to actualize their dream of expanding from their own home workshop, not into a factory, but into more homes, hence multiplying cells of employment, while still protecting the intimate nature of cottage industry.

Survivors all, but more than that, because along with making their own living, they are creating a lifestyle. And consciously or unconsciously, that lifestyle is founded on reverence, reverence for the earth, and reverence for their own creativity.

In *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, Matthew Fox defines reverence as one's response to an awesome experience. He tells us that it is the artist's task to awaken awe, to excite us to reverence all that is precious and meaningful in life, with the result that we are moved to care for what we cherish and revere.

This lifestyle, described by Fox as "the art of making beauty where we dwell", is restoring art as a part of everybody's life, which is the core meaning of the term "folk art", that is, art returned to the people. Fox defines creativity as the fundamental law of the human psyche. Furthering that concept, Zen poet Kenji Miyazawa says the artist is "one who is free to let his or her inner mind speak to him or her." To release/awaken the inner mind or psyche is to allow the true self to be born. To allow one's authentic awe and wonder to be born again, or to facilitate the re-birth for others of the awe and wonder of the universe, is an important incarnational act.

From a Christian perspective, to give birth to one's deepest self in this way is the meaning of the Incarnation. It is the timeless reason for celebrating the feast of Christmas, and perhaps the best reason for a Christmas fair.

Dianne Peck, Sydney, NS

CHRISTMAS IN BELFAST

Christmas did not come early in Belfast: work and school carried on until Christmas Eve. Advent was the Church preparation time, but I do not remember an Advent wreath. Carol singers went around the streets each night for about two weeks, and after each outing, we had mugs of hot bovril to warm our insides. The weather does not loom large. I do not remember snow except for one snowy New Year's Eve when I was nineteen and we had a great night's fun out and about. Generally, it was the wet and windy season and we all just took it in stride.

We did not have mid-night mass in our parish because we had the bishop for the mass at dawn (6 am). As an altar-boy, a few of us were up early and at church by 5 am to serve masses. With six priests and the bishop and each with three masses apiece, masses started early and went on after the bishop's mass until noon with people coming and going all morning. It was also a day for weddings since none were allowed during Advent; there were as many as seventy weddings on Christmas morning. No processions up the aisle; no special music; each wedding party arrived at a prearranged time, followed whatever mass was in progress, presented themselves at the altar-rail where priest and altar-boy with holy water bucket did the needful, and then into the sacristy for the signing of the register. It was a profitable day for altar-boys: the bishop gave each one a little something, each priest gave his servers a Christmas Box, and each wedding party contributed to the altar-boy. Then it was home to enjoy a good breakfast and the good things Father Christmas had brought.

Christmas stands out as the biggest season of the year. The Christmas tree was not always there; some years we did not have a tree, but then many others did not have one either. When we had a tree, it was dressed with baubles, angels, bells, candy and little candles which were lighted and watched carefully but with wonder. The rest of the house was decorated with streamers, bells and balls, and everything looked festive.

We hung our stockings at the foot of the bed even when we were teenagers and, during the night, they were filled with apples, oranges, sweets, and small items for fun and pleasure. Downstairs waited our Christmas Boxes which is the term we used for presents of clothes, money, selection boxes of chocolates, toys, and books. These all had to wait until we came back from mass. Only once was there an impulsive mistake made when my young brother, Gerard, ate a chocolate before mass and could not go to communion.

The crib featured big in our Christmas. All during the season, people visited the crib in each parish within easy reach, said a prayer, and dropped a penny into the box with the angel on top who nodded a thank you. Wise Men and camels appeared in due time. We all knew which parish had the best crib.

We did not have turkey for dinner but chickens instead. One Christmas Eve as I was walking home in the dark, a neighbour woman called me in to kill three chickens in her backyard and hang them up for her. One other neighbour family always had a goose for dinner. Since my father worked in the general post office downtown, he often worked on Christmas Day. There was a mail delivery even on that day. It was sometimes hard on the postmen who in many houses were invited in to toast the season. There were a few times when the postman arrived at our house, he was in no shape to continue the day's delivery, so we kept the mailbag and escorted the postman home.

Some Christmas attitudes have stayed with me. I have never liked mid-night mass but preferred to be up early ready to enjoy the whole day. We do our own liturgy on Christmas Eve at home since during a mass once a jaded priest said "Let us pray" and immediately rushed into the prayer (I think he was in a hurry to get home and watch the hockey game.) and our eight year old Lisa pulled my sleeve and said "Dad, he didn't give us time to pray." The decorated home and tree, the gift giving and receiving, the carol singing, the special meals, and everyone being home taking part in the family rituals have become part of our fabric and make Christmas unique.

Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC

CHRISTMAS PAST

The first Christmas I can remember was when I was three years old - that's seventy eight years ago. Such a different world! Still shades of Charles Dickens and "The Christmas Carol."

I remember going with my parents the ten miles to Exeter in South Devon by train to purchase a goose (it was cheaper than a turkey - besides which we could save the grease to be applied to the chest when we had a bad cough). I can see the large, covered market which we approached up wide granite steps and through a maze of stalls lit by hissing, flaring gas jets, where rows of carcasses of cattle, pigs, sheep and poultry hung by hooks in row after row, far, far above my head. Clutching my mother's hand in an excited trembling of fear and of expectation I listened to my father and mother recite the pros and cons of one bird from the next. Then we were off to purchase a box of crackers to be pulled on Christmas Day.

Mother had already made the Christmas puddings, mince pies and the Christmas cake. I remember sitting before the coal-burning stove in the kitchen, stirring the pudding and being told to be sure to make a wish as I did so. Then watching mother ice the cake, first with marzipan, then with a white sugar-icing and finishing it off with an ornament of Santa Claus standing next to a Christmas tree.

I remember Christmas morning and waking to find a stocking filled with an orange (a rare treat), an apple, a handful of sweets wrapped in colored paper and in the very bottom ... a piece of coal (for good luck). My main present was a wooden engine that my father had made from scrap pieces of wood and painted in a glorious coat of red paint. I knew that this was coming, as, despite his efforts to hide it from my sight during the assembly, he had cut his hand and had to have it bandaged, all the time hopping about and filling the air with not-so-nice, Anglo-Saxon expletives.

We went to the Methodist church in the morning after which we had a cup of tea and a mince pie. My grandparents and an unmarried aunt and uncle who lived opposite us arrived for Christmas dinner. We pulled our crackers, put on the paper hats they contained and ate and ate until we could eat no more. When all was cleared away we all went into the sitting room where my mother played the piano whilst all sang carols and some of the favorite songs of the Great War years. It was sometime during that period that my eyes must have closed because when they opened again I was in my bed and it was Boxing Day morning!

Happy Christmas! and God bless us everyone!

Dick Perrott, Sidney, BC

CELEBRATION OF A BIRTHDAY

I was in Honolulu with jet lag and awake at 3:30 a.m. wandering up and down the streets looking for a place to get something to eat. Up a side street I found one of those sleazy places that deserves the name "greasy spoon", but it was the only place I could find. I asked for a cup of coffee and a donut. As I sat munching my donut, the door of the diner suddenly opened and to my discomfort in marched 8 or 9 provocative and boisterous prostitutes. Since it was a small place they sat on either side of me. Their talk was loud and crude and I felt totally out of place. I was about to make my getaway when I overheard the woman sitting beside me say: "Tomorrow's my birthday. I am going to be 39."

Her friend responded in a nasty tone, "So what do you want from me? A birthday party? What do you want: Do you want me to get you a cake and sing 'happy birthday';?"

"Come on," said the woman sitting next to me, "Why do you have to be so mean? I was just telling you, that's all. Why do you to put me down? I was just telling you it was my birthday. I don't want anything from you. I mean, why should you give me a birthday party? I've never had a birthday party in my whole life. Why should I want one now?"

When I heard that, I made a decision. I sat and waited until the women had left then I called over the guy behind the counter and asked, "Do they come in here every night?"

"Yeah!" he answered.

"The one right next to me, does she come here every night?"

"Yeah" he said. That's Agnes, Yeah, she comes every night. Why'd'ya want to know?"

"Because I heard her say that tomorrow is her birthday." I told him... "What do you say you and I do something about that? What do you think about us throwing a birthday party for her - right here - tomorrow night?"

A cute smile slowly crossed his chubby cheeks and he answered with measured delight, "That's great! I like it. It's a great idea." Calling to his wife, who did the cooking in the back room, he shouted, "Hey! come out here. This guy's got a great idea. Tomorrow's Agnes's birthday. This guy wants us to go in with him and throw a birthday party for her -- right here -- tomorrow night."

His wife came out of the back room all bright and smiley. She said, "That's a wonderful idea. You know Agnes is one of those people who is really nice and kind and nobody ever does anything nice and kind for her."

"Look," I told them, "if it's ok, with you, I'll get back here tomorrow morning about 2:30 and decorate the place. I'll even get a birthday cake!"

"No way," said Harry (that was his name) "The birthday cake is my thing. I'll make the cake.

At 2:30 the next morning, I was back at the diner. I had picked up some crepe-paper decorations at the store and had made a sign out of a big piece of soft cardboard that read, "Happy Birthday, Agnes." I decorated the diner from one end to the other. I had that diner looking good.

The woman who did the cooking must have gotten the word out on the street, because by 2:15 every prostitute in Honolulu was in the place. It was wall-to-wall prostitutes... and me!

AT 3:30 on the dot, the door of the diner swung open and in came Agnes and her friend. I had everybody ready (after all, I was kind of the M.C. of the affair) and when they came in we all screamed, "Happy Birthday!"

Never have I seen a person so flabbergasted ... so stunned... so shaken. Her mouth fell open. Her legs seemed to buck a bit. Her friend grabbed her arm to steady her. As she was led to sit on one of the stools along the counter, we all sang "Happy Birthday" to her. As we came to the end of our singing, her eyes moistened. Then, when the

birthday cake and all the candles were carried out, she lost it and just openly cried.

Harry gruffly mumbled, "Blow out the candles, Agnes, Come on! Blow out the candles. If you don't blow out the candles, I'm gonna blow out the candles!" And, after an endless few seconds, she did. Then he handed her a knife and told her, "Cut the cake, Agnes, Yo, Agnes, we all want some cake."

Agnes looked down at the cake. Then without taking her eyes off it, she slowly and softly said, "Look , Harry, is it all right with you if I... I mean is it O.K. if I kind of... what I want to ask you is ... is it O.K. if I keep the cake a little while. I mean is it all right if we don't eat it right away?"

Harry shrugged and answered, "Sure! It's O.K.! If you want to keep it, keep the cake. Take it home if you want." "Can I?" she asked. Then, looking at me she said, "I live just down the street a couple of doors. I want to take the cake home, O.K.? I'll be right back. Honest!"

She got off the stool, picked up the cake, and, carrying it like it was the Holy Grail, walked slowly toward the door. As we all just stood there motionless, she left.

When the door closed. There was a stunned silence in the place. Not knowing what else to do, I broke the silence by saying, "What do you say we pray?"

Looking back on it now it seems more than strange for a sociologist to be leading a prayer meeting with a bunch of prostitutes in a diner in Honolulu at 3:30 in the morning, but then it just felt like the right thing to do. I prayed for Agnes. I prayed for her salvation. I prayed that her life would be changed and that God would be good to her. When I finished, Harry leaned over the counter and with a trace of hostility in his voice, he said, "Hey, you never told me you were a preacher. What kind of church do you belong to?"

In one of those moments when just the right words came, I answered, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning."

Harry waited a moment and then almost sneered as he answered, "No you don't! There's no church like that. If there was, I'd join it. I'd join a church like that.!"

Wouldn't we all? Wouldn't we all love to join a church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning?

Well, that's the kind of church that Jesus was born to create! I don't know where we got that other one that's so prim and proper. But anybody who reads the New Testament will discover a Jesus who loved to party with whores and with all kinds of left out people. The publicans and "sinners" loved Him because He partied with them. The lepers of society found in Him someone who would eat and drink with them. And while the solemnly pious could not relate to what He was about, those lonely people who didn't get invited to parties took to Him with excitement. Excerpt from "The Kingdom of God Is a Party" by Tony Campolo.

Submitted by Paschal Baute, Lexington, KY

THE THEOLOGICAL SOAPBOX

Sex And Faith (Part II)

In my previous column (Part I), I said that when I was a child the Church taught that any action, done by myself alone or with a person to whom I was not married, which produced sexual pleasure in me or the other person, was a serious (mortal) sin. Since a child doesn't understand the meaning of these terms, the Church provided examples, having mostly to do with nudity. Based on these examples, I inferred that sexual sin (or a "sin against the sixth commandment," as it was referred to) consisted in viewing the unclothed bodies of people of the opposite sex. I equated "sexual pleasure" with satisfying curiosity about the bodies of people of the opposite sex.

As a result of this erroneous conception of sexual sin, healthy psychosexual development was side-tracked and I was burdened with false guilt about my natural curiosity about the bodies of girls and women. With the coming of puberty and knowledge of the facts of sexual reproduction, I finally came to understand the true meaning of "sexual pleasure" because I was physically able to experience it.

In order to see how misguided was the Church's equating of sexual sin with sexual pleasure outside marriage, we have to appreciate the role that pleasure plays in God's good scheme. Pleasure in itself cannot be considered bad since pleasure is created by God, and God cannot create anything bad. Furthermore, in his conference "On The Creed," St. Thomas Aquinas, in speaking of eternal life, writes, "Thus if we desire pleasure, there will be supreme and most perfect delight, in that its object will be God the sovereign good: 'In Your right hand are pleasures for evermore.';" (Taken from *The Three Greatest Prayers*, translated by L. Shapcot, O.P.) The ultimate goal of human life is the enjoyment of the beatific vision. When we enter into the fullness of communion with God, we experience pleasure or delight in the highest degree that we can. God created us to want pleasure. It was God's purpose that we would learn that there are greater and lesser pleasures, and desire the greater pleasures. In this way we would come to desire the greatest pleasure of all, which is communion with God, and so lead a life that would bring us to that goal.

That some act will give us pleasure is always a good reason for doing it, although it may not be a sufficient reason. If the act is harmful we may not do it, despite the pleasure it would bring. But it is never pleasure that makes an act sinful.

But what damage the Church has caused by teaching that acts outside marriage are sinful if they yield sexual pleasure! That way of defining sexual sin makes people think that it is the pleasure of the act that makes it sinful. But all pleasure reflects to a greater or lesser degree the pleasure of communion with God. When we declare any form of pleasure evil, we shut a window on God. When we affirm that a form of pleasure can be evil in itself, we implicitly affirm that God is something other than the source and sum of all pleasure.

This is a heresy as pernicious as it is subtle. It raises a question about the desirability of communion with God that should never be raised. It introduces doubt where there should be no doubt. And that doubt can open a door to confusion, and weaken us in the face of the temptation to believe that God's purposes and our welfare do not always coincide.

Besides defaming pleasure, this teaching assumes that all sexual activity outside of marriage is motivated by pleasure seeking. Yet anyone who has experienced a normal adolescence in North American society knows that hormonally driven urges combined with the overabundance of sexual stimulation in the popular culture (books, movies, etc.) can bring an adolescent to a fever pitch of sexual excitement. And so one of the reasons that adolescents masturbate is to find relief from a sexual tension that would otherwise prevent them from getting on with life. In my early teens, accepting the Catholic Church's moral teaching on sex, I can remember some nights alone in bed, striving for an hour or two to block out sexual fantasies that seemed to rise unbidden in my imagination, and finally resorting to masturbation simply in order to get some sleep.

So even if the Church were correct in teaching that masturbation is intrinsically evil, a person has always to judge whether it may sometimes be the lesser of evils, and in those cases not sinful. But the Church has never sufficiently trusted the moral judgement of its adult members, let alone its teenage members, to educate and encourage them to make reasoned decisions for themselves in sexual matters. The Church thought it safer to teach people laws of sexual morality that admit of no exceptions or qualifications, so that they would bring their violations of the law to a priest

in confession. It was the priest's role to judge whether or not they had actually sinned. Only the priest had the impartiality and theological expertise to know how exceptions and qualifications applied to the case. But even confessors were severely restricted in their application of moral law so that, as time went by, only the Pope and his curial officials could change or add to the exceptions and qualifications that the Church recognized in sexual morality.

Since Vatican Council II more and more of the People of God have understood that God calls them to grow up spiritually and morally, to think for themselves as mature and responsible adults, and make moral judgements according to their particular circumstances with due regard for the teaching of the Church. Many priests and bishops have also realized this and tried to practice it in their ministry but have been hampered by higher authorities in the Church. Nevertheless many of the People of God have accepted the challenge of moral maturity and have broken free of the cycle of guilt and confession that bound so many of us in the past.

The other great failure of the Church was its resistance to learning from the human sciences in the area of psychosexual development. Of course, the Church has a spiritual perspective to bring to the dialogue with the human sciences. The Church has always recognized that the supreme law of God is the law of love. The Church has also understood that love is best realized when people make lifelong commitments to be in loving relationship with one another. The Church has recognized different kinds of lifelong commitments such as marriage, membership in a religious order, the taking of private vows, and celibate friendship.

However, for quite a long time the Church has had a better grasp of how people discern their vocation to religious life or celibacy than to marriage. This simply reflects the fact that most of the leaders of the Church for the past thousand years and more have been celibate.

The Church can learn from the human sciences but has been slow to do so. There is no better illustration of this than the Church's teaching on sexual fantasy and masturbation. What the human sciences tell us is that sexual fantasy, often reinforced by masturbation, is how adolescents instinctively prepare themselves for adult sexual relationships. We encourage young people to imagine themselves doing certain jobs, to fantasize being a doctor or a lawyer perhaps, and play games in which they pretend to act out those roles. We know that such fantasizing and playing are necessary to help them discern their vocation. That we should think fantasizing about sex is, or ought to be, an exception to this general rule of human behaviour, illustrates the extent to which irrational beliefs and attitudes dominate our approach to sex.

Masturbation is wrong when it is practised as a substitute for loving relationships with other people. Sexual fantasizing is wrong if it is used to develop a plan to exploit or harm others. But when I reflect on the sexual fantasies of my adolescence, I see that at their centre was an imagined loving relationship. With much prayer and effort I was able to suppress masturbation in my late teens because I thought it was wrong, and because it would have made my preparation for and exercise of priesthood more difficult. Fortunately I was never able to suppress sexual fantasy, even while I trained for and exercised the ordained priesthood. My recurring sexual fantasies were what enabled me finally to discern my vocation for marriage and recognize the woman with whom I have fulfilled that vocation.

What the experience of morally mature people and the human sciences can teach the Church is that, like all human behaviour rooted in instinct, sexual fantasy and masturbation can be healthy or unhealthy, morally good or bad, depending on whether or not it prepares and leads people to loving relationships or away from them.

My dictionary defines superstition as "a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation." For far too long the Catholic Church has treated sex superstitiously. The light of reason which the Church shone on other aspects of human life did not fall on sex. As the natural sciences rescued Christianity from its superstitions about witchcraft, superstitions that resulted in torture and death for uncounted innocents, so the human sciences may have to rescue the Church from its superstitions about sex. For these superstitions have also resulted in the emotional torture, and occasionally the death through suicide or persecution, of uncounted innocents.

In my next Theological Soapbox I will reflect on sexual morality as it applies to married people.
Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Corpus Canada (National Capital Region) Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary

Members of Corpus Canada (National Capital Region), joined by guests from Western Canada and the United States, gathered in Ottawa October 16 to celebrate the organization's 10th anniversary.

More than 65 participants enjoyed a day of dialogue, prayer, and celebration. The day's program featured an afternoon of presentations, workshops, and sharing on different Corpus initiatives, followed by a liturgy, a banquet, and a social gathering.

The speakers included: Joanna Manning, well-known lecturer, teacher, and author of the recently acclaimed publication "Is the Pope Catholic?," who spoke on reform movements in the Canadian Catholic Church today, including Corpus Canada; Allen Moore, president of Corpus USA, on change within the Church and its ministries; Sharon Gravelle (Corpus, NCR) on The Corpus, NCR Experience over the past 10 years; Jim Noonan and Jean James on The International Federation of Married Catholic Priests Conference they attended in Atlanta, Georgia in July of this year; John Dubay (Corpus, Syracuse, NY) on The Syracuse Corpus Experience; and Emil Kutarna (Corpus, Regina) on The Western Canadian Experience of Corpus.

Corpus Canada is an organization of married priests, their wives, and their friends, working to shape a renewed sense of priesthood and Christian ministry in the Catholic Church. Over the past 10 years, the members of Corpus in the National Capital Region have been meeting on a regular basis for dialogue, faith-sharing, prayer and celebration. They have become a faith community.

Their vision of priesthood embraces both the charism of celibacy and the call of married men and women to serve the people of God as priest and minister. They are committed to reaching out in a spirit of love and faith, justice and freedom, whenever and wherever they are called to minister with their diversity of gifts.

The sentiments expressed at their 10th anniversary celebration were echoed during the Synod of Europe that took place throughout October in Rome. On October 7 Cardinal Martini of Milan in his speech to the Synod of 174 bishops from European dioceses spoke of the issues that face the Church today, including the shortage of priests. Cardinal Martini said: "Another (issue) is to address the deficit - in some places quite dramatic - of ordained ministers, and the growing difficulty for bishops to ensure the care of souls in their territory through a sufficient number of ministers of the gospel and the Eucharist."

For further information about Corpus Canada, NCR, or about the 10th anniversary celebration, please contact Jim Noonan, its spokesperson (613-831-1760).

A Report *by Emil Kutarna*

At the Corpus NCR 10th Anniversary Celebration, I served on a panel and was asked to present a report of the Regina Corpus Conference.

Anthony Padovano was our guest speaker. His talks focused on the past, present and future of Corpus and were well reported in the September-October issue of The Journal. So I won't repeat those remarks here. However, I would like to draw my own conclusions from those talks.

The new realization we in Corpus need to discover is that the future is really ours! We are the builders of the renewed church. Who else is more capable of leading the church into the 21st century? Who but we who experienced clerical priesthood, women who are married to us, those who support our vision of an all-inclusive priesthood? Who but we are more equipped, more capable, more concerned, and prepared for this leadership? If not us, then who? The Pope? The submissive bishops? The dying and aging clergy? The (so called by the Vatican) "laity"? WHO?

There is an old saying: "Rome never baptizes. It only confirms." We are the baptizers. Let's just do it!

Note: A Christmas gift idea: "Hope Is A Dialogue" by Anthony Padovano. This is the best of Anthony's presentations at Call To Action and Corpus Annual conferences in the USA and Canada. Order from Emil Kutarna (while supplies last), 113 Tibbits Rd., Regina, SK S4S 2Y9; Tel: 306-586-2853 or Fax: 306-584-3430 or e-mail: ekutarna@dlcwest.com. Price, including postage: \$22. Cdn.

A Report From Manitoba

At a meeting after the Regina Conference Leonard Schmidt's proffered resignation from the Corpus Canada National Coordinating Team was not accepted by the other five members of the Alpha and Omega Christian Community of Winnipeg. We have had regular monthly meetings in September, October and November at the home of Adeline & Leonard Schmidt. No meeting will be held in December; our next meeting will be on January 21, 2000.

At our November meeting we decided to apply to VolNet (Voluntary Sector Network Support Program, funded by the Federal Department of Industry --1-800-575-9200). We hope to qualify as a charitable organization for the equipment, etc., necessary to be able to access the Internet.

Let's pray and hope that the present Holy Father will excel in his papal ministry in the new millennium, and pray that all of us in CORPUS will also excel in all our ministries! WARMEST CHRISTMAS and JUBILEE GREETINGS; AND a HAPPY NEW MILLENNIUM to all CORPUS members and friends and relatives !!!

Neil Parado and Len Schmidt, Winnipeg, MB

A Millennium Reflection

Leonard Schmidt, a married priest, is a founding member and first chairperson of the Manitoba League of Disabled Persons. He was involved in setting up the Coalition of Provincial Organizations Of the Physically Handicapped. He was also chair of the Morris Centre Inc. Sr. Theresa Feist's Alternate Health Treatment House. Of Corpus Canada, he writes:

"The future of Corpus Canada includes three roles, namely, Dialogue, Opposition, and Lobbying. I hope that Corpus Canada will be successful in arranging an annual dialogue with the president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). This has been established by our counterpart in the US. Corpus Canada also provides the CCCCB with the opportunity of charitable and respectful critiques of CCCCB pronouncements. Corpus Canada could lobby the Federal Govt. on behalf of the poor, the voiceless, and the homeless. Thus, Corpus Canada would be both political and democratic. Finally, I see the small faith communities that Corpus Canada promotes obtaining a Revenue Canada charity registration number by adopting a name, for example, Xristos, or Alpha/Omega Christian Community. These communities are primarily spiritual, healing, nourishing, and consoling with constitutions acceptable to Revenue Canada."

C.I.T.I. Canada

Anyone wanting to know if Rent-A-Priest has been successful in achieving their goals might ask the media. They were very interested in Rent-A-Priest, Canada during 1999 - not only in finding out more about us, but in our opinion on matters affecting the Roman Catholic Church as a whole. Their interest has contributed to our overall success.

Interviews and articles have been broadcast and published across this country. This resulted in inquiries from many Catholics, practising and non-practising regarding the services we offer. In listening to their stories, I have found that many individuals or family members have been hurt by a representative of the Church - a teacher, nun, priest, or other Catholic person. This hurt usually, but not exclusively, affected them emotionally and spiritually. They felt less than or rejected by their circumstances, their family history or behaviours; the sexual identity, the marital or economic status of themselves or a member of their family. You know all about it, having felt isolation and rejection yourselves because of your decisions. Many of you heard these horror stories during your active priesthood.

These same clients and supporters are now smiling and ecstatic at what CITI and Rent-A-Priest are doing. In the over two years that I have been doing this, I have had only two negative letters out of a hundred or more positive ones. No one has been turned off by the name and many have indicated that the name is how they heard about us. It gets the attention of the Media. They know that I don't "rent" anyone. No one cares whether the priest is married or not - in fact, the majority of them think it is wonderful to be ministered to by someone who understands the ups, downs and problems faced by married people today. Although every person inquiring about a wedding is told up front that "this marriage will not be recognized by the official RC Church", they do not care. They just want to be married in a spiritual setting, in the location, day and time of their choice, by a priest who is administering to them a valid sacrament.

I know that those of you who have taken the risk to get involved, have made a difference. Just ask all of those people whose lives are richer because you have shared your priesthood with them. They love you, God loves you and so do I. One person can make a difference! We have proven it.

Excerpt from a talk given by Joan Lang of London, ON before a gathering of Married Priests and their wives, November 28, 1999.

BOOK REVIEW

The Unforgivable Sin by Francis A. Sienna

Granite Press, RR2 Box 99, Charles Town, WV 25414 - \$15.95 US @ 304-728-2829 or \$24.95 Cdn @ 519-742-2522

Everyone has ideas about sin, morality and conscience. Christianity, in its infant stage of development defined three unforgivable sins: murder, adultery, and apostasy. In following years, reflections about the teachings of Jesus led Christians away from such a position. Today in the Catholic Church, there seems to be one unforgivable sin - for a priest to fall in love and marry. Although not officially stated, the married priest is relegated to nonentity within the church by hierarchy, many other fellow priests, and a small number of the laity.

The Unforgivable Sin, Memories and Reflections of a Married Catholic Priest, is written with none of the bitterness or caustic accusations you may expect from one considered fallen from grace. It is a warm and personal story of a young Italian boy who entered seminary because his parents were poor, and hoped he could have a better life in the priesthood. An émigré to Canada, the young priest worked in the Catholic Church for over 40 years and tells of his faith, personal accomplishments and struggles. Finally, loneliness leads him to choose marriage.

The book flows smoothly in style and narrative. It is an insightful and truly human story. Especially appealing to readers is the struggle between choices we make and the consequences that follow. Another bonus is the practical advice the last chapters make.

The author of this autobiographical reflection, Francis Sienna, has resided in Kitchener, ON for the last 15 years. At the beginning of his priestly career he attended seminary in Toronto and served the catholic community in Guelph for 20 years. He was assistant priest at Sacred Heart, Guelph, and then pastor of St. John's, Guelph. He oversaw the building of the beautiful St. John's Church and Rectory, and for 10 years he served as a member of the Separate School Board in Guelph.

Note: This review was submitted by Joan Lang, London, ON.