



From the Heart

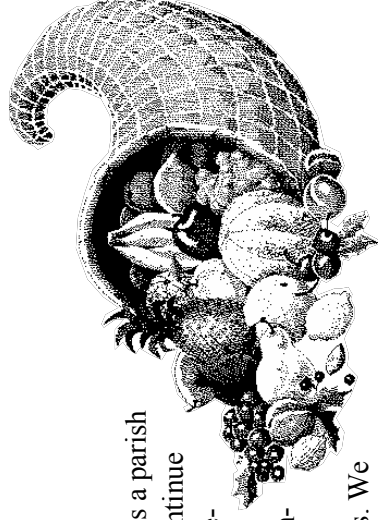
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In times of terror and war, of global insecurity and economic uncertainty, of disrespect for human life and human dignity, we need to return to basic moral principles. Politics... should be about fundamental moral choices. How do we protect human life and dignity? How do we fairly share the blessings and burdens of the challenges we face? What kind of nation do we want to be? What kind of world do we want to shape?

—USCCB Administrative Committee,
Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, pp. 1-2



Crosswinds



There are so many ways in which we as a parish community of Catholic Christians continue the mission and ministry of Jesus. We celebrate God's real presence with us in the sacraments so that we can share it with others. We teach others about our faith in our religious education and formation programs. We care for the needy and the poor through our social ministries and outreach. We encourage one another to become more aware of God's presence and guidance in our lives through shared prayer and faith. We work with all people of good will for the betterment of our town, nation and world.

As a result of our parish discernment over these past months, we now have another concrete way to continue the mission of Jesus long after all of us have gone. After listening to and evaluating the recommendations of parishioners, the Pastoral Council at its May meeting recommended that the generous bequest of Irma Smith and Mildred Ziegler be used to establish an endowment as an arm of the pastoral ministry of our parish. They recommended that fifty percent of the interest be divided each year for the following purposes:

- 50% for works of charity
- 20% for scholarships for parishioners' higher education with the stipulation that the recipients give some time and service to the poor
- 20% for parish expenditures
- 10% for parish youth ministry

The other fifty percent of the interest will be reinvested each year with the hope of building up the principle. Donations by others to this endowment fund will also be welcomed in order to build this working investment of our parish.

A subcommittee of the Pastoral Council is working on by-laws for this fund. A five-member committee of parishioners will be established to oversee the disbursement of funds, and a three-member committee of financial advisors (also parishioners) will oversee its investment and growth.

We can only imagine how this fund will further the ministry of Sacred Heart Parish in the future, but we know that it will. The fact that the basic thrust of the recommendation is actively directed toward the poor speaks of the great faith and generosity of this parish. This endowment fund will always be part of Sacred Heart Parish and it will

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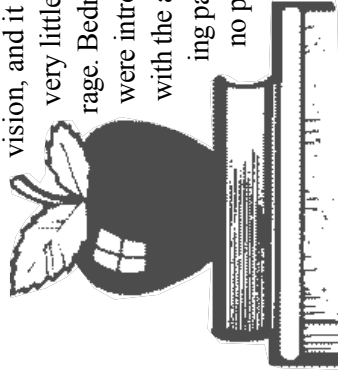
A Commentary on Morality



Recently, I had the opportunity to hear Board of Education member Shapiro address Rochambeau's eighth grade graduating class. He admonished both students and parents to prepare themselves for high school. This is wise advice. The young people are going to encounter kids of many different backgrounds and will have some pretty serious decisions to make. I remember when my own children were in high school. I was very concerned about where they went and with whom they associated, and of course, I was concerned about drugs. LSD was the prevalent drug at that time.

I doubt that I am the only one currently concerned about the downhill slide of morality. We all need to pay attention to what is happening. Practically every week we read or hear about some young child having a tantrum in school and going so far as to strike the teacher. Where does this come from? As parents we can't just shrug it off as an incident of no significant value. Somewhere along the way, many parents have forgotten their responsibilities and are quick to blame everyone but themselves.

Morality did not decline all at once. Gradually foul language was introduced in the movies and on television, and it generated very little public outrage. Bedroom scenes were introduced, first with the actors wearing pajamas, then no pajamas, and



again we accepted it and said nothing. Violence became commonplace. Homosexuality has become part of almost every show. It seems that we have allowed television to become a forum for someone else's agenda.

If we teach our children to take pride in the way they dress and act, they will begin to have more self-respect, and in turn more respect for others. This may help them when they face hard decisions. Teachers in school can only do so much to help the child learn and grow, but as we say when we baptize your child, "REMEMBER, the parents are the first teachers of this child."

Perhaps less time could be spent on sex education in school and more time on reading and writing. Let's work in unison with the teachers and make sure our children are towing the line. We need to check on their behavior in and out of school. Are they doing their homework? Check with the teacher once in a while. If your child is acting strangely, perhaps it is time to start asking some questions.

In our parish community we have some wonderful kids. As good as they are they still have an uphill battle in this life before they can assert themselves as independent beings. They need the community's support as well as their parents', so let's not let them down.

Joe Lavoie

Crosswinds (Continued from cover)

always help the parish community live its response to Jesus' words, "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do for me." I want to thank all those, especially the expanded Pastoral Council, who have contributed to this process of discernment by their participation at the open parish meetings, their recommendations, their work and their prayer. May God who has begun this good work in us bring it to fulfillment!

Fr. Joe

From the Heart

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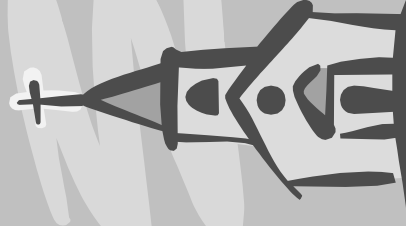
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New members, ideas and Ask Father questions are welcome throughout the year. Please contact the rectory or Katherine Pavone at 264-6599.



dispersed the candy in plentiful amount with feigned horror and pleading that the costumed creatures would not perform any tricks. I am not sure I would have had that type of Christian spirit viewing ten to twenty children climbing the porch (all the houses in Crestwood had porches). Our little group expanded in number as more and more fathers joined us. Those fathers also seemed to suffer from "dryness-in-the-air" disease as many of them carried beer.

Suddenly out of the night appeared a triumphant Nancy Drew with two huge bags of candy. Lauren was already plotting how to prevent her scheming brothers from getting even one of her Clark Bars.

"Dad?" said Lauren. Lauren always called me dad when she felt I was in trouble or about to get into trouble.

"Who is that one?" Lauren pointed at a little munchkin in a ghost costume. Tommy was rough housing with his friends yet at the same time holding onto Paul's hand. For some incredible reason, Paul was still wearing his costume. That should have been my first warning.

"Paul." I answered.

"I don't think so." With two steps, and an artful removal of the headpiece, Lauren revealed a pretty ten-year-old girl with black hair and dimples.

"You're a fun father; can I go with you?"

"Tommy!" I yelled.

"Paul is around here somewhere. I'll find him."

"How did you end up holding Tommy's hand?" I asked the girl.

"Tommy is a hunk so I let him." Perfectly logical to a ten year old female mind, but not to me who must account for a missing son.

"Tommy, you're such a jerk. Some piece of fluff comes along and you dump your little brother in a heart beat."

"Who you calling a piece of fluff?" replied a slightly miffed ten-year-old girl.

Thankfully as God so provides for us in our daily living, Tommy appeared with Paul in the state of undress that I anticipated. The costume was gone, but Paul offered instead three large bags of candy. He too was already plotting how to prevent Lauren or Tommy making a

midnight raid on his gains. I looked at my bedraggled boy and briefly thought that I lost a son but gained a daughter; and now the prodigal son has returned—so much for gaining a daughter. Besides she belonged to someone who probably was looking for her.

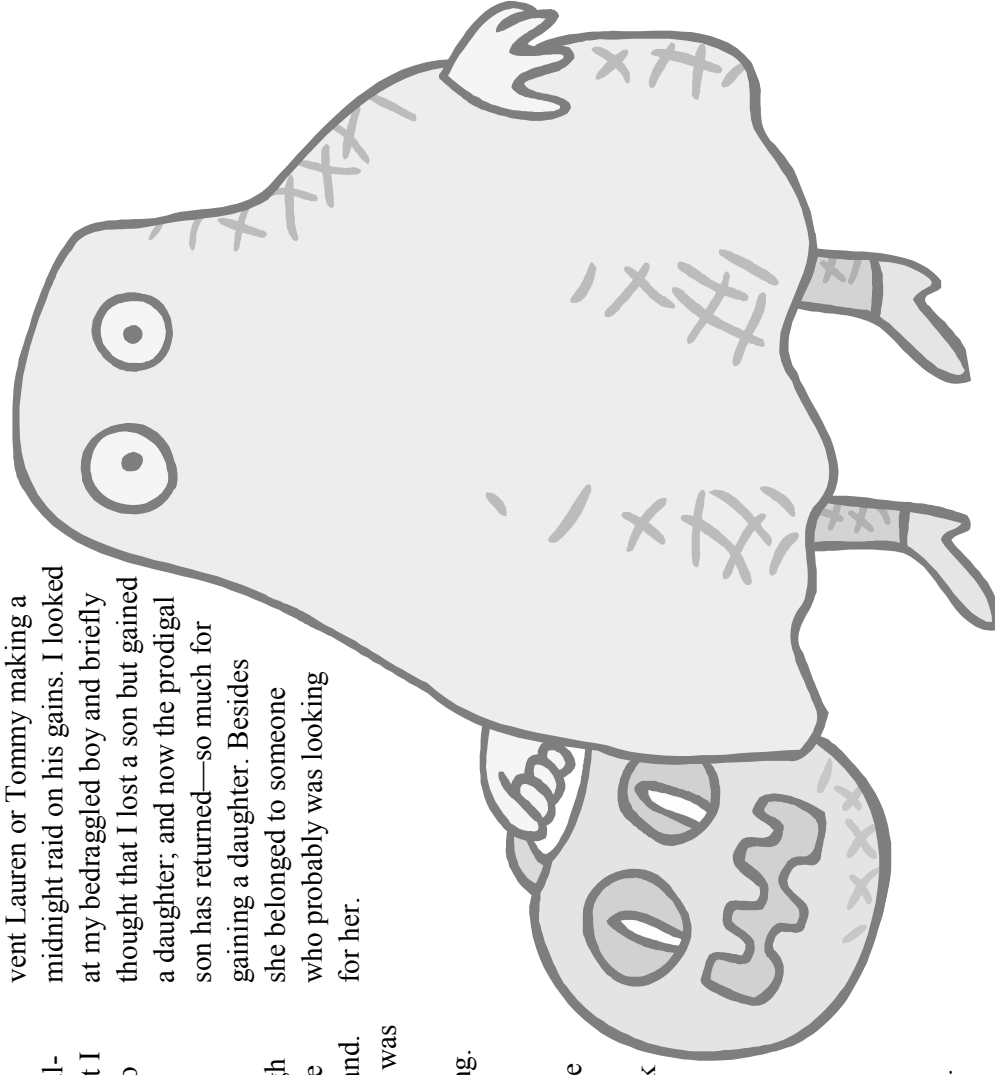
So the kid thinks I am a fun father? I wondered. "Let's go find your father," I said as I took her hand.

Postscript:

The ten-year old girl with black hair and dimples eventually became Lauren's closest girl friend serving as Lauren's Maid of Honor and god-mother to Dylan. Ironically, the next time Tommy spoke to her was at Lauren's wedding rehearsal dinner, fifteen years later. I guess Tommy wasn't that much of a hunk.

God moves in mysterious ways. And so life goes on.

Dennis J. McLaughlin



Missing Ghosts and Candy, Oh My

Thirty-five years ago I was the father of three young children. A daughter, born twenty years old, and two sons, rampaging little puppy dogs, were put on this earth as part of my purgatory. If it enabled me to attain the Beatific Vision faster, so much the better. To further test my resolve, I was forced annually to take part in a ceremony entitled HALLOWEEN. My children greeted this form of unusual punishment in which I was an active participant, with great glee and anticipation.

This event was really an excuse for organized mayhem overseen by an assortment of fathers and very few mothers. I write concerning this last observation with some confidence since, no doubt, the mothers were anxious to get the children out of the house to allow themselves a few meaningful hours of peace and quiet, which translates into a bubble bath, supplemented by two or three glasses of wine. Oh, yes, life could be good. But this is what we are fathers for!!

The locality of this annual gathering was Crestwood, a northern offshoot of the village of Bronxville in Westchester County. Crestwood consisted mostly of the Irish who for one reason or another could not get into Bronxville but wanted to be as close to paradise as possible. The great tangible benefit of living in Crestwood, if one was family-oriented, was that the town was absolutely loaded with children. There were times that I felt sure that my children (even though they were attending St. Joseph's Catholic Grammar School in Bronxville) knew each and every child of comparable age, and I had

bought each and every child of comparable age ice cream from Bronxville's Baskin & Robbins.

Now back to HALLOWEEN. I remember going through the explanation with them concerning the creation of Halloween. This also was an annual event.

"The day was not designed merely for dressing up in disguise and trick-or-treating. There was a reason for all of this. Halloween was unified with All Saints' Day because of similarities to reverencing the dead.

"Halloween, a Druid feast day, was terrifying. The Druids believed, among other things, that on October 31, Samhain, the Lord of the Dead, would release the wicked souls, condemned within the last year to wander the earth in the form of ghosts. To protect themselves, believers must give out food and provide shelter for the ghosts for the night and if they didn't, the ghost would cast a terrible spell over the household, thus we have 'trick or treat.' (Paul always liked that part of the lecture.)

"As a matter of fact, All Saints' Day contributed to the naming of Halloween because that day (October 31) was originally called The Eve of All Saints, which evolved into the Eve of All Hallows. The Mass currently said on November 1 was called All Hallowmas established in about 700 A.D. by Pope Boniface and was permanently moved to November 1 by Pope Gregory III. This

is why, as I said before, All Saints' Day and Halloween become one."

By this time, all eyes were totally glazed and Paul, as he did every year, asked to be a ghost. Lauren was Nancy Drew and Tommy was Captain

Marvel, red cape and all. Being Nancy Drew gave Lauren the opportunity to wear make up; that was most important to her in those days. To make a long story shorter, I called some friends of mine (no names to protect them from possible litigation) and met them at a street in Crestwood well known for its generosity in distributing candy.

And so, three fathers shepherding ten children ranging in age from six to eleven made a frontal assault on the neighborhood. Lauren /a/k/a/ Nancy Drew disappeared almost immediately. I saw her with a gaggle of friends from school. This meant that Miss Drew was now prepared to deny our very existence in order to consort with her peers. I instructed Tommy to guard Paul as if his own life were at stake. Who knows, maybe it was!

Thus with one eye on Lauren and the other on the two boys, we began to make the rounds. As fate would have it, one of the fathers had the foresight to bring a six-pack of beer, which we drank to avoid the dryness in the October air.

I'll say this for most of the patrons who answered the doors; they

Keep Trying

When you are called to answer
For the way you lived your life,
For the way you met the challenge
Of its daily stress and strife,
Will you stand before your Maker
Shoulders back and head held high,
Or cower and say, "I couldn't."
'Cause you didn't really try.

When defeat seems certain
Why not stop and take a rest.
Ask yourself this simple question,
"Have I done my very best?"
Then go back and keep on trying
'Til your goal at last is won;
For God assigns no task to man
If He knows it can't be done.

Irma Rilling

Crosses in the Rubble

We have read how much the church for years found their way back. Of those who saw or heard of the crosses, could they have been reminded of God and his love for them? In their hopelessness and fear, they found the overwhelming need to pray alongside the devoted.

Were they looking for answers, comfort? Did they witness, or possibly sense the presence of love and goodness among the evil visions in the smoke spewing from the towers that day? Many of us saw the pictures in the newspapers—the face of evil rising from its own creation, devastation.

While our pained citizens flocked to their places of worship, all were sure of one thing. Even though their paths may have led them away from their respective religions—God would never turn them away. And not every innocent person who died that day could have been a perfect

Catholic or Christian, a perfect Jew, or perfect Moslem, or Buddhist.

However, my faith and teachings tell me, God treated them all with love and acceptance.

We have heard people ask, "If there is a God, why would he allow this to happen to our country? We, like no other country, support the world." Let us not forget, he gave us free will—all of us. And still, the appearance of the crosses reminds us that he is always here to help us pick up the pieces.

On that terrible day of September 11, 2001, God came to help with love, comfort and forgiveness. Thousands of angels came with him. Whether our loved ones perished that day or ran to safety, God and his angels ushered them away from the devastation and away from the evil.

Phyllis Van Wormer



Represented in Song

By the time this article reaches our parishioners, Melissa Nimmo will have moved to Florida. Such is the timing of things, but we can still be most pleased that we have had the privilege of enjoying her beautiful voice these past five years. I believe hers will be the standard by which our new cantor will be judged.

Melissa lived in Connecticut her whole life, first in the Stamford area, and for the last 16 years in Southbury with Bob, her husband of 23 years. Her initial interest in college at Marymount was to pursue a career in music, during which time she was attracted to a summer program at Chautauqua, in New York State. This is a very special place attended by many students and professors in music, various art forms, religion and philosophy. During her summer there she met some professors who succeeded in enticing her to change her college and enroll at SUNY Fredonia to study opera.

Late to enroll, she found herself in a coed dorm. This is where she met Bob, the man she would subsequently marry. It was when Bob took a position with IBM that they moved here and established family roots. Raising Drew 16, soon to be a junior, and Trevor 13, and returning to school full-time to pursue a masters degree in

speech pathology, along with being responsible for all the Masses at Sacred Heart each weekend has kept Melissa quite busy as you might imagine.

Fortunately Patty Richards, our organist, is the one who picks the music to be sung, and, except for an occasional esoteric hymn request for a special liturgy, most are familiar. That in no way means ho-hum; quite the contrary. When Melissa raised her arms to beckon our participation, she meant to give it her best, and indeed she did.

We can blame IBM, if anything, for her leaving, as they sent Bob's job to India. Fortunately he was able to find another position with Nielsen in Florida, and so with much apprehension, the family is off to Palm Harbor outside of Tampa and a new phase of life. Melissa will be continuing her pursuit of a degree in speech pathology with three more years at Florida Southern in Tampa.

Asked if she had any regrets about the move, she paused in thought and responded no, that she has to do the best she can in response to what God is asking of her.

Sacred Heart will always be very special to her. She will carry the memories of looking over the congregation from her vantage point at the podium and feeling warmth at the sight of so many friends and acquaintances. The raucous ushers at the 11:00 Mass will hold a very special place.

As she finished her last Mass on picnic Sunday, I'm sure she felt all the trepidation that anyone who has to start all over in a new place would feel. With her family and her faith to hold things together, we wish her God's grace in all she does!

Ernie Swanberg



The Media Religion

The question "Why don't journalists get religion?" was recently asked in an article written by Gal Beckerman for the June 2004 issue of the Columbia Journalism Review. The media is an important force in our lives whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. Indeed, the less we acknowledge its power, the more power it may have over us. The media controls what images we see (and do not see) of the outside world, and because of this it has the ability to control at least part of how we think, which in turn helps to determine how we act.

In newspapers and on network news feeds, a story isn't a story unless there is conflict. Religion doesn't stand a chance at making the headlines unless the story is about fundamentalists, politics or scandals. No time is given to discuss in open forum what the beliefs are, what the traditions are, and what those traditions stand for. Every issue is thus compressed into black and white. Everyone is either a liberal or a conservative. You're either with us or against us. No fence sitting is allowed in the world of journalism. Conflict is how a story gets the headlines. But isn't conflict the antithesis of basically every religion? How has that message become so perverted by journalists?

America is a divided nation because of the way the media interacts with its audience. The gears of bias are continuously turning us against each other. Instead of deflating the stereotypes, the media encourages them, and many people buy into them! Because of the way the media portrays issues as a battle between the secular world and religion, a caricature has been drawn of all faiths. Overwhelmingly, in the media's eye-view all Muslims are terrorists, all Christians are self-righteous homophobes, and all Jews are greedy mercenaries. By focusing on minorities within a given group, the media distorts the truth and frightens us, all to make a buck. Never has a news station or newspaper made "to show an accurate world view" its creed. If they in fact did, we would certainly see a lot more positive news stories!

With the media forming our perception of the world on a daily basis, people of no particular religion themselves view the caricatures the media has created as an

accurate depiction of reality. They point to the three-second sound bites and images of religious leaders being arrested as a reason to wipe out all forms of tradition and theism from government and public life no matter how beneficial they are to society. It seems that their wish is to create a cold, godless state, and to achieve this end, they rely on video and audio clips, so short that the depth of understanding they convey would be laughable if it weren't so disastrous.

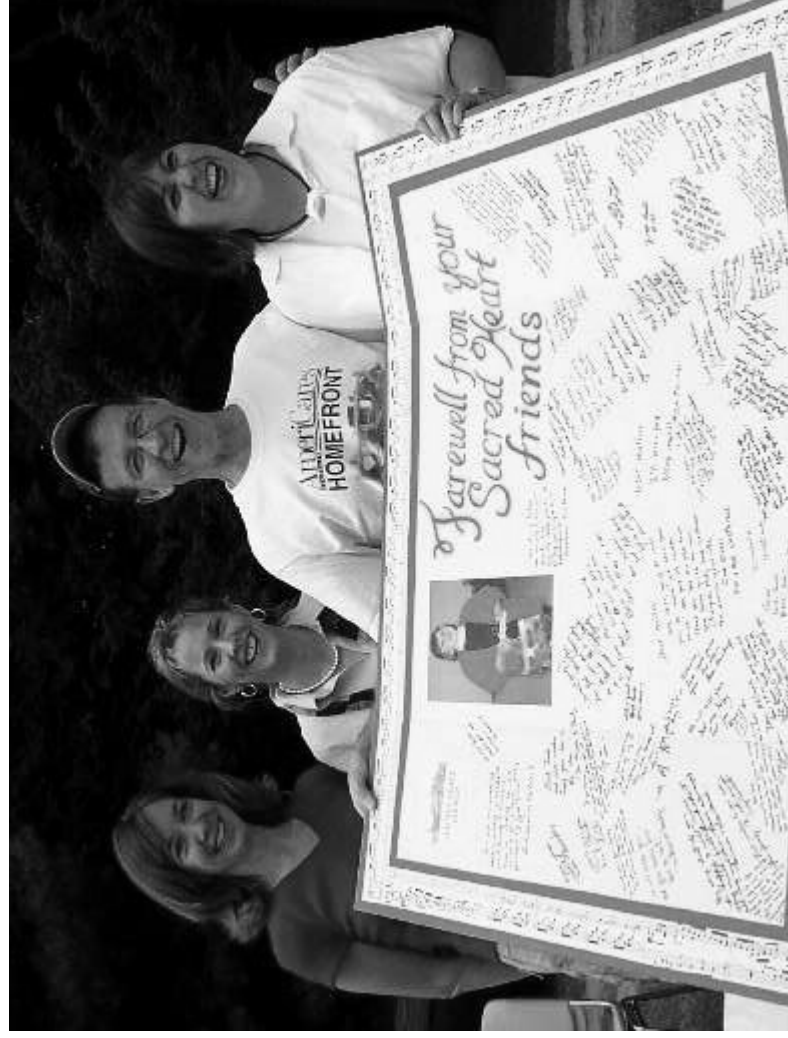
On the other end of the spectrum we have people who ARE strong members of their faith group who also view the caricatures the media has created as accurate depictions. Many of these people can be just as harmful. When they take up an issue they view it as God's will, and they can be so self-righteous in dealing with sensitive issues they alienate the compassionate and antagonize the innocent. By doing this they create more negative news, more bad images, and more inaccurate sound bites that allow the media to continue its war of distortion against religion. Can we put a stop to this viciousness?

Gal Beckerman concluded in his article that the media is unable to comprehend religion because of the very rules that the media abides by in order to exist in the first place. The negative depiction of religion will only cease when journalists examine their own dogma. Every religion has cultivated its worldview with an appreciation of faith of the unknown. The media, being secular, doesn't have that appreciation. The media has its own worldview, and it imposes that worldview on its audience every time it mis-reports and misleads its viewers on religion.

There are certain subjects that journalists absolutely cannot cover correctly; religion is one of them. Don't let anyone speak for you or generalize about Catholics. We're a diverse community and anyone who tries to pigeonhole or stereotype us is doing us, and anyone who wants to learn more about us, an injustice. Just the same, dispelling stereotypes about other cultures and religions is an honorable thing to do. Putting an end to ignorance is essential in our quest for truth and unity.



Mark Prybylski



Father, why do you talk about the election in church? It does not have anything to do with our faith. And besides, it goes against our American belief about the separation of church and state.

This question reflects some very common misconceptions about both our Catholic faith and about the separation of church and state. I am glad to have the opportunity to respond to both.

First of all, the meaning of the word “religion” in Latin is “to build bridges.” Religion is about making connections. People believe in a particular religion because it helps them make connections between their faith and their life experience. Religion should help us understand the meaning of our experiences in life. While religion is not supposed to tell us who to vote for, it should help us to understand the issues of our day in light of our faith, and that can help us decide how to vote. A religion that is separated from life or that has nothing to say about the issues we face in life is not really religion. Look at the Gospels. Jesus talked about life issues: care for others, human dignity, care of the sick, relationships among people, marriage, government and religion, treatment of strangers etc. Jesus tried to help people view reality and life as *God does*.

The Church has always tried to help people understand the meaning of life and to live it as God intends. At Vatican II the bishops purposefully added a separate document or teaching entitled *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Latin name: *Gaudium*

church/religion from interference by the state, not to keep the church out of the issues that affect people’s lives. Our ancestors had come to America because, among other things, they were unable to worship as they chose. The separation of church and state was an attempt to say that the government could not infringe upon the practice of anyone’s religion and that there would be no “state religion” as there had been in England.

The Catholic Church cannot and will not tell anyone for whom they should vote. We will not endorse any candidates or parties. Since neither of the two major political parties hold what the Catholic Church holds in its entirety that should be obvious. But in order to be what Jesus wants us to be we have a right like any other individual American or American group to be part of the great dialogue that is our American system of elections. The Catholic approach to faithful citizenship begins with moral principles. The directions for our public witness are found in the Bible and in Catholic social teaching. Because of this we believe as the American Bishops teach, “In the Catholic tradition responsible citizenship is a virtue and participation in the political process is a moral obligation.” It is neither surprising nor inappropriate that we as a parish are called upon to consider what part our faith plays in our preparation to vote.

Secondly, our American belief about the separation of church and state was created to protect the

church/religion from interference by the state, not to keep the church out of the issues that affect people’s lives. Our ancestors had come to America because, among other things, they were unable to worship as they chose. The separation of church and state was an attempt to say that the government could not infringe upon the practice of anyone’s religion and that there would be no “state religion” as there had been in England.

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lives and thus had no meaning for their lives. If they are right, we have failed as a Church to be what Jesus wants us to be. Religion is about the meaning of life as God wants us to live it. For this reason the Catholic Church believes that we have something to bring to the conversation and process that helps us prepare to exercise our citizenship by voting.

Secondly, our American belief about the separation of church and state was created to protect the

Women of Grace Conference

What is authentic femininity? What misconceptions about our role in today’s society have we been led to hold? Why are we here in this place and at this particular time in history?

These questions were answered for me in April when I had the opportunity to attend the Women of Grace conference in Orlando, Florida along with Lynn Tidgewell, Kathy Hufnagel, Rosalinda Nowak and Esther Rada, members of our Sacred Heart Women in Faith group. Women of Grace is a Catholic women’s organization founded by Johnette Benkovic to encourage and affirm women in their dignity as daughters of God and in their gift of authentic femininity.

Having never been to a conference before I didn’t know what to expect. Our itinerary had us busy from 8:30 am until 10:30 pm for almost three days. Interspersed among the speakers were opportunities for daily Mass, a healing service, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and praise and worship music. After checking into the hotel we proceeded with our pens and pads to the conference area where almost immediately we felt a common bond with the other women, all Catholics from many different states gathering together in prayer, praise and faith. Little did we know how powerful the weekend was going to be, and what an impact it would make in our lives.

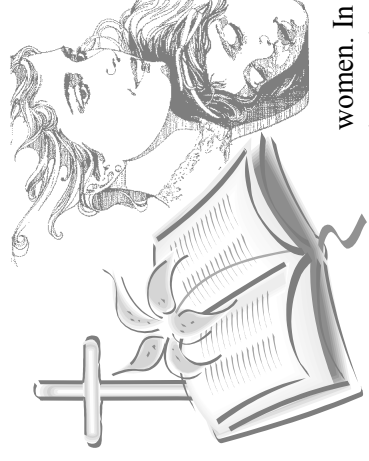
The conference placed great emphasis on the Blessed Mother, the saints, the importance of all the sacraments and on the writings of Pope John Paul II. One quote from the Second Vatican council expresses an urgent plea for women to hear and accept God’s call. “The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world and influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women impregnated with a spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid humanity in not falling.”

We heard that authentic femininity is a balance and compliment to masculinity, is God’s gift to us and in turn is our gift to others. As women, we are meant to be

sources of life and love to others. Our role is to nurture and support our societies, our churches, our families, and affirm through our hands, actions and words the dignity of all life from conception until death.

The 1960’s brought radical changes in the way women’s roles were viewed and how women began to view themselves. In response to the feminist movement, more women sought fulfillment outside the home with a career, rather than at home raising a family. The family unit as we knew it gradually began to crumble. We have become an abused generation, subject more than ever to the effects of depression, neglect, pornography and rape. One in four women is a single mother; abortion is available on demand and STD’s are reaching epic proportions due to society’s acceptance of casual sex without the commitment of love and marriage. We have gotten tricked into thinking we have to be better than men; we have forgotten how to be fulfilled as women. In order to “aid humanity in not falling” we have to know our faith and become involved in the struggles and challenges of today’s society. We are called to rectify the wrongs of our culture, now...for if good women do nothing, evil will triumph.

All the speakers were dynamic, affirming us as women and enflaming our hearts to get about the purpose for which God created us. Johnette herself is a remarkable testament to her own Catholic faith. Her son, who had spent months in Iraq and was highly decorated, returned home and was killed in a tragic car accident a few weeks prior to the conference. She told us about the strength she received from the Lord, the Blessed Mother, and through Scripture and explained that we are never called to a task for which God does not prepare us. We become heralds of the Gospel, experts in humanity and sharers in the world’s sadness by living and finding every spiritual treasure hidden within our sufferings. Sometimes in order for us to be channels of his grace, the channel must be pierced to be opened. God gave us life at this particular time to be his love to others in this day. Keep the faith, and ask God to make us women and mothers of grace in the 21st century.



Diane Tomas

Knights of Columbus Corvette Raffle

Almost every Catholic has heard of the Knights of Columbus, and most know that it is a Catholic fraternal organization promoting social and intellectual fellowship among its members and their families. Many know that the organization is dedicated to charitable, educational, religious and social welfare works in the community. Some Catholics know of specific activities of the Knights. A smaller number of Catholic men are Knights.

There are 1.6 million Knights, primarily in North America, organized in over 12,000 local councils. The Msgr. William J. Collins Council No. 5066 meets in Sacred Heart Church, and is active locally. In service to the community, Council 5066 recently provided lunch to the entire AmeriCares crew working on a project in Southbury; provided refreshment to the Walk for Life participants; provided and served breakfast at the Pomperaug High Grad Night; provided crowd control services and guidance at the annual Good Friday Faith Walk; and made charitable contributions to numerous

local and national causes. Also, the Council annually provides several \$1,000 merit scholarships to local high school graduates.

Funds to support these activities come almost exclusively from a tri-annual Chevrolet Corvette raffle run by the Council. This year the prize is a 2005 C-6 Corvette coupe, an all-new version of the Corvette. This is only the 6th major redesign since America's favorite sports car was introduced in 1953. In addition to the new body style, the car has a 6.0L all-aluminum 400 horsepower engine.

The drawing will be held Saturday, October 30, 2004, at 2 pm, at the West Chevrolet showroom, 729 Main Street South, Woodbury, CT. The car will be on display there as soon as it is delivered, and it will remain there until the drawing, when it will be presented new to the winner. The raffle tickets are limited to 4,000. The price is \$20.00 each, and they are available at many area businesses, from members of the Knights, or, contact Bob Riendeau at 203-264-4742.

Vincent J. Pavone



Have you ever said Sacred Heart Parish should....?

If you have, you are a great candidate for our Pastoral Council. This past year we have changed our Parish Council to a Pastoral Council. The change is more than the name. Rather than a meeting of members of various parish committees who talk about what their particular committee or ministry is doing, a Pastoral Council formulates and oversees the implementation of a vision for the parish. It is future oriented. We meet once a month to reflect upon some aspect of our parish life and to brainstorm suggestions for how that aspect of our parish might grow and mature. We send those suggestions to the appropriate parish committee/

wish to leave their name in consideration. This group after asking any other questions they have about the Council and praying together, will self-select 5 members and 2 alternates for the Pastoral Council. Deacon Chuck Dietsch will facilitate both evenings. I ask that all participating parishioners of Confirmation age and older consider being part of the process and possibly of the Council. Over the next month, I will offer more information on it, but I ask that you consider if this is a way for you to offer your gifts for the good of the parish.

Fr. Joe

The Widow Anna

After some fun, vacation, and relaxing in the sun, it's time to get back to our regular work routines. Anna, the elderly woman in Luke's Gospel 2:36-38, never rested from her "work" of praising and fasting. She is the only woman in the Gospel referred to as a prophetess.

Anna had been married for seven years and widowed for 84 years. She was the first to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. At that time, Rome dominated the entire Mediterranean world. Science, philosophy, wealth and social power reigned supreme. There were few, like Anna, who believed the prophecies long foretold and knew with certainty that someday the Messiah would come.

Imagine this humble, serious woman in the temple daily; fasting, praying and loving her Lord. She must have been a woman of deep spirituality and faith. She probably had no children and perhaps held a

place in the temple like a deaconess or a nun. She probably wore no fancy clothes, and her face must have shown a serene spirituality.

Though an old woman of the ancient tribe of Asher, a daughter of Phanuel, Anna was young in hope. She prayed and told others, simple folks like herself, about the Messiah's coming. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse." (Isa. 11:1)

According to the Jewish custom, Mary and Joseph brought their Holy Child to the temple for the ceremonial service of his mother's purification forty days after his birth. Simeon, also an elderly man of great faith, saw Jesus, immediately recognized him as the Messiah, and uttered, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." God allowed two elderly people this wonderful experience.

There is no recording of a canticle uttered by Anna, but she turned to bystanders who had waited so long for the redemption of the Lord and declared that this was the promised Messiah. She must have spent the rest of her days thanking God for this honor.

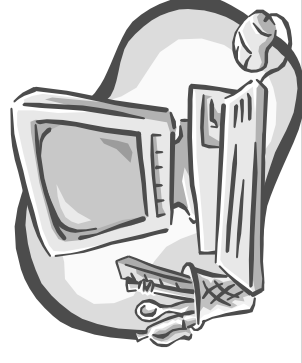
We can see from Anna's story that God does indeed use everyone, young and old, for his purposes. You can be sure she continued her fasting, praying, thanksgiving, and witnessing to what she had seen. So, brothers and sisters let us go forth and give witness to Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Be not afraid, Anna is a good example of faith, loyalty, and devotion to his holy place, the Church.

Dina Carella

Sacred Heart Parish Welcomes You

Are you at a distance from or do you feel alienated from either the Church or Sacred Heart parish?

There are many different reasons that people find themselves drifting or walking away. Yet, we are less than who we should be or can be when you are not with us. If this applies to you or to someone whose faith you care about, check out the new link on our parish website. Our parish wants to promote healing, reconciliation and unity among God's people—and we would love to welcome you home.



Website: www.sacredheartchurch.info
The link is: www.oncecatholic.org

“Patience is not waiting passively. Patience asks us to live the moment to the fullest, to be where we are, to trust that the treasure we look for is hidden in the ground on which we stand.”

—Henri J. M. Nouwen

At the recommendation of Sr. Mary Ann Strain, C.P., a member of the retreat team at Holy Family Retreat House in West Hartford, CT, I recently read the book, *Abraham: a Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* by Bruce Feller. In a world that is afflicted with so much division I was longing to read a book that would lead me to a path of wholeness. Sr. Mary Ann is one of those people to whom I can turn when I need someone to bring a sense of peace amidst so much turmoil, a sense of reason when everything seems so irrational. Once again she was able to do that for me by recommending this book, which now I highly recommend to you. Sr. Mary Ann reviewed this book in a periodical entitled *Retreat Forward* published by the Passionist Community. Permit me to share her words with you, which I am sure you will find truly inspiring.

“Reverend Petra Heldt is a German Lutheran minister who moved to Israel in the 1970’s to work to improve Jewish Christian relations. She is part of one of the few small groups in the region who is searching for common ground within Judaism, Christianity and Islam. She and others believe that Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people, the spiritual forefather of the New Testament and the father of Muslims can be this ground.

Heldt has an unusual habit of keeping her hands tucked between her legs to hide them. The reason is that they are covered in grafts. In 1977 she was almost incinerated by a suicide bomber as she was shopping for dinner in Jerusalem. The attack did not send her running for cover in a safer country but left her more committed than ever to working for peace where she was and more convinced that violence and military action are not the way to achieve it.

Since 9/11 we have all struggled on one level or another with the same questions and emotions as Petra Heldt. How do I go on with my life in a world that no longer feels safe? How can I understand people who seem to have motivations that are completely different from mine? Where did all of this bitterness and mistrust come from and can it ever be healed?

Bruce Feller the author of *Abraham: a Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* is an award winning writer and journalist who has made a career of exploring other cultures. It was the events of 9/11, Feller says, that motivated him to explore the hearts of the three faiths and to try to determine whether this shared ancestor, the first person to understand that there is only one God, might be a vessel of reconciliation.

The author, who is Jewish, made his way to prominent sites in Abrahamic history, from the desert of Beersheba to Jerusalem to the patriarch’s tomb in Hebron. He conversed with imams, bishops and rabbis. The result of this exploration is a spectacular biography of Abraham. Feller hoped to find an Abraham that could serve as a bridge for all the faithful. Instead he encountered a multitude of Abrahams as the interpretive texts of each tradition shaped and reshaped the story, making Abraham exclusively theirs. If you are trying to understand the roots of tension in the Middle East you need to look no further than the final half of this book where Feller explains how these different interpretations of the Abraham story led to a millennia of hatred and misunderstanding culminating in the Holocaust and in the ever spiraling violence of today’s world.

Yet Abraham’s greatest legacy, his deep longing for God remains a profound force in the lives of all of his descendants. Feller hopes that this book will spark interfaith conversations and that Abraham, so long interpreted by the three religions in ways that separated them from one another, can at last bring us to a place where God’s blessings can be shared by all.”

May this book be as meaningful to you as it is to me.

Mike

Secular Franciscan Commitment

This summer, two of Sacred Heart’s parishioners—Muriel Hummel (left) and Joan Shalvoy (right)—made their permanent profession into the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO). The SFO was founded by St. Francis of Assisi in the early 1200’s for lay people who wanted to live the Gospel life according to his insights and example. For centuries its members were known as tertiaries. They follow a rule of life updated after the 2nd Vatican Council. In the Southern New England region more than 900 people live this vocation today.

Our congratulations to Muriel and Joan for making this public commitment to Christ and his Church!



Dancing a Little Jig?

In keeping with the theme of the women’s retreat, “Dare to Listen to the Music; Dare to Enter the Dance,” held on April 2 and 3, 2004 at Sacred Heart, Dolores Matzen led participants in a dance class and dared them to follow their bodies, their hearts and the music. She encouraged them to move their hips and lift their chests and spirits as they learned some basic elements of Middle Eastern belly dance, one of the most ancient of dances, which has its origins in the area of the world that Jesus chose to live on earth. The soulful music reminds us of a time and place where Jesus brought his message of love and peace.

Reticence eventually gave way to the call of the music, and all retreat members, young and old, entered the dance and participated with enthusiasm. The group exercised their bodies as they relaxed their minds and listened for the voice of God speaking to them. In concluding the dance lesson, Dolores distributed veils to the class members and told them to imagine that the veil represents the will of God for them. What followed was a stunning example of prayer; so beautiful, simple, spontaneous and genuine. With the channels of energy opened, the participants went on to the next retreat activity of devotion and discernment.