

# C21 Resources



Cathy Images

## A Dance of Sex and Spirit

*Our sexuality is at the core of our humanity*

BY THOMAS C. FOX

**H**illaire Belloc, an English Catholic writer from the first half of the last century, once remarked apropos of Catholic leadership that any organization whose leadership was guilty of such knavish imbecility must have the special protection of God. As we ride the turbulent waves of the latest reprise of the sexual abuse scandal, we must wonder why. Why did some of our leaders fall victim to the current wave of knavish imbecility?

Some "experts" appeal to celibate

clerical culture as an explanation, with no evidence to support such an argument and no explanation why police, physicians and sometimes even academics similarly protect their own. So do many church leaders of other denominations, though not with so much dedicated imbecility.

Some gay-bashers blame the church for ordaining gay men in recent years. But most of the cases that have surfaced are of men who were ordained long before the alleged increase in gay ordinations.

The answer, I think, has nothing to do with celibacy or homosexuality and much to do with the propensity of men to stand behind their own kind, especially when they perceive them to be under attack. Under such circumstances, loyalty inclines men to circle the wagons, deny the truth of the charges (however patent they may be to others) and demonize the attackers. A form of group-think takes over. They rally round to support those under assault.

Clerical culture is different from similar cultures in that the bishop is under pressure to exercise paternal care of the priest in trouble. The bishop finds himself inclined to the same denials and demonization as other priests do: maybe the charges are not true, maybe the so-called victims brought it on themselves, maybe they're just interested in money, maybe the priest deserves another chance. The police have not brought charges; the doctors offer ambiguous

### *A Catholic Sense of Sexuality*

Catholics, as a group, have not always rested easily with the issue of sexuality. The gap between Church teaching and Catholic practice has seldom seemed so wide. And given popular culture's excessive focus on sex and the permissiveness it promotes, Catholics may well feel that the best thing to do is simply to leave the topic alone. But avoidance has consequences. It estranges individuals from their God-given bodies. In its most malignant forms, it has also contributed to the sexual abuse scandal that has shaken the Church.

In this, our second issue, *C21 Resources* brings together a number of

articles that address the role that sexuality has played in the crisis, and, more generally, in marriage, homosexuality, the formation of priestly celibacy, and the issue of how to recover the positive aspects of Catholic tradition on sexuality. Included are two Church documents.

Many of these articles reflect on a basic premise of Catholic theology that has sometimes been overlooked: that we are embodied souls with sexual needs and identities, that God wanted this, and that this is good. Others reflect on whether the Church's teachings on sex are adequate to address our historical moment or whether they reinforce

the harmful dualism that divides body from soul.

Not all of these articles agree, and they do not offer a comprehensive look at this complex subject. But all offer food for thought about our present situation. The issue ends with the moving response of one bishop, Archbishop Sean O'Malley of Boston, to the crisis.

How to be at once holy and embodied? Simple answers are hard to find. Thus we are grateful to be reminded by some of these articles that the mystery at the center of our faith is itself a story of embodiment and incarnation.

*The Editors*

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For more information on the publications featured, see page 7.

advice; the lawyers think they can fend off a suit. The media thus far have left these events alone. The priest vigorously denies that he ever touched the alleged victim. Just one more chance, he asks.

Many bishops, perhaps a majority of them, even the most churlish, feel a compulsion to be kind to the priest in trouble. (There but for the grace of God.) So they beat up on the victims and their families and send the man off to an institution and then, hoping he's cured, send him back to a parish.

Should a trial materialize, the bishops—trapped between adversarial lawyers (“the victims and their families are the enemy”) and their own doubts about the guilt of the priest (“he still denies it”)—are willing to argue through lawyers that priests do not work for the church but are independent contractors. Or they argue, as Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua did through his lawyers in Philadelphia, that the victims' parents are responsible for not warning their child of the dangers.

This is the slippery slope that begins with loyalty to a fellow priest, doubt about guilt and paternalist duty to be kind, and ends either with reassignment or hardball litigation. Moreover, at every step of the way, the bishop's advisers encourage him to give the priest another chance or to fight back. The kind of men who are made bishops today find it difficult simply to dump a fellow priest, and, similarly, their advisers find it difficult to suggest doing so (though in Boston, Bishop John Michael D'Arcy did indeed give such advice).

This narrative might suggest sympathy for the decisions many bishops made. But I am attempting to understand and explain, not to defend. The decisions made across the country are manifestations of knavish imbecility. Yet I can understand how men could have come to make them.

Mistakes were perhaps understandable before 1986, when at their meeting at St. John's Abbey the bishops heard for the first time a systematic presentation about child abuse. They became less understandable after 1993, when the hierarchy put together a perfectly reasonable set of guidelines (which were ignored) and when Cardinal Joseph Bernardin distributed copies of his policies in Chicago to every American bishop.

I remember when I was harassing

the cardinal about the abuses in Chicago. “What should I do?” he asked.

“Get rid of them all,” I said.

“That's exactly what we're doing,” he said.

“And set up a review board on which the majority are not priests.”

He did that too, though I claim no credit for it.

Yet I reflect on how hard it must have been for Joseph Bernardin, the kindest and gentlest of men, to remove more than 20 priests from active ministry. The Chicago system does not work perfectly; no system could. But it works better than anything that seems to have functioned for the last 10 years in the Northeast. As far as I am concerned, the statute of limitations on knavish imbecility ended in 1992. That bishops could reassign abusive priests after the early '90s was, I'm sorry to have to say it, sinful.

There were three sins. First, they besmirched the office of bishop and seriously weakened its credibility. Second, they scandalized the Catholic laity, perhaps the worst scandal in the history of our republic.

But their gravest sin was to not consider the victims, not even to talk to the victims and their families, to blind themselves to the terrible wreckage that sexual abuse causes for human lives. Bishops worried about their priests; they did not worry about the victims. They did not seem to understand that at the same time they were trying to inhibit sexual satisfaction in the marital bed, they were facilitating sexual satisfaction for abusive priests.

When I argue that many of our leaders have sinned, I am not judging the state of their conscience. I do not have the gift of *scrutatio cordium*. I will leave it to God to judge their moral responsibility. I am merely saying that by cooperating with the sexual abuse of children and young boys they were objectively sinning—and it is hard to see how they can claim invincible ignorance. They were, in fact, according to the strict canons of the old moral theology, necessary cooperators in evil and objectively as responsible for the evil as those who actually did it.

Yet they still blame the media and the tort lawyers for their problems, as though *The Boston Globe* and money-hungry lawyers sent priests

with twisted psyches back into the parishes where they could rape kids.

Cardinal Law argues bad records. In *The Wall Street Journal*, Philip K. Lawler, his one-time editor, blames the cardinal but links the cardinal's mistakes to parish priests' not enforcing the prohibition on birth control.

Gimme a break!

Denial continues, now no longer about the guilt of their priests but about their own sinfulness. Moreover, the denial persists not only among bishops but also among priests, who complain about how they are suffering because of the scandal. If the pathetic letters emerging from the office of the National Federation of Priests Councils are any indication of the sentiment of the ordinary priest, self-pity is more important than the consideration of their own personal responsibility for not reporting abuse about which they knew.

Reparation has not even begun. Until that happens, the re-establishment of even a semblance of hierarchical credibility cannot begin.

As the late Bishop William E. McManus argued, the bishops must do public penance. They didn't then. If they do it now, it would have to be much more impressive than just a collective service in some cathedral. Those bishops who have become public sinners must admit their guilt and undertake personal penance.

Resign? I doubt that the Vatican, which does not seem to have a clue about the current crisis in the United States, would accept resignations. It would be much better if the offending bishops would go off to a monastery for a long period of prayer, reflection and fasting. This kind of gesture might just possibly calm some of the stormy waves. They wouldn't necessarily have to don sackcloth and ashes, though there is something to be said for that ancient custom.

Will something like that happen? Again I say, gimme a break! Cardinals don't have to admit that they have sinned. Much less do they have to engage in public contrition.

Thomas C. Fox is president of National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company.

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# The Fog of Scandal

## *The sexual-abuse crisis in historical perspective*

By JOHN T. MCGREEVY

It is now almost a cliché to say that the sexual-abuse scandal of the last year is the worst crisis in the history of the American church. The sustained media coverage, subsequent disillusionment, and passion aroused by the scandal have no parallel. Certainly the crisis and its ripple effects have become the single most important event in U.S. Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council. For Catholics under the age of forty-five, it may be defining: the public event that shapes their adult relationship with Catholicism more than any other.

How did the crisis become so severe? Much of the reaction is the result of the sheer horror of what has been revealed: horror at priests acting as sexual predators toward young people; horror at bishops willing to protect those priests. Still, this is not the whole story. If sexual abuse alone were at issue, the shock of this episode might be receding. After all, relatively few cases of sexual abuse seem to have occurred in the past ten years, and we can imagine that the next ten years, as dioceses and religious orders listen to their lawyers, develop lay review boards, and tighten their procedures, will see far fewer cases than the last decade. Yet the fury of Catholic lay people, and the scorn of non-Catholics, may not dissipate quickly. Most social movements in history, after all, seize upon a small issue (think of Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus) and tap into a much larger well of discontent.

Why, then, such discontent? I think three aspects of the crisis deserve emphasis. First, and least important, is a quiet anti-Catholicism in the assumptions of many who work in the culture-forming sectors of our society, including the national media. Bishops and priests—not the *Boston Globe*, not *The New York Times*, not *Nightline*—caused the crisis, but commentary oc-

asionally reinforced anti-Catholic tropes. Assertions that celibacy itself was the problem—one *New Yorker* editorial called such a judgment "common sense"—made little sense when placed against what we now know of sexual abuse in families. At the same time, such "enlightened" commentary cast an unflattering light on an American culture so saturated in sexual imagery, so quick to equate sexual activity with "health," that any kind of sexual asceticism bordered on the incomprehensible. Worth recalling here is a non-newsworthy story, that

all direction of their institutions to faculty and boards of trustees. In all of these institutions, reformers used the same vocabulary that we Catholics are now becoming familiar with: accountability, of course, but openness, transparency, and democracy.

It's clear that in this new cultural climate successful institutions must practice much more openness and transparency than did their predecessors a generation ago. Legitimate authority is not raw power. Here the sexual-abuse crisis has demonstrated that some Catholic institutions and

*Well-meaning Catholics tell us the answer is fidelity, a reassertion of Catholic teaching on sexuality and authority. This is a simple answer to a complex problem, and like most simple answers, it is wrong.*

the vast majority of priests, innocent of wrongdoing, are suffering along with victims in this crisis, and along with the many bishops who did act responsibly.

Second, and far more important, is the problem of accountability. The term threatens to lose its salience from repetition, but no other will do. Here the story is not a Catholic story but a wider American one. Beginning in the early 1960s, leaders in all sorts of hierarchical American organizations, including police chiefs, army generals, corporate leaders, and university presidents, faced unprecedented challenges to their authority. Cities instituted "lay review boards" to verify accusations of police misconduct; corporate boards and stockholders took a more active role in governance; university presidents began to share control of faculty hiring and the over-

some Catholic dioceses are shockingly backward. The complete control some bishops evidently had over diocesan finances, the unwillingness of bishops and leaders of religious orders to consult with parish members about the placing of priests with a history of sexual abuse, and the self-pitying defenses of past actions by many bishops paint a sobering portrait.

It is hard to underemphasize the tension between autocratic church structures and the everyday expectations of most parishioners. Well-educated adult Catholics accustomed to robust measures of accountability in almost every professional and civic component of their lives now find themselves utterly unable to affect the conduct of their bishops and priests in the institution that may lie closest to their hearts, the Catholic Church. Parents don't bring their children to

IBM to be baptized; families don't bury their loved ones with the mayor's office. Bishops are rightly accountable to Rome, but loyalty to Rome should not come at the expense of the men, women, and children of the Catholic community—powerless to hold their putative leaders to account.

A full generation after the end of Vatican II, it is sobering to learn that an archbishop can make financial settlements in the range of \$450,000 and then delete the sum from financial records distributed in the archdiocese; or to learn that bishops unable to make appearances in their own dioceses because scandal has made them so unpopular, feel no compunction to resign, and that no fellow bishops seem publicly willing to ask them to do so. Put yourself in the position of alert Catholic college students whose experience with the institutional church is defined by reading the newspaper during the last year. Can they, will they, pledge their loyalty to such an organization?

The third, and related, explanation for the intensity of the crisis revolves around credibility, especially on sexual matters. Another cultural shift that began with force in the 1960s was a new respect for personal experience, a conviction that abstract rules about morality needed evaluation in light of particular people and situations. Here, too, a certain contemporary romanticism is to be resisted. This focus on personal experience, which often became a sense that experience was all that mattered, melded nicely with a contemporary focus on personal autonomy and the self that allowed no check by God, institutions, or family.

And yet the issue of individual moral authenticity is crucial. The still powerful reverberations of the Catholic debate over birth control stem from this tension between inherited authority and personal integrity. Couples ignore church authorities because they find church teaching as reiterated in *Humanae vitae* (that every act of sexual intercourse be open to procreation) incompatible with family life as lived in the late twentieth century. Perhaps more pointedly, Who doubts that a primary obstacle to Catholic campaigns against legal abortion in the last generation was the absence of women in positions of Catholic leadership? In itself, the fact that Catholic women cannot become bishops did not destroy the plausibility

of the Catholic argument on abortion, as prolife women have attested. Yet the effect of an all-male church leadership has been devastating: in a culture where personal experience seems crucial to the assessment of moral problems, prochoice women speak of the terrors of unwanted pregnancy and the danger of illegal abortion while priests and bishops outline in abstract terminology their opposition to the taking of innocent human life.

This is not a plea for women priests. I am simply highlighting the inability of the last generation of Catholic leaders to separate authority within the church from gender, and the devastating consequences for Catholic credibility. The two most powerful social changes in the American twentieth century have been, first, the move from the farms (where 60 percent of Americans lived in 1900) to the city (where 97 percent of us live now), and, second, the changing role of women. It is worth pondering that this second change has occurred within our own lifetimes. That we habitually encourage women to seek advanced degrees, that most women with children work outside the home, that these women struggle to balance career and family in ways unfamiliar to women reaching adulthood in 1950, is now the very cultural air that we breathe. To regain credibility on any topic related to sexuality and gender, Catholic leaders must acknowl-

edge this fact and integrate women into decision-making processes within the church at the highest levels. Families, not bishops, carry and transmit Catholicism, in our culture as any culture. If the deepening alienation of Catholic women from a church hierarchy seen as distant and unsympathetic is not creatively addressed, the consequences for an American Catholic Church that still remains more vibrant than its counterparts in France, Italy, or other industrial societies will be immense.

A similar, if more complicated, dynamic is evident in discussion of homosexuality and the priesthood. Clearly the gay awakening that began in the late 1960s has created an entirely different climate for discussion of gay and lesbian issues. One component of this new, more open climate was that many homosexually oriented priests and seminarians in the 1970s and 1980s began to understand their own identity in the sexual vernacular of the larger society, and not simply (to use the term of the Catechism) as a "disordered" orientation. Again the question is credibility: sexual abuse is a crime of power, not passion, but the large number of cases involving priests and teenage boys, probably 80 percent of the total, indicates a yawning gap between private behavior and public rhetoric. This secrecy and the tension surrounding the issue of homosexuality within the priesthood

surely helps explain why some bishops seemed attentive to the struggles of priests, and blind to the sufferings of Catholic young people.

In closing, I'd like to take a stab at answering the question, What next? We now have well-meaning Catholics telling us that the answer is fidelity, that a reassertion of Catholic teaching on sexuality and authority will resolve this crisis. This is a simple answer to a complex problem, and like most simple answers to complex problems, it is wrong. Of course our problem is fidelity, as it has always been. The problem is also an inability to speak clearly, to make our voice heard in the absence of structures of accountability that unite lay people and bishops, and in the absence of structures that take the experience of women and gays seriously. The most fruitful moments in modern Catholic history—I think of Ignatius beginning to evangelize sixteenth-century Spain, of John Henry Newman asserting the authority of the church against the state in nineteenth-century England, of the extraordinary cast of theologians including John Courtney Murray of the United States who set the stage for the Second Vatican Council, of John Paul II's concern for global human rights—drew from fidelity to the church's tradition, but did not stop there. Murray famously urged Catholics to distinguish between what is principle and what is contingent ap-

plication of principle. If we are to salvage the credibility of hierarchical religious organizations—and I think this is crucial in a society casually accepting of the belief that morality is merely a matter of majority rule—authority must be distinguished from raw power. If we are to sustain a Catholic voice on sexual ethics—and I think this is crucial in a society where many intellectuals instinctively equate new reproductive technologies with liberation—Catholic leaders cannot ignore women's experience.

After all, much is at stake. The Catholic Church enrolls more active members than any other organization in the United States. Our fellow communicants include prominent leaders in government, the professions, the universities, the trade unions, and all branches of American industry. This church is important to the Latino community, now taking center stage in American public life. Let us hope that in the next generation a more creditable and accountable church can build new associations and ties within the church and with our society, for our own sake, and for the suffering strangers in our midst.

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## Stunted Catechesis

*The Church's teaching on sexuality has a role in its current crisis*

BY SIDNEY CALLAHAN

**T**he effects of the sex abuse crisis in the American church aren't going away. A host of issues concerning church government and accountability continues to surface. Everyone from the bishops on down may agree that change is needed, but when it comes to specifying reforms, disagreements bubble up

Deep and fundamental differences,

for instance, emerge when it comes to the future role of the official teachings of Roman authorities on matters of sex and gender. Two opposing agendas for the church directly conflict.

One traditional group sees our current sex abuse troubles as stemming from past and present infidelities of priest perpetrators to Pope John Paul II's articulation of sexual teaching. In this view, sin and evil are recognized as always present, but

abusing priests have been led to violate their vows of chastity and celibacy because of the debilitating permissiveness toward sexuality that pervades both the church and the culture. Offending bishops did not exercise their proper authority of oversight and correction, in part because they, too, were infected by the climate of laxity and infidelity to the church's sexual teachings. Granted, the bishops had to cope with the '60s sexual revolution and bad psychologi-

cal advice, but, goes this indictment, infidelity lies at the heart of the matter. Many seminaries have been remiss in not adhering to the strict theological and practical formation necessary for priests.

The solution? In this neoconservative diagnosis, the American church and its leaders must conform more strictly to the church's sexual teachings as articulated by the Vatican. Disobedience to the hard sayings of Christianity produces sin and hinders the church from being a countercultural force. Courage is called for; the bishops in their teaching roles must reassert the ban on artificial contraception, on women's ordination, on married priests, on remarriage of the divorced, and most important, the ban on homosexual activity, particularly in the seminaries and the priesthood. Only then will health and

integrity be restored.

To get with this program, dissenting Catholic laity and theologians, along with wavering bishops, must be shaped up to obedience. The seminaries must be set straight on sexual matters and, if need be, purged of dangerous influences. It may even be a good idea, say some, to ban the ordination of homosexuals.

I cannot agree with the above analysis and agenda in good conscience. I belong to that large centrist, reform-minded group of devoted Catholics who affirm the creeds, the scriptures and the teachings of Vatican II, but have come to a far different diagnosis of our current sexual abuse troubles. Indeed, I see the present teachings on sex and gender as contributing to the current disarray. The last thing we need is a reaffirmation of rigid teachings, which are seriously flawed morally and theologically.

Yes, I agree with the conservative assessment of our sexually permissive secular culture as destructive and dangerous to men, women, children, families and the unborn. But I don't think our present Catholic stance is helping the situation. The official Catholic teachings on sex and gender are too inadequate, stunted and skewed to help engender mature chastity in either a celibate or marital vocation. The distortions on sexuality also weaken the church's moral authority in the crucial work of the pro-life movement and for peace and justice.

While Vatican II marked a positive turn toward accepting human sexuality as a gift of the Creator, no adequate theology of the body and sexuality has been developed since. Paul VI's post-council reaffirmation of the ban on contraception in *Humanae Vitae* was a sad regression. Giving in to conservative fears, the pope reversed the recommendation for change offered by the majority of the birth control commission he had appointed. In effect, he repudiated the testimony brought by married lay members on the burden of the teaching. He also ignored the opinion of theologians and others.

Not surprisingly, the widespread theological dissent from *Humanae Vitae* has been accompanied by disregard for the teaching by the American laity and the majority of their parish priests. While bishops must pledge their adherence to the ban on

contraception to be appointed, one wonders how many truly believe that the majority of their faithful laity, priests and theologians are wrong. While conservatives would see only disobedience, dissenting Catholics see in the Vatican teaching an authoritarian reassertion of the older fear and disdain for sexuality.

Further rejection of the value of sexuality is signaled by Vatican refusals to consider a married priesthood in the Roman rite, the forbidding of sexuality to the divorced and remarried, and the absolute prohibition of any sexual activity in committed homosexual unions. Women's welfare and dignity are also seen as threatened when contraceptive meth-

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ods (that are not abortifacients) are repudiated.

The traditional overemphasis on biological procreation rather than psychosocial generativity belies the lived sexual experiences in a changed social world. John Paul II may have apologized to women for past wrongs, but his refusal to allow discussion of women's ordination and his strictness on sexuality is seen as a de facto repudiation of women's full sexual partnership in the church.

The pope upholds his particular view of the complementarity of the sexes and concludes that in the church there exists a female Marian principle (no ordination) that complements a male Petrine principle (ordination). Granted, John Paul II has made efforts to defend the goodness and sacredness of married heterosexuality in his prolific writings, but his insistence upon gender complementarity and the ban on contraception ensure that his teachings fail the needs of ordinary persons. The pope's romantic rhetoric is not received beyond a minority.

While Christian teachings and understanding of sexuality and gender have been evolving over the centuries, at this point we are caught in

both an underestimation of the positive power of sexuality to engender love, unity and transformation in committed couples, and an overestimation of the moral, psychosocial and theological significance of gender identity (mostly female). These inadequacies are systemically interrelated and thwart change. Authorities fear that if the ban on contraception and procreative gender complementarity is relaxed, then the way is opened to homosexual unions, which would threaten gender complementarity, which in turn would threaten the ban on women's ordination, and so on.

All of these lingering denigrations of sexuality and women have played a part in the sex abuse crisis. Both per-

petrators and their bishops were formed in a seminary system upholding official teachings that either disdained sexuality or denied its positive power and importance in personal development. There was a biological emphasis upon procreation and the dangers of lust. In a climate of distrust, silence reigns. Future priests could hardly be well prepared for the challenges of mature chastity, interpersonal integrity or ministry to the married. Sexual lapses could end up being equated with drunkenness, as just another instance of individual sin.

Slighting the importance of the interpersonal dimension of sexuality leads to a minimizing of sexual abuse. When the psychosexual value of sexuality is not recognized, it is easy to deny the enormity of the damage that sexual abuse can do to a young person's development. If abusing priests had been dosing young persons with growth-inhibiting hormones, would the priests have been so easily forgiven and secretly reassigned?

Secrecy and denial in a segregated clerical system made it easier for perpetrators to hide. Women, still defined as dangerous and denied equal status, could be kept at a distance and their witness discounted. Mothers, fa-

thers, nuns and family members, as lay persons, remain without a voice, until they call in the law or the media.

Needless to say, within a distorted sexual teaching focused on reproduction and the danger of adult women, homosexual encounters could be seen as safe from consequences and remain relatively invisible. Illicit sexual activity is more likely when there is little openness or value given to sexual maturity. Homosexuality remains so officially taboo that it is off the moral screen and outside the system—in theory, if not in practice.

So what to do? Obviously children and young people must be protected. This lesson has been learned. But can moral integrity be restored if authorities rigidly attempt to enforce conformity to problematic teachings, especially in the seminaries? Instead, new efforts should be expended to develop a more adequate Christ-worthy theology of sex and gender. The sense of the faithful must be consulted. Courage is needed to initiate more honest discussions and to dispense with deceptions.

But where or when can we have truly free, open dialogue to confront conflicting agendas? In the universities, in diocesan synods, in newly formed lay commissions, in local and ecumenical councils?

Hope arises only from the faith that the Holy Spirit has led us since Vatican II to acknowledge that we are a learning church, ever reforming, ever on pilgrimage. The sex abuse crisis may force us to admit that we have a long way to go to develop and appropriate the riches of our Catholic sacramental tradition. We believe in the goodness of sexual embodiment, the goodness of committed love, and in gender equality, but working these affirmations out will not be easy.

Of course, all Catholics recognize the perpetual presence of sin and self-deception. Humility means to remain teachable and to keep a willingness to be persuaded by our sisters and brothers in Christ. But humility and a love of the church cannot countenance silence, especially not at this time.

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# Let's Talk About Sex

*In an interview, psychologist Fran Ferder, a Franciscan nun, talks about the dangers of body dualism*

**F**ran Ferder, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, is the author of *Tender Fires: The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality* (Crossroad, 2002). In an interview with *U.S. Catholic* magazine, she says she believes that many Catholics have felt shame about their bodies because there are too many "forbidden topics." A doctor of clinical psychology and ministry, she draws on the "best side" of Catholic tradition concerning sexuality, which sees it as embodied. Ferder is on the faculty of Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry, where she team-teaches with Father John Heagle. *U.S. Catholic* magazine conducted this interview.

**Why have you and John Heagle, two celibate people, chosen to work in the area of sexuality?**

Neither one of us, when we were 10 or 12 years old, said, "When I grow up, I want to write about sex." But as a clinical psychologist, I experienced very early that when people come in to talk about their concerns—it might be depression or panic attacks or marriage crisis or sexual orientation—almost everyone sooner or later wants to talk about their relationships. Because whatever is going on inside of us that hurts, it affects relationships. And the more John and I prepared to deal with our clients, the more we realized that relationships and sexuality were tremendously connected, particularly for Catholic people.

Although many people today want to downplay this, the issue of sexuality is a source of tremendous pain and angst among serious, churchgoing Catholic people, as well as among those who have dropped out of Catholicism. Often they have done so for reasons that are related to sexuality—such as divorce, birth control, homosexuality. So there's a lot of pain around the issue.

We felt invited, mostly by our

clients, to rethink, pray, and study. We would say to people, "It's important that you're in touch with your sexual story and your sexual energies and that you listen to them." And we realized we need to do the same. That made us even more aware of the messages that we grew up with.

**Why is sexuality a source of pain for many Catholics?**

A lot of it has to do with the dualism that has been present in Christianity for centuries. It divides body from soul. It's not Christian in origin, but many of the early religious writers and thinkers had strong suspicions of the body and of sexual pleasure and

from our best side, there isn't a tradition that could speak more positively about the broad meaning of sexuality. But we so rarely do that.

That's changing somewhat now, but we still meet people in their 20s and 30s who labor under messages that sexual mistakes, even small ones, are about the most offensive thing that one can engage in in relationship to God. So all of that needs to change.

**Don't many church leaders still reinforce that message?**

Unfortunately, yes, they do. My personal belief is that these negative messages have to do with control and

*The Christian churches have often given a double message: 'Sex is dirty. Save it for someone you love.' Basically the message is that sex is dirty, sex is bad, unless it's within these boundaries we've defined.*

subsequently taught that they were opposed to the spirit. In an era when much of the population was illiterate, the people were dependent on educated priests, monks, and religious leaders to tell them what was right. So many people internalized a lot of negative messages about sexual pleasure, the goodness of eros, the wonder of relationships. And that just got passed on from generation to generation. You know, when the Catholic tradition speaks from its best side, it's incarnational, embodied, fleshed. It's sacramental. It's salt and water and ritual and all of those earthy things. Everyone's included, everyone's got a place at the table. When we speak

maintaining power. The patriarchal dominance in the hierarchy is incredibly strong, and sexual mandates are a good way to scare and control people.

**Why does that negative attitude get so associated with Catholicism, not just Christianity in general? A lot of people have the view that Catholics are anti-sex.**

In the mainline Christian religions, the messages have been pretty similar in terms of negative views toward sexuality and rigidity around sexual mores. The newer religious traditions that claim Christianity but are not part of the mainline, like Unitarian Universalists, are much more open. Other Christian traditions are

learning and listening to some of their views.

Catholics are not the only ones. But still, at graduate school one of my professors defined scrupulosity as the "Catholic disease." Some research has shown that sexual scrupulosity is high among the most conservative faith traditions and highest among Roman Catholics. So that says something.

**Do you see that in your practice? Can you give us some examples?**

I don't see it as much anymore. Now when we see scrupulosity, we're calling it obsessive-compulsive disorder, which may have religious features to it. But I have seen tormenting guilt about occasional masturbation. And I remember working with a woman a number of years ago who as a teenager had danced with a boy at school. He brushed against her breasts during the dance and she found it arousing. Twenty years later she was still confessing that because she felt like she had done something terribly wrong. Many Catholics were taught that the mere suggestion of erotic or sexual arousal outside of marriage was sinful, not just sinful but mortally sinful. And that's a heavy burden to carry.

**What are the key messages that you want to convey to this audience?**

A couple of things. When Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council, someone asked him, "Why?" He said, "To make the human sojourn a little less sad." John Heagle and I reflected on that, and when people ask us why we wrote this book, we say it is to make the human sojourn a little less guilt-ridden around sexuality—a little more positive and a lot more open to people's experiences. Another message is that sexuality and spirituality really belong together. I don't believe that people can be authentically spiritual, holy, in touch with the sacred, if they're not also grounded in their flesh, aware of the mysteries of their bodies, dealing with the love and pain of relationships. Sexuality is energy for relationships. The third message is that sexuality is bigger than sex, it's more than genital behavior. In relationships of love and respect, sex ritualizes love. But our culture, and unfortunately our church, tends to deal with sexuality primarily as genital behavior.

**What do you think we should be doing to prepare kids to be sexually healthy people someday?**

We often say there are two missing dimensions to sex education, which we prefer to call sexuality formation for lifelong learners. The first missing dimension is communication skills. Communication is a tremendously sexual reality in the sense that it's impossible to have a relationship that's healthy, and that grows and deepens, if one can't express feelings and listen with interest to the other.

The other missing dimension, then, is formation for friendship. We say to 5-year-olds, "Who's your boyfriend?" or "Who's your girlfriend?" First of all, we make a heterosexual assumption, but we also create a mindset when we do that—that they are supposed to couple. I'd rather ask little kids, and even older ones, "Who's your friend? What does it mean to be a friend? How do friends treat each other?"

Children need to learn age-appropriate sexual anatomy and physiology and prevention, but I'd like to see it more in the context of relationships.

**For example?**

Recently we said to a group of high school students: "Create a scenario about how you want to remember your first sexual experience. Pretend you're 30 and looking back. What do you want to tell your children about it, if at some point you do that? And if you've already had sex, how do you want to remember the next time?" Their answers were profound.

**It seems our culture tries to sexualize girls younger and younger with trashy clothes and trashy rock stars. What do you think?**

We've been trying for a long time as a human community to shake off the constraints and the negative messages about our bodies and about sexuality that dualism has created. The Christian churches have often given a double message: "Sex is dirty. Save it for someone you love." Basically the message is that sex is dirty, sex is bad, unless it's within these boundaries we've defined.

Then, in the '60s and '70s, the hippie movement came along. The message in that era was, "Sex is beautiful." It attempted to reconnect sex and

love. It was irresponsible in many ways but it was all about love. Of course, it didn't last, and a new shift came with Madonna. Madonna said, "Sex is naughty, and I'm gonna do it anyway." And it's an in-your-face, trashy thing. Everything that's outrageous and sexual got combined with Madonna. And then Britney Spears came along and got bleached and packaged by the media because the Madonna thing wasn't working anymore.

When any kind of fad stops selling, then the packagers have to get a new one. It's about money and skin. Unfortunately, the latest way is that sex is increasingly being packaged deliberately to very little girls. The message is that unless you're like Britney Spears, you're not beautiful, nobody's going to love you, you're out of it, and clothes will make you.

**How can we counteract that?**

This is where my sadness lies in that the church has not been helpful. It has merely created negative warnings. Instead of coming out with a list of do's and don'ts—mainly don'ts—and

the "just say no" message, the church needs to put some thought into age-appropriate positive messages. What do you say yes to? In terms of relationships, in terms of caring for your body, in terms of messages that you want to give.

I would like to see religious leaders listen more to kids. Talk with them about what they're watching on TV and listening to in their music. Sit down with them and say, "Let's listen to that together and let's talk about it."

Some of the chastity programs are really frightening. If you sit in front of a group of 16-year-olds, you can assume that a substantial number of them have already had sex—under whatever circumstances. And you can assume that somewhere between 20 and 30 percent of them have been sexually molested to some degree as children. So if you tell them chastity is equated with sexual abstinence—which is a misuse of the word chastity—you've already lost a third to half of the people who think, "Well, so much for me." And they write you off.

## Contributing Publications

*America*, the national Catholic weekly magazine, has been published since 1909 by Jesuits in the United States for thinking Catholics and those who want to know what Catholics are thinking. During 2002-2003 it published many articles, news stories and editorials on the sexual abuse crisis. Visit [www.americamagazine.org](http://www.americamagazine.org) to subscribe or call 800-627-9533.

*National Catholic Reporter* is an independent newsweekly that is frequently the first to report on serious issues important to thinking Catholics and a place to find open, honest and ongoing discussion of those issues. NCR makes a commitment to in-depth reporting of global peace and justice issues and consistently wins national and international awards for "Best Investigative Reporting" and "General Excellence" from the Catholic Press Association. Founded in 1964, NCR features fear-

less, balanced writing on topics including spirituality, human rights, living the Catholic faith, social justice, and liturgical developments. It is published by the National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company. To subscribe, visit [www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org).

Established in 1924, *Commonweal* is an independent journal of opinion edited by lay Catholics. It has a special interest in religion (Catholic and otherwise), politics (war and peace lately), and culture. It publishes 22 issues a year. Along with articles on current events, *Commonweal* regularly reviews books, plays, films, and television. Its goal is to bring a distinctively Catholic perspective to bear on the issues of the day. A trial subscription is \$25. Call 888-495-6755, or visit [www.commonwealmagazine.org](http://www.commonwealmagazine.org).

*First Things* is a monthly journal of opinion founded and edited by Rev.

Richard John Neuhaus, a Catholic priest, author and authority on religion and public life. The journal is published in New York by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, whose mission is to "advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society." Editorial board members of the journal include Mary Ann Glendon, George Weigel and Michael Novak. Subscriptions may be ordered on its Web site, [www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com).

At *Sojourners*, the motto is "Christians committed to justice and peace." *Sojourners* is both a magazine and a faith-based organization to promote social change. Founded in 1971, it provides an alternative perspective on faith, politics, and culture through its magazine, Web site, and public events. Ecumenical and progressive in nature, *Sojourners* lifts up the biblical connection between social justice and spiritu-

al renewal. For more information, visit [www.sojournal.net](http://www.sojournal.net) or telephone 800-714-7474.

*U.S. Catholic*, a monthly magazine published in Chicago by the Claretian Missionaries, believes that it makes a difference whether or not you are Catholic and that Catholicism is a spiritual path that helps us live better and richer lives. We invite readers to explore the wisdom of our faith tradition and to apply it to the challenges of contemporary life. We celebrate the vibrancy and diversity of contemporary Catholicism, and we embrace a positive vision of Catholic faith today. For information or to subscribe, telephone 800-328-6515, or visit [www.uscatholic.org](http://www.uscatholic.org).

*The Catholic Chronicle* is the official weekly newspaper serving Catholics in the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio.

**What in our Catholic tradition can we mine for positive messages?**

Some of what's best in the tradition is our focus on the incarnational. We need to look at what it means to be embodied. How do we live in our bodies? How do we experience our bodies—all dimensions of them? Then we could create programs for children at all ages to honor and reverence not only their own bodies, but to treat other people's bodies well. We could incorporate ritual, the whole sacramental tradition in the church. I think we could be really creative around designing rituals that many of our ancestors practiced, like coming-of-age rituals.

Catholicism is also a mystical tradition. There's more than what we see. There is mystery. There is more to hope for, to believe in, to strive for. John Heagle makes the point that

when children are little, we talk to them about metaphysics. When they say, "Where do babies come from?" we give them concepts. They don't understand the philosophical ideas of love but we go on and on about it. And they're kind of bewildered by the whole thing. They just want to know mechanics. They're very concrete at that stage.

Then when they get to be in middle school, when they're having heart experiences and crushes and attractions and twitterings, feelings and arousals, then we give them plumbing. And what they really want to know about is: What does it mean when all of a sudden my whole body goes electric when I see this person or that person? And often they're embarrassed to talk about it. We need to help them see those as mystical experiences rather than dismiss them with:

"That's normal, but don't act on it."

We need to redesign, rearticulate the whole theology of body touch, body exploration. What does it mean to experience your body as a child? And what is this wonder of feelings and arousals and ideas and physical powers? It is important to see these things in context, rather than separate out genital touching from other kinds of learning and experience. Ordinary genital self-touch can be very important and can help children come to reverence their bodies, to know them.

**You mentioned that sexual abstinence is not the definition of chastity. What is it?** All of us are called to chastity. Chastity is loving reverence in relationships—how we stand before people, and ourselves.

The Catechism has a great definition of chastity: a school of the gift of

the self. It says chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person. And that's the inner unity of people in their bodily and spiritual being. It says some good things.

We also need to look at the real meaning of sexuality and the erotic. We think of everything in terms of genital stuff. The term sexual has been so narrowed to be synonymous with genitality that you cannot use it in a broader way.

But eros is to be stirred, to be moved, to want to embrace all that is good and beautiful, and to recognize that it comes in many different forms—the whole person, soul pleasure, body pleasure, watching a sunset or sunrise. And to narrow it just to the sexual pleasure part is to really reduce it.

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# The Capacity for Love and Communion

## *An excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church*

*From Article 6 ("The Sixth Commandment") of Chapter 2, "You Shall Love Your Neighbor As Yourself," from Section II, dealing with the Ten Commandments, found under Part III of the whole catechism.*

### **I. "Male and female he created them"**

**2331** "God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image . . . God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion." [114]

"God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them"; [115] He blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply"; [116] "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created." [117]

**2332** Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his

body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.

**2333** Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

**2334** "In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity." [118] "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God." [119]

**2335** Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitat-

ing in the flesh the Creator's generosity and fecundity: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." [120] All human generations proceed from this union. [121] **2336** Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. In the Sermon on the Mount, he interprets God's plan strictly: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." [122] What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. [123]

The tradition of the Church has understood the sixth commandment as encompassing the whole of human sexuality.

### **II. The vocation to chastity**

**2337** Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging

to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.

The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.

### **The integrity of the person**

**2338** The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech. [124]

**2339** Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. [125] "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as

moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end.”[126]

**2340** Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God’s commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. “Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity.”[127]

**2341** The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.

**2342** Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.[128] The effort required can be

more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence.

**2343** Chastity has laws of growth which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. “Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth.”[129]

**2344** Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a cultural effort, for there is “an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society.”[130] Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life.

**2345** Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a grace, a fruit of spiritual effort.[131] The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.[132]

#### The integrity of the gift of self

**2346** Charity is the form of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity

appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbor of God’s fidelity and loving kindness.

**2347** The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends,[133] who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality.

Chastity is expressed notably in friendship with one’s neighbor. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion.

#### The various forms of chastity

**2348** All the baptized are called to chastity. The Christian has “put on Christ,”[134] the model for all chastity. All Christ’s faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. At the moment of his Baptism, the Christian is pledged to lead his affective life in chastity.

**2349** “People should cultivate [chastity] in the way that is suited to

their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral law, whether they are married or single.”[135] Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence: There are three forms of the virtue of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second that of widows, and the third that of virgins. We do not praise any one of them to the exclusion of the others . . . . This is what makes for the richness of the discipline of the Church.[136]

**2350** Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity.

Excerpted from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993.

## The Embodied Self

*The distinctness of our being male and female, the author argues, is revelatory of God’s own being and inner life*

BY MICHAEL NOVAK

**I**n the very first year of his papacy, Pope John Paul II planted a time bomb in the Church that is not likely to go off until about twenty years from now. Beginning in September 1979, he devoted fifteen minutes of each weekly general audience over a five-year period to sustained, dense, and rigorous meditations on human sexuality. Reflecting on key biblical passages, the Pope began by wondering what it meant to Adam, walking in the gar-

den, to discover that he was alone as an embodied self. He also asked what it means to Karol Wojtyła, and the rest of us, to be embodied selves.

Even during the papal conclave that elected him, Cardinal Wojtyła had been working on these lectures, intending to use them in his teaching in Krakow. He was unsatisfied with the reception to Paul VI’s *Humanae Vitae* of 1968, and unsatisfied, too, with the state of the argument in the Church, thinking that it did not go as far as it could in answering certain basic puzzlements that humans have

about themselves. In particular, certain passages in the Bible about male and female, love and lust, matrimony and divorce are not transparent in their meaning, and stirred Wojtyła’s wonder. What on earth could they mean? To get to the bottom of the mystery that we are to ourselves, must we not go down more deeply into a philosophy of the human self, that is, the human subject?

In the 129 public addresses that Pope John Paul II delivered over those five years, in four long sequences of a varying number of

weeks, he went back to the Word of God to try to fathom the Creator’s intentions in this puzzling work of His. The Pope began with Adam in his solitude. Adam walked alone as a species, neither vegetable nor mineral, neither God nor animal, and not an angel, either. He stood alone in all creation. He did not have the company of his own kind. Neither could he procreate, and so assure the continuation of his species. His was a poignant solitude, a truly silent solitude. It was not, the Bible tells us, good. It lacked an essential part.

And so from Adam’s flesh—to underline the oneness of the human essence—God created Eve. Not just “woman,” but a person with a name, face, shape, and personality. One inescapable point of this account is that the human being is two-in-one. “Male and female He created them in the beginning.” To make man two-in-one was God’s intention, from even before time began.

Further, if the human being is made “in the image of God” (the sec-

ond point the Bible insists upon), it is as “male and female” together. Something in our male-and-femaleness-together pulls back the veil on what God is like. The distinctness of our being male and female is revelatory of God’s own being and inner life.

We human beings are not “persons” in the way an angel is. We are each embodied male or female, and it is in our communion with one another that we are “images of God.” Each gender alone is incompletely human. We are made for the communion of male with female.

Why then, so soon, did Adam and Eve become “aware of their nakedness” and filled with “shame”? That this shame is not due to their bodies, or merely to their being naked, is made plain by one glaring fact: shame had no part in their original being; it is not of their essence. On the contrary, the shame arises only when Adam and Eve violate the will written into their natures by their Creator, when they use each other to suit their own individual appetites, wishing to put self in the place of God. Their shame arises when they become enemies of one another, through the war for dominance on the part of each. Then they must hide from one another, and in order to become master, learn the arts of seduction.

Their sexed individuality was given Adam and Eve so that, in becoming one, they might heal their essential incompleteness, and come into existence as the one essence God intended “from the beginning.” By willing the good of the other—that is, by self-giving love—male and female become one in spirit, will, and truth. That gift comes not solely from one, unrequited; the gift of one is matched by the gift of the other, freely given; their love is mutual. To speak of Adam and Eve as “in communion” is to capture their gift of each to each. Their beings come to rest in one another.

Thus, however imperfectly, our sexuality reveals to us that, whatever else He might be like, our Creator lives in self-giving communion. This experience of communion between woman and man, self-giving, in mutuality, and without either’s dominance, is more like the inner life of God than anything else that we encounter in creation. To self-giving communion, willing wholly the good of the other as other, giving of self

freely and in accord with the creative will of the Creator, nothing else in the experience of the race comes close.

Wojtyla’s views on sex reflect the riches of the Catholic tradition—erotic, poetic, profound. In two of the deepest, most lovely lines in the poetry of any language Dante captures the essence of this love and all

too, there is an all at once wholeness and timelessness that reflect the totality of eternity; an edge of sadness similar to that of the Gift of Knowledge; an expansion of spirit; a complete fulfillment of activity without satiety, for they that drink shall yet thirst.

Wojtyla, too, is a poet, but he grew up under Nazi occupation, and

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*Instead of asking, ‘What am I forbidden to do?’, moral inquiry should ask: ‘How do we shape our lives of sexual love in ways that fulfill our dignity?’*

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its range:

En’ la sua volonta e nostra pace . . .  
L’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle

In His will, our peace . . .

The love that moves the sun and other stars.

Propelled by its most divine-like energies, l’amor is sexual, erotic, physical, and in that form its communion is procreative. From two-in-one there comes a third. From the love of two there comes the miraculous and startling creativity of birthing, pushing forth a newborn child—not just “child,” but “girl” or “boy.”

Consider the relation of Wojtyla to Aquinas. Thomas Gilby once said of Aquinas that he paid things, in the act of rendering them in their complexity, “the compliment of attempting to do so without breaking into poetry.” Yet, as Gilby shows in putting together a miscellany of Aquinas’ texts on love, Aquinas did not fall short of poetry by much:

Love is more unitive than knowledge in seeking the thing, not the thing’s reason; its bent is to a real union. . . . Other effects of love he also enumerates: a reciprocal abiding [mutua inhaesio], of lover and beloved together as one; a transport [exstasis] out of the self to the other; an ardent cherishing [zelus] of another; a melting [liquefactio] so that the heart is unfrozen and open to be entered; a longing in absence [languor], heat in pursuit [fervor], and enjoyment in presence [fruitio]. In delight,

was driven to deeper depths by the knowledge of sheer terror and the need for steely will. When all around his friends were being brutalized, dehumanized, and exterminated with ruthlessly systematic purpose, the “communion of subjects” came to seem to him more rare and precious. It was to the interiority of the human subject that events had driven him. Where Aquinas had written, “Love is more unitive than knowledge in seeking the thing, not the thing’s reason,” Wojtyla would write “subject” in the place of “thing.” Rigorously, he would take Aquinas and drive every term of his analysis inward, toward the subject, and toward that communion in which two subjects fuse as one. The only trustworthy path, experience had shown the young Wojtyla, is self-donating will, willing the good of the other, no matter how one feels. Under terror, one’s own feelings cannot at all times be trusted.

For the young priest and later pope, even celibacy is understood in the light of matrimony, the sacrament by which the Creator revealed to humankind the communio of His own nature. Thus, the second set of the Pope’s meditations, begun in 1980, concerns the trick question the Sadducees put to Jesus: If a woman was married and widowed seven times, with which husband shall she be joined in Paradise? Jesus answered that the Sadducees misapprehended Paradise. It is not that humans there are bodiless but that communio comes

to the fore, communion with “the Love that moves the sun and other stars,” in Whose will is peace. The unity with God that constitutes Paradise is to will the good of the other, to be one with God’s own love for all.

This is the love that enflames the person who commits his life, for that Kingdom of Heaven’s sake, to celibacy. He wills totally the will of God, in Himself and for all humankind. His communio does not falsify, it vindicates, the love that a man offers to a woman, a woman to a man, in its total self-givingness. The two kinds of love, matrimonial and celibate, shed a kind of light upon each other. Matrimony reminds us of the earthiness of human clay, breathed upon by God’s love, and of the completed, united twoness of our essential nature. G. K. Chesterton was being more than merely witty when he defined the married couple as a four-legged animal infused with love. But celibacy dramatizes for us that the source of unity in love is the total giving of two wills, focused on the good of the other. Celibacy is no denial of the body, only a leapfrog over to the gift of will for the Creator and Redeemer’s use. Married and celibate teach each other depths of love.

In this perspective, the Pope thoroughly refashioned the standpoint of *Humanae Vitae*. Instead of visualizing the moral task in married love as “endurance,” the Pope asks: How can married love grow into the fullness of human nature, in its highest possibilities for self-giving love? Instead of focusing on “birth control,” the Pope turns to the first of the cardinal virtues, practical wisdom (*prudentia*, *phronesis*), and speaks of the excellence of prudence in deciding, in God’s presence, how many children to have—how to “regulate” fertility. Practical experience teaches a couple that, willy-nilly, they will need to practice abstinence at times, just as they at times enjoy ecstasy—and the tension of that drama is a large part of human excellence. Prudence, temperance, justice, courage—excellence in all four cardinal virtues heightens excellence in married love.

Instead of asking, “What am I forbidden to do?,” moral inquiry ought to ask: “How do we shape our lives of sexual love in ways that fulfill our dignity?” The Pope suggests that married couples regard sexual love in

marriage as a school, always bringing out in them new excellences, and bringing them deeper into participation in God's own love within them.

Four things are novel in Wojtyła's thought on "love and responsibility" (to allude to a title of another of his books). First, there is a turn to interiority, to subjectivity, beyond the Thomistic synthesis. He could not have done this without the experience of modernity, and the simultaneous turn of some phenomenologists to both the subject and the real.

The second is the refusal to separate the "person" from its body. Wojtyła refuses to adopt a physicalist theory of sexual love. He refuses to be a Manichee. He refuses to be gnostic. He loves the human body—has always enjoyed his own strength and vitality, climbing in the mountains, kayaking in mountain waters, until an assassin's bullet and other

maladies made him bear the cross of the body's infirmities. He loves the sights and smells and sounds of the liturgy of the Holy Mass. He loves the oils of the sacraments. Everywhere he sees the ways that spirit and body are made for one another, enter into one another, interpenetrate in the secret recesses of our being. Embodied selves, indeed. Thus do we believe in the resurrection of the embodied self.

The third insight is that the unity of man and woman comes in the giving of the will, each to each. The giving of the self makes truthful the bodies being one, and the bodies being one express united selves. The heart of love is a *communio* of selves. In matrimony, human selves are one in both their bodies and their selves.

The fourth insight is that in our sexuality lie glimpses of the Godhead. Our vision of God becomes clearest

when our minds grasp the communion of persons in matrimony. Marriage between man and woman is the most beautiful (as Aquinas put it) of all friendships known to us. God is more like the communion of persons than He is like anything else we know of. That, at least, is the way He has revealed Himself to us, not only in Scripture and in His Son, but also in the way our embodied selves are joined in matrimony.

At the very head of the Book it is written: "Male and female He made them from the beginning. He made them in His image." Should we miss the point of that, it's hard to believe we'd get much right about the rest.

For some time, Western culture has been in a fever of free love, contraception, and the pill. Doing what we will with our bodies—doing what our bodies will—has become a worldwide passion, the acme of fulfillment.

The project must not be going very well. Why else would there be so many books on sex, so many manuals, so many grapplings to understand the widespread disappointment?

But just wait. Boredom is as boredom does. Disordered sexual love and death are partners in a deathly dance. There will come a time when minds are open. When women and men begin to wonder, When He wrote Eros into our embodied selves, what did God intend?

Then it may be that they will not find many guides as daring as Karol Wojtyła.

*Michael Novak holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair at the American Enterprise Institute.*

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## Marriage as 'A Daring Promise'

*In an interview, theologian Richard Gaillardetz sees marriage as a radical and evangelical act*

BY RACHEL WIMBERLY

**R**ichard Gaillardetz says he did not write the book, *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*, on how to make a marriage easy, but instead on why a faithful Christian marriage is hard.

"I am convinced that living out a committed Christian marriage today is one of the most radical and evangelical things a Christian can do in our culture," says Gaillardetz, who holds the Thomas and Margaret Murray and James J. Bacik Chair of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo.

One only has to look at the alarming divorce statistics to agree that the author does indeed have a point. Gaillardetz says when most single adults are asked whether or not they want to get married the majority of them answer positively. While he

does not believe the difficulty lies in the institution of marriage having a bad name, Gaillardetz says there are "profound cultural forces that make sustaining a committed marriage difficult."

What are these cultural forces? The educator points to one of the main culprits: our society's unrealistic expectations of what a marriage

body's needs are not met and they decide they are no longer getting any benefits out of the union. Gaillardetz, who is married and the father of four young boys, says the decision by most in our consumerist culture is that they "bought the wrong product."

Another cultural difficulty is the dominance of therapy relationships as

there solely to help another. Gaillardetz emphasizes that the therapy relationship is governed by the rules of economic exchange, which is a contractual relationship. Marriage cannot be approached in the same manner.

Hollywood is another cultural force that Gaillardetz says perpetuates an unrealistic myth. In a National Marriage Program at Rutgers University, named "The State of Our Unions," 94 percent of those in their 20s agreed that when you marry it should be to your soul mate first and foremost. One only has to look at the majority of romantic movies coming out of Hollywood, Gaillardetz says, to understand why so many people have unrealistic expectations: In the movies people meet their soul mates, fall in love, and live happily ever after.

In the real world, if someone within the marriage grows and changes and the other person does-

should look like. He says, "We are a consumer-oriented culture based on cost-benefit-analysis. Listen to any newly engaged person talk about their fiancé. They tick off the benefits their beloved brings to the relationship, having concluded that these outweigh the costs."

He says the problems arise when at some point in the marriage some-

a model for human relationships. Gaillardetz is quick to point out that he is not against therapy in any way. His concern is when a couple enters into a marriage union, they often have the expectation that all their needs ought to be met by their spouse.

Inevitably, he says, this is a "recipe for disaster." In therapy, one person is

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*Marriage is not a cost-benefit analysis.*

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n't like what they see, all of a sudden he or she is not with Mr. or Mrs. Right anymore. "The value is partnership and companionship in marriage. There is way too much expectation on the erotically-charged notion of romantic love," says Gaillardetz.

So, one may ask, what can we do to try and sidestep these cultural landmines and sustain a healthy, happy marriage? The educator says he wrote *A Daring Promise* to try and ask if there are things in the Christian tradition that can offer an alternative view for the meaning of marriage. He says the book's emphasis is on the spirituality of marriage.

"Couples need to realize that their marriage relationship is the place where by the grace of God they will 'work out their salvation' as St. Paul

puts it," he says. "The challenge for a married person is to realize that they will work out their salvation, not only on their knees in prayer or in church, but primarily in their relationship with their wife/husband and children."

"Christian marriage is an invitation daily to die to my own selfishness, to the desire to have my own needs met, and to rise in loving service to my spouse and children. Marriage is a crucible in which God is forging me into something new. If we as Christians can hold onto that insight, it might help us sustain our marriages through difficult times while rejoicing in the grace and blessings as well," says Gaillardetz.

Often it is difficult for a lot of couples to hold onto this kind of faith without the support of a larger

community. The Roman Catholic Church is in the forefront of preparing couples for marriage, but Gaillardetz says few resources are offered to assist couples in sustaining their marriages.

He does recognize the nationwide Marriage Encounter Movement, a weekend retreat offered to couples, but says that most find it difficult to attend when they have young children that need to be cared for. Another program, Retrouvaille, is a weekend retreat for couples on the brink of divorce, but Gaillardetz says, "Why should we wait to this point?"

How can the church become more involved in offering programs aimed at supporting married couples?

One such idea, says Gaillardetz, is to foster mentor relationships. Couples who have sustained long,

fruitful marriages could be teamed up with younger couples. Faith-sharing communities could be formed that enable married couples to pray and support one another. He also believes specific programs to help couples deal with crucial transitions in their marriage are needed—parenting, loss of a loved one, retirement, loss of a job, and ill health, to name a few. "Jesus said, 'You must die to self in order to rise new life,' and this has to apply to marriage as well," Gaillardetz says. *A Daring Promise* challenges everyone to find the spirituality in his or her own sacred marriage unions.

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## An Act of Companionship

*An essay drawn from Gaillardetz's book,  
A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage*

To marry another is not just to acquire a sexual partner or a lover, it is to discover a "companion." The word derives from the Latin prefix *comor* "with" and *panis* or "bread." A companion is one with whom a person shares bread.

Bread is an ancient symbol suggesting both the product of human labor and the stuff of human nourishment. A powerful biblical image, God offers the biblical bread, manna, to feed Moses and the Israelites wandering in the desert.

Yet the gift of manna required the Israelites to rise each morning to gather the manna. When they tried to store the manna so as to avoid the daily chore of rising and gathering the bread, the manna rotted. God's provision had to be patiently received daily as gift, not hoarded and controlled. And of course, at the last supper, Jesus identifies himself with bread, becoming food for the world.

To see my spouse as a companion is to see her as one who shares bread with me. This means, in the first place, that in marriage we are to nourish one another.

My wife, Diana, once participated in a chaplaincy internship in an institutional home for the elderly. While there she befriended a resident, Fred, who was partially paralyzed and was visited regularly by his wife, Josie.

She was no longer able to care for him on her own, but she came daily to visit. His pride always led him to fuss at the nurses as they attempted to feed him but when his wife arrived, he docilely accepted her ministrations. Diana was quite moved by the sight of Josie gently cutting Fred's food and feeding him bite by bite. The tender companionship of marriage was being enacted before her eyes in its most spare and vital form. Throughout the life of a marriage husband and wife are called

upon, often at considerable sacrifice, to nourish one another.

Marital companionship also includes the common labor a couple undertakes together. This labor becomes for them the "bread" they share with the world. In marriage a new community is established (a domestic church) offering the world the shared fruit of the couple's relationship. This is why for many married couples their experience of marriage is so closely tied to our children. Our children can become our "shared bread," our common work offered to the world.

I have often been struck by this sense of parenting as a common labor, in the presence of several mature married couples whose children have long since moved out of the home. One such couple, Winnie and Wally, would, over dinner, offer us tales of their own struggles raising four boys of their own. As they shared with us their stories, chuckling

and exchanging knowing glances throughout, they offered us, with disarming honesty, both their successes and their misgivings. As I recall those treasured meals, it seems to me now that their children were the "bread" they firmly kneaded and patiently baked in their home as an offering to God and world.

Later, long after their children had grown up and left home, they experienced their adult children in a new way when they returned to visit. Stories of these visits, told with the same love and affection, nevertheless were cast differently. The children were no longer living projects to be shaped by parental hands; they were now adults who had gone out into the world where, by turns, they stumbled and flourished.

In any case, they returned home as individual adults with their own tales to be told, tales in which the impact of the parents had become negligible. These adult children now represented "return gifts" to be welcomed and embraced by their parents. So it is the bread we married couples offer the world returns to us transformed for our delight and nourishment.

*A Daring Promise* was published by Crossroad (2002).

# Changing Catholic Models of Marriage

*The legal term 'contract' has given way to the biblical word 'covenant'*

BY MICHAEL G. LAWLER

Marriage is in the news these days, but for mostly negative reasons. The first type of union for the majority of couples is now not marriage but cohabitation; young people are delaying both marriage and, when married, parenthood; the divorce rate hovers around its all-time high; and the birth of children to unmarried parents has skyrocketed. Some college textbooks describe marriage as a trap, especially for women. It puts women at risk for violence, they say, and it is bad for their mental health. One could be forgiven for concluding that marriage is going out of style and is being replaced by more attractive alternatives, but that would be a serious mistake. Every study of young Americans demonstrates that they are still the marrying kind and still have high hopes for a happy marriage. Unfortunately, given all they see around them, they also have a debilitating fear of their ability to achieve a stable marriage.

Many things have changed in the contemporary world with respect to marriage. The cultural climate has changed; the feminist movement has led women to reject a patriarchal model of marriage in which they are made legally dependent on a man. The economic climate has changed; women's entry into the career market has led to their economic independence and changed attitudes toward marriage. The legal climate has changed; no-fault divorce law has made it possible for the unsubstantiated whim of one partner to bring a marriage to an end. The religious and theological climate has changed, so that today Catholics are as confused as anyone else about the nature of marriage and what it might mean that marriage is a sacrament.

In a recent study of the impact of marriage preparation, young Catholics complained that marriage preparation

programs educated them well in the psychological dimensions of marriage but less well in the religious and theological dimensions. To make a real contribution to the resolution of the crisis in marriage, the churches must better fulfill their specific task.

There was a time in the Catholic tradition, from the second century to the middle of the 20th, when marriage was modeled as a procreative institution, a stable one in which a man and a woman became husband and wife to procreate children. Their procreative activity, which defined marriage, extended not only to the production of a child but also to nurturing motherhood and fatherhood and the production of a functioning adult. The marriage contract was about bodies and acts; the procreative institution was not about persons and their mutual love. Couples who hated one another could enter into it as long as they exchanged legal rights to one another's bodies for the procreation of children.

In 1930, Pope Pius XI published an encyclical on marriage, *Casti Connubii*, which transformed the procreative model into a more personal model of conjugal love and intimacy. The procreative institution, in which procreation was everything, began to give way to procreative union, in which procreation was almost, but not entirely, everything. Predictably, Pius insisted on the procreative institution; procreation was still the primary end of marriage. Unpredictably, he insisted also on the importance of the mutual love and marital life of the spouses. So important is this mutual love and life, Pius argued, that "it can, in a very real sense, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of marriage, if marriage be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and educating of the child but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange."

In these wise words, Pius suggested that there is more to marriage, much more, than the Stoic, biologically root-

ed, physical-act-focused procreative institution can explain. His suggested procreative-union model provided a transitional model of marriage and set Catholic marriage theory on the way to an entirely new and unheard of model of marriage, a model of interpersonal union. Although condemned by Pope Pius XII, that model came to fruition at the Second Vatican Council.

The council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" describes marriage as a "communion of love" (No. 47), "an intimate partnership of life and love" (No. 48). In spite of loud and insistent demands to repeat the centuries-old received tradition of marriage as procreative institution (thus consigning spousal love to its traditional secondary place), the council declared love between the spouses to be of the very essence of marriage. The council underscored its preference for an interpersonal union model by making another important change in the received tradition. Marriage is founded in "a conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent" (No. 48). The legal word contract gives way to the biblical word covenant, a word saturated with overtones of mutual personal and steadfast love, characteristics that are now applied to marriage. The description of the object of the marital covenant places the interpersonal character of marriage beyond doubt.

Marriage and the marital love of the spouses are still said to be "ordained for the procreation of children" (No. 48), but that "does not make the other ends of marriage of less account," and "[marriage] is not instituted solely for procreation" (No. 50). Because of the intense debate over it, it is impossible to claim that the refusal to sustain the old marital tradition was the result of some oversight. It was the result of deliberate choice, one given canonical formulation 20 years later.

Marriage, as modeled in the Catholic tradition, has been transformed from procreative institution, in

which procreation was everything, through procreative union, in which procreation was not quite everything, to interpersonal union, in which the love of the spouses and their life together is as important as procreation.

A good question arises at this point: does it make any difference that a new model of marriage emerged in the Catholic tradition in the middle of the 20th century? The answer is yes, it makes a great difference. Models are imaginative constructs that selectively represent and enable us to understand specific aspects of the world.

They also evoke attitudes and actions consonant with the model. It is, perhaps, in its call to new attitudes and new action that a new theological model makes its greatest difference.

The action required by the procreative model is obvious and abundantly evidenced throughout Catholic history: the procreation of children. The action required by the interpersonal union model is different: the procreation of love. Make the relationship between the spouses in all its psychological, intellectual and sexual manifestations loving, faithful, symmetrically self-sacrificing, just, compassionate, forgiving, peaceful and nonviolent.

The model asserts that the interpersonal union is the best climate for the procreation of functioning adults. It asserts that a marriage lived as a steadfastly loving union is not a trap for the unwary, male or female, but a grace-filled way to God, an opportunity to provide a needed symbol in the contemporary world, a veritable sacrament, of the steadfastly loving union between God and God's people and between Christ and Christ's church.

*Michael G. Lawler is the director of the Center for Marriage and Family at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.*

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# The Clergy's Buried Truths

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*Prevalence of male teenage victims in scandal points to issue of homosexuality*

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BY DONALD COZZENS

**A**s a result of the abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, priests, whether heterosexual or gay, must cope with skyrocketing stress and plummeting prestige. Owing to the details of the revelations, gay priests are in the public eye as never before, many of them no doubt bracing for an anti-gay backlash. At the same time, lay Catholics are discussing the role homosexuality plays in the abuse of teenage boys and wondering how the current turmoil will affect the priesthood and the church itself.

But there is one essential element of the scandal that has not gotten the attention it deserves: Most priest abusers are not pedophiles—adults whose sexual drives are almost exclusively directed toward pre-pubescent boys and girls. Rather, they fall into the category of ephebophiles (from ephebeus, one of the Greek nouns for a post-pubescent youth). Both pedophilia and ephebophilia are criminal, and in the eyes of most religious traditions, immoral.

As the distinction takes hold, it is accompanied by the disturbing realization that most of the reported victims of priest abusers are not children, but teenage boys. A. Richard Sipe, a former priest and author of "Sex, Priests and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis," believes that post-pubescent boys are victimized by priests at a rate that is four times more than post-pubescent girls.

The predominance of male teenage victims raises anew a thorny issue addressed by Notre Dame's Richard McBrien and Andrew Greeley, the sociologist and novelist, almost 15 years ago—the presence of significant numbers of homosexually oriented men in the priesthood.

Commentators and behavioral specialists stress the absence of any link between sexual orientation,

specifically a gay orientation, and the abuse of young children. But given the presence of large numbers of gay men in the priesthood, what is the significance of the disproportionate number of teenage boys

and presbyterates (the priest fraternity in a given diocese). The denial that greeted my report, though diminishing, remains strong. Even raising the issue led to allegations that I was attacking the sanctity and repu-

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*If celibate gay priests deserve support and acceptance, sexually active gay priests, like sexually active straight priests, deserve to be challenged. Sadly, examples of the shadow side of gay clerical life abound.*

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among the victims of non-pedophile priest abusers?

We cannot, of course, read the hearts of gay priests as the abuse scandal expands. Yet we know they are dealing with a double suspicion—of being not only a priest but a gay priest. So it's understandable that many celibate gay priests feel like scapegoats.

Most gay priests, I believe, live with yet another level of pain and conflict that is only minimally understood, even by their families and friends. Their church teaches that a homosexual orientation is an objective disorder. Does that mean the church holds that they as people are objectively disordered? No, but this fine distinction is of little comfort from an existential point of view. Can disordered people be really holy? Lead lives of genuine sanctity? Of course, but sexual identity is so central to a fundamental sense of self that it is an easy step to conclude that a gay individual himself or herself is objectively disordered.

It's been two years since I wrote about the large number of sexually oriented gay men in our seminaries

and the priesthood.

It's impossible, of course, to accurately determine the percentage of gay men among the nearly 25,000 priests active in the priesthood and in our seminaries. Studies suggest that perhaps 30 to 50 percent of priests (especially those under 50) are homosexual in orientation, compared with about 5 percent in the population at large. In the United States alone, more than 20,000 priests have left active ministry since 1970, most to marry. While gay priests have also resigned in significant numbers, the priesthood has lost a sizable proportion of its heterosexually oriented members.

A number of gay priests report that they entered the priesthood as a way to deal with their orientation, though that is not how they thought of it then. For some, this was an attempt to put their sexuality on the shelf, so to speak, to avoid coming to terms with their orientation by embracing wholeheartedly a life of celibate service. Such tactics, we know now, don't work over the course of time; they actually subvert healthy

maturation.

But what difference does it make if 30 to 50 percent of priests are gay? The rule of mandatory celibacy appears to make the issue of orientation a moot point. In reality, it is far from that.

My own experience as a former seminary rector made it clear to me that the growing number of homosexually oriented priests is deterring significant numbers of Catholic men from seriously considering the priesthood. Moreover, seminary personnel face considerable challenges dealing with the tensions that develop when gay and straight men live in community.

As in seminaries, the priesthood's gay subculture injects an unsettling dynamic. Circles of influence and social comfort zones tend to divide presbyterates, with notable exceptions, into straight and gay networks. Suspicions arise that appointments to prestigious offices and other promotions are somehow influenced by these networks. Whether well grounded or not, when such suspicions surface, sexual orientation becomes the fuel feeding clerical politics and gossip.

Heterosexual priests, moreover, remark among themselves that celibacy is, in effect, optional for gay priests. Only the integrity of the gay priest, who is free to travel and vacation with another man, sustains his life of celibacy. Celibacy, the straight priest understands, is impossible to enforce for the priest who is gay. Of course, when celibacy has to be enforced, whether for straight or gay clergy, it has lost its ecclesial meaning and power.

If celibate gay priests deserve support and acceptance, sexually active gay priests, like sexually active straight priests, deserve to be challenged. Sadly, examples of the shadow side of gay clerical life abound: reports of priests at gay bars and gay parties; Internet chat rooms for gay

clergy; and the sex ring scandal uncovered at Canadian orphanages run by religious orders.

Celibate priests, gay and straight, know from personal experience the struggle involved in remaining chaste. Most are forgiving when faced with their own and their brothers' occasional failures. They don't understand, however, the cavalier attitude of some priests who believe discretion is their only responsibility. Faced with the abuse of children and teens by their brother priests, they are livid.

It's common knowledge now that some straight priests cross the line with adult women and girls in their teens, and some gay priests cross the

line with adult men and teenage boys. In the cases of priests having relations with adults, the behavior is immoral. In the cases with teenagers, it is immoral—and criminal. The extent of the current scandal reveals how simplistic and dishonest are attempts to explain these tragic abuses of trust as an example of a few bad apples in an otherwise healthy barrel.

Something more complex is at the bottom of these behaviors. The perpetrators live in a closed, all male system of privilege, exemption, and secrecy that drives sexuality underground, where it easily becomes twisted. There is something wrong, Catholics and others now see, with

the clerical system itself, a closed system of legislated celibacy, hierarchical accountability, and feudal privilege. These and other issues require serious review by lay leaders, priests, bishops, and the Vatican, if the church is to regain its moral voice and credibility.

The drastic drop in seminary enrollments prompts some church leaders to keep the problems in the priesthood quiet out of fear that a bad situation will be made worse. The opposite, of course, is true. The priesthood, like the clergy of most mainline religions, faces a crisis that includes but goes beyond the issue of orientation. Yet sexual orientation is likely the most complex and sensitive

of the factors at work here. The church's first step in facing the difficulties in the clergy might well be to address with compassion and sensitivity a reality it wants to deny: Many of its priests and bishops are gay.

Coming to grips with this reality is an important first step to a renewed church and a healthier priesthood.

*Rev. Donald Cozzens, visiting professor of religious studies at John Carroll University, is author of Sacred Silence: Denial and the Crisis in the Church.*

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## Made In God's Image

### *A homosexual priest speaks out about his sexuality*

BY ANONYMOUS

I knew that I was called to priesthood before I knew that I was gay. The lure of sacramental mystery that resonated with my young soul, the ready acceptance I found in my home parish community, and the care and attention shown me by priests of all ages and temperaments convinced me at an early age that my life would be spent in service as a priest. The excitement, complexity, and beauty of my sexuality were a later discovery, coming at a time when body, mind, and soul were ready to explore and understand one of God's most profound gifts. Yes, I knew that I was called to priesthood before I knew that I was gay. That is why the pronouncements from Rome and elsewhere that homosexuals are not fit for priesthood give me pause and cause me to wonder, "How could that be?"

Though disheartened and angered by the growing number of voices judging me unfit, I am not surprised. It has been my experience that even the most loving people fall prey to intolerance when it comes to the topic of homosexuality. Once when I tried

to talk with my mother about my ministry to gay and lesbian students at a local college, her only response was, "I hate those people." And during a time of personal challenge when I "came out" to a pastor I loved like a father, he told me, "Funny, you don't look like one of them."

clothed? Why wasn't I stopped at the door before ordination 25 years ago?

Throughout my seven years of seminary formation, I struggled with the issue of my same-sex attraction and wondered whether it was possible for me to respond to the call to priesthood, given the church's teach-

*I am effective in ministry, not despite the fact that I am homosexual, but often because I am homosexual.*

No, I am not surprised. I think I have been expecting this to happen for some time. Still, hearing the words that pronounce me unsuitable hurt and confuse me. If Rome decides that homosexuals will not be admitted to the priesthood, then I will be an unwelcome member of a brotherhood whose defining character is the attraction to women. How did I get here? How is it that I now find myself feeling like the guest who entered the wedding feast not properly

ing and understanding of the issue. The call to ministry was clear to me and apparently to many others, including family, friends, priests I had known, and seminary personnel. Still, the question remained: Could I live a happy, meaningful celibate life in service to others, knowing that the church I wanted to serve considered an integral part of my person to be "basically disordered"?

As questions emerged each step of the way there was always a spiritual

director to guide me, and, for a two-year period, a priest counselor who challenged me to understand the role my sexuality played in my self-appreciation and how I related to others. In the prayer life of the seminary, in the direction I received from spiritual guides and confessors, and in the supportive community of my brother seminarians, I found the strength and acceptance I needed to continue toward ordination.

It puzzles me that those who now oppose the ordination of homosexuals argue that living in a seminary environment might make it more difficult to live chastely. Every article and book I have read encourages those who want to live in accord with the church's teaching on homosexuality to develop a strong life of prayer, to seek a supportive spiritual director, and to be part of a community that shares the church's teaching. Far from being a source of temptation, the seminary ought to be the optimal place where one can find direction and support in living a chaste life. The assumption that an all-male seminary would be an occasion of temptation for gay men is absurd. Does that mean that hearing confessions in a convent would be an occasion of temptation for a heterosexual priest and thus should be avoided? Of course not. Why is it that sexuality is always reduced to sexual urges rather than being understood in the larger context of how one relates as a whole person—body, mind, and spirit?

I also find it disturbing that issues

sometimes associated with homosexuals (for example, substance abuse, sexual addiction, and depression) are thought of as intrinsically related to homosexuality, rather than resulting from a poorly formed sexual identity. It would stand to reason: if a homosexual man starts with the assumption that his sexuality is disordered because, as Baker says, it "tends toward a corrupt end" and can "never image God and never contribute to the good of the person or society," he might have to struggle with feelings of maladjustment or depression. Those unhealthy attitudes and potentially self-destructive behaviors stem not from the orientation itself but from the destructive self-image imposed on homosexuals by society and the church. If I were to believe that the God-given gift of my sexuality is disordered, how would I ever establish a trusting, loving relationship with the God who so ordered me?

Living a celibate life does not erase one's sexuality. It challenges the celibate to direct all relational energy (heterosexual or homosexual) in loving service to those to whom we minister. That relational energy is more

than genital expression; it is the whole self in relation to others. It is a puzzle to me that writers like Baker who voice such strong opinions on this subject reduce sexuality to physical attraction.

The twenty-five years I have spent in priestly ministry have been years of challenge, grace, and a sharing in the mystery of the incarnate God made visible in Jesus, who continues to live in and through his church. The person of the priest is called to mirror the selfless, chaste love of Christ to those he serves. He does so not because he is heterosexual; he does so because he is willing to reaffirm the goodness of people made in God's image and likeness, calling them to live the gospel message in the face of misunderstanding, challenge, and sacrifice. I have come to realize that I am effective in ministry, not despite the fact that I am homosexual, but often because I am homosexual.

I know it is difficult for some to understand that assertion. That may be because writers like George Weigel (*The Courage to Be Catholic*) divide homosexual people into two types: gays ("a man who makes his homoerotic

desires the center of his personality and identity") and those who recognize their homosexual desires to be disordered. Such an analysis reduces the choices a homosexual person makes to either promiscuity or self-abnegation. Neither choice leads to a healthy spirituality based on an appreciation of being made in God's image and likeness. Another option is needed, one that defines the multifaceted dimensions of sexuality and reflects the limitless love God has for his beloved. There is no such thing as generic divine love: God's love is always directed in unique, jealous fashion to each person as beloved.

Because official church teaching denies such a possibility for homosexuals, I understand the struggle homosexual people have believing that they are made in God's image, that they are good, that official church teaching can serve as the foundation for a healthy, grace-filled spirituality. I am saddened that it is the authorities of the church I love who have placed the biggest obstacle to acceptance of such goodness, asking that we see ourselves as "disoriented" toward a corrupt end. It is one of the heavy

burdens, hard to carry, that the church places on many of her sons and daughters. Woe to those who impose such a burden!

It will be a sad day for me if those in authority decide to impose a ban on the ordination of homosexual men, and it will be a sad day for the whole church. Many of us will be lost, for I suspect there will be those who, out of self-respect and a decision not to accept the church's faulty designation, will choose to walk quietly out of the ministry to which God has called them, the ministry that they love. I suspect those in high places will hardly notice or will breathe a sigh of relief. Those who have trusted and treasured their ministry, however, will notice and be saddened that their own spiritual welfare is being compromised once again by those who have the authority from Christ to make decisions, but lack his mind and heart to make them wisely.

*The writer is a Catholic priest.*

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## On 'Straightening Out' Catholic Seminaries

*Banning gays could foster a return to secrecy, duplicity and repression in seminaries*

BY JON FULLER

One of the deeply troubling outcomes of the Catholic Church's recent scandals involving sexual abuse and the abuse of administrative power is the call from many quarters to exclude from seminaries men who are gay. This is troubling, because it flies in the face of simple logic. Experts have repeatedly pointed out that the sexual abuse in question—pedophilia and ephebophilia—are functions of arrested sexual development, not of a particular sexual orientation. It is also troubling because it is misleading and diverts attention from the real causes of the problem.

Voices asserting that individuals with a homosexual orientation must be excluded from seminaries and from being ordained have come from many quarters. Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, said that "persons with a homosexual inclination should not be admitted to the seminary." Joaquin NavarroValls, the Vatican spokesman, opined that "people with these inclinations just cannot be ordained." Philadelphia's Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua noted that "a person who is homosexual-oriented is not a suitable candidate for the priesthood even if he had never committed any homosexual act."

Recently in America, Rev. Andrew R. Baker of the Vatican Congregation

for Bishops noted that the homosexual orientation "is fundamentally flawed in its disordered attraction because it can never 'image' God and never contribute to the good of the person or society." A Catholic News Service story discussing an anticipated position paper on the subject quotes an unnamed source saying, "The document's position is negative, based in part on what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says in its revised edition, that the homosexual orientation is 'objectively disordered.' Therefore, independent of any judgment on the homosexual person, a person of this orientation should not be admitted to the seminary and, if it is discovered later, should not be ordained."

While these strong assertions may

not surprise those familiar with the church's longstanding teaching on homosexual acts, they are examples of an increasingly harsh stance being taken toward the homosexual orientation itself. Such statements seem to contradict the catechism's teaching that with self-mastery, grace, friendship and prayer, homosexual persons "can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection" (No. 2359). They certainly stand in stark contrast to the lived experience and spiritual discernment of many religious orders and at least some diocesan seminaries.

Many formation programs have evolved dramatically in their approach to the appropriate treatment of sexuality. Whereas in former years the

subject was essentially treated with silence, it is now widely recognized that if seminarians are to understand and live in a healthy way the vow of celibacy, adequate attention must be given to sexuality and to psychosexual development during their training.

The need to address these issues more openly has been in part stimulated by the church's experience that silence on sexuality can lead to a poorly integrated, uncritical and sometimes self-loathing adult sexuality that may eventually respond inappropriately to sexual urges that have never been honestly faced (whether homosexual or heterosexual). Men who vow celibacy must be able to deal frankly and openly with numerous questions and challenges that arise as they pass through various stages of adult development. This forthrightness is seen as a critical component not only of initial formation, but also of being a happy, integrated adult living the vow of celibacy.

Given the fact that a significant number of priests are high-functioning, integrated and self-respecting gay men, the topic of homosexuality is an increasingly comfortable subject of discussion for many clergy and religious—at least among colleagues. For men in religious orders, being known and supported by one's brothers is a central aspect of community life. Many now find it fundamental, at least with close friends and in small groups, to speak about sexual orientation as an important part of one's identity—perhaps as important and basic as describing one's family of origin. And this attitude of openness and acceptance is not restricted to religious communities. As reported in the May 20 issue of *Newsweek*, students and faculty at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, Calif., (which serves the largest U.S. archdiocese) said that "being gay is not a big deal."

In consultations with people in leadership in religious orders, dioceses and vocational development that I have attended in recent years, it is my impression that there is little discomfort with the presence of gay members and applicants. Indeed, some orders have policies explicitly indicating that gay applicants can be admitted. Rather than focusing on sexual orientation as the issue, attention is more appropriately directed toward assuring that all members be integrated, healthily transparent, generous

and respectful of (and able to live and work with) persons different from themselves.

In a presentation this year to the National Religious Vocation Conference, the psychologist Donna J. Markham, O.P., Ph.D., A.B.P.P., director of the Southdown Institute in Toronto, made the statement: "More importantly, I . . . believe we are clearly asking the wrong question. The issue is not one of sexual orientation but one of relational integration . . . It is an issue of possessing the spiritual and emotional health for religious life."

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*This may be an opportunity for the Church to reflect on what it means to 'discern from the signs of the times,' to broaden its view of human beings and to recognize that God has given to humanity at least two kinds of sexual orientation, which do not threaten or contradict each other and each of which can contribute to the good of the community.*

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Canice Connors, O.E.M., former head of the St. Luke Institute in Maryland and current president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, raised this issue in a recent letter to C.M.S.M. members regarding the current crisis in the church: "I would also like to say a word about the shadow of suspicion being cast over our brothers living out the gracious mystery of homosexual orientation. We treasure all of our brothers in community. We all treasure and share the same gift of celibacy. We are all journeying toward God by seeking God first in one another . . . . But I want to assure all of our brothers where we stand and it is in firm solidarity with all religious living a celibate life."

The current drive to exclude gay seminarians could return seminaries to an unhealthy psychological environment, one that promotes secrecy,

duplicity, repression and homophobic attitudes and behaviors intended to prove (to others and to oneself) that one is heterosexual. History teaches that in a society (and church) in which homosexuality is stigmatized, personal and societal pressures to ignore same-sex feelings, or to "change" or to "cover" a homosexual orientation, can be enormous—and profoundly debilitating. Indeed, individuals who passed through traditional seminary formation decades ago have in some cases not been able to honestly recognize and respond positively to their homosexual orientation

record of homosexual ministers stands in stark contrast to arguments that they are unfit for such service. This divide is not just about differing conclusions; it is also about the methods deemed appropriate for reaching such conclusions. Whereas the affirmative perspective regarding homosexual ministers has been informed by reflection on the experience of living and working with gay men, the negative view has been deduced a priori from the church's teaching that only heterosexuality can be affirmed.

Scripture teaches that "a good tree cannot produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit" (Mt 7:18). If, as many in the church observe, "good fruit" is being produced by those whom the church considers to be "intrinsically disordered," something is profoundly amiss. This crisis may represent a precious opportunity for the church to reflect on what it means to "discern from the signs of the times" how it is being called by Christ to live as an enfolded community of faith. Perhaps the church is being challenged to broaden its view of human beings (and of God) and challenged to recognize that God has given to humanity at least two kinds of trees, both of which produce good fruit for the community, neither of which need threaten nor contradict the other.

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# Always Our Children

*From Always Our Children, a 1997 pastoral message by the U.S. Catholic bishops*

**T**he purpose of this message is to reach out to parents coping with the discovery of homosexuality in their adolescent or adult child. It urges families to draw upon faith, hope, and love as they face uncharted futures. It asks them to recognize that the Church offers spiritual resources to strengthen and support them at this moment and in the days to come. This message draws upon the teachings of the Church, of Pope John Paul II and of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is not a systematic presentation of the Church's moral teaching, nor does it break new ground theologically. Rather we intend to speak words of faith, hope, and love to parents who need the Church's loving presence at a time that may be one of the most challenging in their lives. We hope this message will be helpful to priests and pastoral ministers to whom parents may turn to face their anxieties.

## Accepting Your Child

The meaning and implications of the term homosexual orientation are not universally agreed upon. Church teaching acknowledges a distinction between a homosexual "tendency," which proves to be "transitory," and "homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, 1975, no. 8).

In light of this possibility, therefore, it seems appropriate to understand sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual) as a deep-seated dimension of one's personality and to recognize its relative stability in a person. A homosexual orientation produces a stronger emotional and sexual attraction toward individuals of the same sex, rather than toward those of the opposite sex. It does not

totally rule out interest in, care for, and attraction toward members of the opposite sex. Having a homosexual orientation does not necessarily mean a person will engage in homosexual activity.

There seems to be no single cause of a homosexual orientation. A common opinion of experts is that there are multiple factors—genetic, hormonal, psychological—that may give rise to it. Generally, homosexual orientation is experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen. By itself, therefore, a homosexual orientation cannot be considered sinful, for

of our sexual identity is sexual orientation. Thus, our total personhood is more encompassing than sexual orientation. Human beings see the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart (cf. 1 Sm 16:7).

God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual. God's love is always and everywhere offered to those who are open to receiving it. St. Paul's words offer great hope: For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other

*Being created a male or female person is an essential part of the divine plan, for it is sexuality that allows human beings to share in God's creative love.*

morality presumes the freedom to choose.

You can help a homosexual person in two general ways. First, encourage him or her to cooperate with God's grace to live a chaste life. Second, concentrate on the person, not on the homosexual orientation itself. This implies respecting a person's freedom to choose or refuse therapy directed toward changing a homosexual orientation. Given the present state of medical and psychological knowledge, there is no guarantee that such therapy will succeed. Thus, there may be no obligation to undertake it, though some may find it helpful.

All in all, it is essential to recall one basic truth. God loves every person as a unique individual. Sexual identity helps to define the unique persons we are, and one component

creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39).

## Accepting God's Plan and the Church's Ministry

For the Christian believer, an acceptance of self and of one's homosexual child must take place within the larger context of accepting divinely revealed truth about the dignity and destiny of human persons. It is the Church's responsibility to believe and teach this truth, presenting it as a comprehensive moral vision and applying this vision in particular situations through its pastoral ministries. We present the main points of that moral teaching here.

Every person has an inherent dignity because he or she is created in God's image. A deep respect for the total person leads the Church to hold

and teach that sexuality is a gift from God. Being created a male or female person is an essential part of the divine plan, for it is their sexuality—a mysterious blend of spirit and body—that allows human beings to share in God's own creative love and life.

Like all gifts from God, the power and freedom of sexuality can be channeled toward good or evil. Everyone—the homosexual and the heterosexual person—is called to personal maturity and responsibility. With the help of God's grace, everyone is called to practice the virtue of chastity in relationships. Chastity means integrating one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, in the area of human sexuality, in a way that values and respects one's own dignity and that of others. It is "the spiritual power which frees love from selfishness and aggression" (Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1996, no. 16).

Christ summons all his followers—whether they are married or living a single celibate life—to a higher standard of loving. This includes not only fidelity, forgiveness, hope, perseverance, and sacrifice, but also chastity, which is expressed in modesty and self-control. The chaste life is possible, though not always easy, for it involves a continual effort to turn toward God and away from sin, especially with the strength of the sacraments of penance and eucharist. Indeed God expects everyone to strive for the perfection of love, but to achieve it gradually through stages of moral growth (cf. John Paul II, *On the Family*, 1981, no. 34). To keep our feet on the path of conversion, God's grace is available to and sufficient for everyone open to receiving it.

Furthermore, as homosexual persons "dedicate their lives to understanding the nature of God's personal call to them, they will be able to celebrate the sacrament of

penance more faithfully and receive the Lord's grace so freely offered there in order to convert their lives more fully to his way" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, 1986, no. 12).

To live and love chastely is to understand that "only within marriage does sexual intercourse fully symbolize the Creator's dual design, as an act of covenant love, with the potential of co-creating new human life" (United States Catholic Conference, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, 1991, p. 55). This is a fundamental teaching of our Church about sexuality, rooted in the biblical account of man and woman created in the image of God and made for union with one another (Gn 2-3).

Two conclusions follow. First, it is God's plan that sexual intercourse occur only within marriage between a man and a woman. Second, every act of intercourse must be open to the possible creation of human life. Homosexual intercourse cannot fulfill these two conditions. Therefore, the Church teaches that homogenital behavior is objectively immoral, while making the important distinction between this behavior and a homosexual orientation, which is not immoral in itself. It is also important to recognize that neither a homosexual orientation, nor a heterosexual one, leads inevitably to sexual activity. One's total personhood is not reducible to sexual orientation or behavior.

Respect for the God-given dignity of all persons means the recognition of human rights and responsibilities.

The teachings of the Church make it clear that the fundamental human rights of homosexual persons must be defended and that all of us must strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against them.

It is not sufficient only to avoid unjust discrimination. Homosexual persons "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2358). They, as is true of every human being, need to be nourished at many different levels simultaneously. This includes friendship, which is a way of loving and is essential to healthy human development. It is one of the richest possible human experiences. Friendship can and does thrive outside of genital sexual involvement. The Christian community should

offer its homosexual sisters and brothers understanding and pastoral care. More than twenty years ago we bishops stated that "Homosexuals . . . should have an active role in the Christian community." What does this mean in practice? It means that all homosexual persons have a right to be welcomed into the community, to hear the word of God, and to receive pastoral care. Homosexual persons living chaste lives should have opportunities to lead and serve the community. However, the Church has the right to deny public roles of service and leadership to persons, whether homosexual or heterosexual, whose public behavior openly violates its teachings.

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## An Ethic for Same-Sex Relations

*Seeing no ground for an absolute prohibition, a Catholic ethicist argues that homosexual couples deserve the duties, rights and relational joys of all couples*

*The following is a condensed excerpt from Margaret Farley's chapter, "An Ethic For Same-Sex Relations" in A Challenge To Love: Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church, edited by Rev. Robert Nugent (Crossroad, 1983). A professor of Christian ethics at Yale Divinity School and former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Farley writes on medical, sexual, and social ethics.*

BY MARGARET A. FARLEY

I began by saying that my concern was to move beyond the question of whether or not same-sex relations and sexual activity can ever be justified. By arguing that no absolute prohibition and no absolute blessing can be established from the sources of Christian ethics, I have meant to imply that some same-sex relations and activity can be justified. I have not tried to settle questions of whether homosexual relations are as

humanly fulfilling as heterosexual, or whether they can be justified only as exceptions to what is otherwise normative. I have focused on what I have called a "modest conclusion" because I believe it is sufficient to move us on to the most important task for Christian ethics in regard to homosexuality. That is articulating an ethic for same-sex activity and relations. In my view, it is finally the same as the task of articulating an adequate contemporary ethic for heterosexual relations and activity.

One way to begin to identify ethical norms for sexual activity is to refine a justice ethic for the sexual sphere of human life. This may prove to be only preliminary to a more adequate sexual ethic, but it has the advantage of moving sexuality away from a taboo morality, without assuming a contentless ethic of love. Moral criteria for homosexual relations must serve in particular as a corrective to remaining tendencies in the culture to as-

sociate sex with defilement in relation to taboos. (The culture's marginalization and oppression of homosexuals has at times manifested the worst of these tendencies.) On the other hand, it will not do to end all ethical discernment by saying simply that sexual relations and activities are good when they express love; for love is the problem in ethics, not the solution. The question ultimately is, "What is a right love, a good love?" The articulation of norms of justice will begin to answer that question, for these will be the norms of a just love.

Justice, of course, can have many meanings. The classic meaning of rendering to each her or his due can be, I think, most helpfully translated into the fundamental formal principle that persons and groups of persons ought to be affirmed according to their concrete reality, actual and potential. The formulation of material principles of justice depends, then, on our interpretation of the re-

ality of persons. Contemporary efforts to develop a sexual ethic must take into account new interpretations not only of human sexuality but of the human person. Thus, for example, new emphasis on the element of freedom in the person must give rise to norms which place great emphasis on the need for the free consent of both sexual partners. Similarly, new understandings of the nature and role of women must challenge traditional understandings in which relations between men and women were marked by hierarchy and subordination. Identification of such fairly obvious norms for sexual relations suggests a way of organizing a sexual ethic.

Contemporary concern for the nature of the person leads to a focus on at least two essential features of human personhood: autonomy and relationality. These two features ground an obligation to respect persons as ends in themselves and forbid the use of persons as

mere means.

The obligation to respect the autonomy of persons sets a minimum but absolute requirement for the free consent of sexual partners. This means, of course, that rape, violence, or any harmful use of power against unwilling victims is never justified; and seduction or manipulation of persons who have limited capacity for choice because of immaturity, special dependency, or loss of ordinary personal power, is ruled out. It also means that other general ethical principles such as the principles of truth-telling, promise-keeping, and respect for privacy are fundamental to an adequate sexual justice ethic. Whatever other rationales can be given for these principles, their violation binds the freedom of choice of the other person.

Individuals do not just survive or thrive in relation to others; they cannot exist without some form of fundamental relatedness to personal others. In relation, awareness of autonomy is born, and freedom either grows or is diminished. Insofar as sexuality qualifies the whole personality of persons, it also qualifies the relation of persons to one another. Sexual activity and sexual pleasure are instruments and modes of relation; they can enhance relation or hinder it, contribute to it and express it. Sexual activity and sexual pleasure are optional goods for human persons (in the sense that they are not absolute, peremptory goods which could never be subordinated to other goods or for the sake of other goods be let go), but they can be very great goods, mediating relationality and the general well-being of persons.

Sex must not violate relationality but serve it. Another way of saying this is that it is not enough to respect the free choice of sexual partners. Respect for persons together in sexual activity requires mutuality of participation. This, of course, can be expressed in many ways, but it entails activity and receptivity on the part of both persons—mutuality of desire, of action, and of response.

Underlying mutuality is a view of sexual desire which does not see it as a search only for the pleasure to be found in the relief of libidinal tension, although it may include this. Human sexuality, rather, is fundamentally relational; sexual desire ul-

timately seeks what contemporary philosophers have called a “double reciprocal incarnation,” or “mutuality of desire and embodied union.”

This leads to yet another norm, however. Freedom and mutuality are not sufficient to respect persons in sexual relations. A condition for real freedom and a necessary qualification of mutuality is equality. The equality which is at stake here is equality of power. Inequities in social and economic status, age and maturity, professional identity, etc., render sexual relations inappropriate and unethical primarily because they entail power inequities—hence, unequal vulnerability, dependency, and limitation of options.

Strong arguments can be made for a third norm regarding relation-

ality in a Christian sexual ethic. At the heart of the Christian community's understanding of the place of sexuality in human and Christian life has been the notion that some form of commitment, some form of covenant, must characterize relations that include a sexual dimension. In the past, this commitment, of course, was identified with heterosexual marriage. It was tied to the need for a procreative order and a discipline for unruly sex. Even when it was valued in itself as a realization of the life of the church in relation to Jesus Christ it carried what today are unwanted connotations of inequality in relation between men and women. It is possible, nonetheless, that when all the meanings of commitment for sexual relations are sifted, we are left with powerful reasons to retain it as an ethical norm.

Sexual desire left to itself does not even seem able to sustain its own ardor. In the past, persons

feared that sexual desire would be too great; in the present the rise in impotency and sexual boredom makes persons more likely to fear that sexual desire will be too little. There is growing general evidence that sex is neither the indomitable drive that early Christians thought it was nor the primordial impulse of early psychoanalytic theory. When it was culturally repressed, it seemed an inexhaustible power, underlying other motivations, always struggling to express itself in one way or another. Now that it is less repressed, more and more free and in the open, it is easier to see other complex motivations behind it, and to recognize its inability in and of itself to satisfy the affective yearning of persons. More and more

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*Just as homosexual men and lesbian women must affirm one another and themselves in terms of autonomy and relationality, so they have claims to respect from the wider society and the Christian churches.*

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readily comes the conclusion that sexual desire without interpersonal love leads to disappointment and a growing meaninglessness. The other side of this conclusion is that sexuality is an expression of something beyond itself. Its power is a power for union and its desire a desire for intimacy.

Sobering evidence of the inability of persons to blend their lives together, and weariness with the high rhetoric that has traditionally surrounded human covenants, yield a contemporary reluctance to evaluate the two ways of living sexual union. At the very least it may be said, however, that while brief encounters open a lover to relation, they cannot mediate the kind of union—of knowing and being known, loving and being loved—for which human relationality offers the potential. Moreover, the pursuit of multiple relations precisely for the sake of sustaining sexual desire risks violating the norms of autonomy and mu-

tuality, risks measuring others as apt means to our own ends, risks inner disconnection from any kind of life-process of our own or in relation with others. Discrete moments of union are not necessarily valueless, but they serve to isolate us from others and from ourselves.

On the other hand, there is reason to believe that sexuality can be the object of commitment, that sexual desire can be incorporated into a covenanted love, without distortion and loss. Given all the caution learned from contemporary experience, we may still hope that our freedom is sufficiently powerful to gather up our love and give it a future; that thereby our sexual desire can be nurtured into a tenderness that has not forgotten passion. We may still believe that to try to use our freedom in this way is to be faithful to the love that arises in us or even the yearning that rises from us.

A Christian sexual ethic, then, may well identify commitment as a norm for sexual relations and activity. Given a concern for the wholeness of the human person, and for a way of living that is conducive to the integration of all of life's important aspects, and for the fulfillment of sexual desire in the highest forms of friendship, the norm must be a committed love. This, of course, raises special problems in an ethic for homosexual love—problems to which I will return.

While the traditional procreative norm of sexual relations and activity no longer holds absolute sway in Christian sexual ethics, there remains a special concern for responsible reproduction of the human species. Traditional arguments that if there is sex, it must be procreative have changed to arguments that if sex is procreative it must be within a context that assures responsible care of offspring.

These concerns appear at first glance to have little to do with a sexual ethic for same-sex relations. Yet they suggest an important last norm for homosexuals as for heterosexuals in regard to relationality. Interpersonal love, in so far as it is just, must be fruitful. That is to say, it violates relationality if it closes in upon itself and refuses to open to a wider community of persons.

The articulation of this norm, however, moves us to another per-

spective in the development of a sexual ethic for same-sex relations. There are obligations in justice which others in the Christian community and the wider society have toward those persons who choose same-sex relations. Just as homosexual men and lesbian women must affirm one another and themselves in terms of autonomy and relationality, so they have claims to respect from the wider society and the Christian churches.

Given no grounds for an absolute prohibition of same-sex relations, and none for an absolute blessing, homosexuals have the same rights as others to equal protection under the law, to self-determination, to a share in the goods and services available to all. Their needs for incorporation into the wider community, for psychic security, for basic well-being, make the same claims

for social cooperation among us as do those of us all. The Christian community, in particular, is faced with serious questions in this regard. If, for example, a norm of commitment is appropriate for sexual relations among Christians; and if such a norm belongs to a homosexual ethic as much as to a heterosexual ethic, then the problems of institutional support must (like the questions of a sexual ethic) be addressed anew.

What I have tried to offer here is a beginning response to the question of what norms should govern same-sex relations and activities. My answer has been: the norms of justice—those norms which govern all human relationships and those which are particular to the intimacy of sexual relations. Most generally, the norms are respect for persons through respect for autonomy and

relationality; respect for relationality through requirements of mutuality, equality, commitment, and fruitfulness. More specifically one might say things like: sex between two persons of the same sex (just as two persons of the opposite sex) should not be used in away that exploits, objectifies, or dominates; homosexual (like heterosexual) rape, violence, or any harmful use of power against unwilling victims (or those incapacitated by reason of age, etc.) is never justified; freedom, integrity, privacy are values to be affirmed in every homosexual (as heterosexual) relationship; all in all, individuals are not to be harmed, and the common good is to be promoted. The Christian community will want and need to add those norms of faithfulness, of forgiveness, of patience and hope, which are essential for any relationships between persons within the Church.

It is not an easy task to introduce considerations of justice into every sexual relation and the evaluation of every sexual activity. Critical questions remain unanswered, and serious disagreements are all too frequent, regarding the reality of persons and the meaning of sexuality. What is harmful and what helpful to individual persons and societies is not always clear. Which sexual activities contribute to and which prevent the integration of sexuality into the whole of human life is not in every case evident. What can be normative and what exceptional is sometimes a matter of all too delicate judgment. But if sexuality is to be creative and not destructive in personal and social relationships, then there is no substitute for discerning ever more carefully the norms whereby it will be just. □

## Celibacy and Spiritual Growth

*Celibacy as a gift from God and a mystery that takes a lifetime to unpack*

BY HOWARD GRAY, S.J.

In her memoir, *Virgin Time*, Virginia Hampl explores the reclamation of her spiritual life through three pilgrimages, to Assisi, to Lourdes, and to the Trappistines community in Redwoods, California. In the third of these pilgrimages, Hampl recounts a particular moment of insight, at evening prayer. In the dark, quiet chapel, a nun enters, reverences the altar, and lights a single large candle. Hampl muses that the candle is not there for light because it illumines only the section of the chapel immediately surrounding its stand. Nor is the candle there for heat, as its warmth extends only a few inches from the flame. But the candle is there for focus, to draw the attention of the congregation to the altar as a place of prayer. Hampl concludes her reverie by noting that this is what the

life of these contemplative nuns is about, giving focus to something beyond themselves. I want to use this narrative to explain what I am going to offer this evening in this presentation on celibacy within the Roman Catholic tradition.

First, I am going to use Canon 277 from the 1983 Code of Canon Law, not because it gives a comprehensive treatment of celibacy and not because it offers a spiritually moving exposition of the experience of being celibate, but because it provides a focus for the time we have at our disposal about a topic hard to compress in twenty minutes. The canon reads: "Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are obliged to observe celibacy, which is a special gift of God, by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and can more freely

dedicate themselves to the service of God and humankind." This brief canon offers a succinct statement of what celibacy is—"perfect and perpetual continence"—and why celibacy exists—"for the sake of the kingdom of heaven . . . [to] adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and more freely dedicate oneself to the service of God and humankind."

In his *America* article, "Some Basics about Celibacy," John O'Malley cited three decisive moments in the history of celibacy within Roman Catholicism. What he suggests, and what the canon does not present, is a sense of historical process, the Church engaged with sexuality and culture. What the canon does catch is some of the evolving interpretations that marked this historical process. Let us turn to these interpretations.

First, that celibacy is a symbol of living for the kingdom of God. A

person dedicated to a love transcending this world and living faithfully in that commitment can witness to the power of God to call and to sustain a way of life. Second, a public declaration that this call follows the example of Christ can witness to the mission of all Christians to find in him the way, the life, and the truth. Third, when this dedication is coupled with a life of genuine service to God and to the neighbor, then it can witness to the action of the Spirit, drawing all Christians to prayer, to worship, and to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. For many years these were the kinds of devotional and religious arguments used to explain celibacy. They said something helpful about what remained, "a special gift of God."

But these devotional assertions or theological suggestions needed more contexts. For example, Rowan Williams has wisely warned us that

symbols can make reality abstract. For example, if we can typify people as members of an evil empire or of a godless nation, then it is easy to bomb those symbols, forgetting that they were first of all people with families and jobs, with hope and dreams, just like us. The people who promised to be celibate for the kingdom may witness to the kingdom of God, but they did not cease to become people. Renunciation without a gentleness and compassion can become an endurance contest. Renunciation of sexual love without a concomitant humanity and availability can become a narcissistic spiritual athleticism. Similarly, the following of Christ honors not only what he gave up but to whom he gave—the poor, the marginal, the cripple, the foreigner, the self-righteous. Celibacy has to be Christ-like in the way that it liberates our human attention and our human responses. Moreover, it has to be something that unites the community as one in its baptismal commitment to reflect all the aspects of Christ's presence and service. Therefore, it is a call not to any elitism but to a humble sense of being part of the bigger Body of Christ. Third, the availability to service that

celibacy can provide is not the exclusive prerogative of celibates. John Paul II developed the idea of complementarity of marriage and celibacy. Most celibates have brothers, sisters, and friends who remind them of the profound availability demanded in every workable marriage, in raising children, in one's profession, in making neighborhoods a community—in short, the life we call lay equally demands a Christian availability.

Finally, the disclosures of sexual misconduct have radically rocked the assurances the people of God once had that the declaration of public celibacy signified a private life of integrated celibacy. When I was ordained in 1961, people believed that I stood for a love that they could trust. Many no longer believe in that kind of celibate love. Others want to but their trust has been wounded.

Still others have argued that celibacy needs to be re-examined as a prerequisite for ordained ministry. On the one hand, people like the late Richard Schoenherr challenge the assertion that celibacy is the only way to live priestly ministry, seeing it as a discipline with an honorable tradition but without ultimate neces-

sity for life or ministry. Others, echoing the Protestant reformers, seem to blame celibacy for the sexual misconduct found among some clergy and male religious. The result is that we are, willy-nilly, in a period of profound reexamination not only of what celibacy does but also of what celibacy means.

This reexamination of celibacy has to be a chore of the entire Catholic community, not only its ecclesiastical leadership. For the radical question celibacy addresses is how do the people of God understand chastity, as the virtue that guides sexual appetite? It is not right to ask that only one segment of the community tackle this question. Celibacy is linked to chastity; and chastity is linked to the way we all interpret how we want to live our sexuality within this culture for the sake of the kingdom, in the light of Christ, and in order to be freer to serve our brothers and sisters. This kind of reflection brings us full circle, to sexuality and the Church of the 21st century. The Holy Father has it right. We need to see the issues of celibacy in a wider cultural context, as part of the sexual asceti-

cism of the entire Church, as the complementary calls to be sexually integrated with our gospel discipleship.

There is one more task that I have been asked to perform, to relate all this to my own experience as a Jesuit priest. The celibacy of religious life priesthood is enfolded in the vow of consecrated chastity, which, in turn, is part of a triad that includes poverty and obedience. Chastity forms a style of apostolic presence. My Jesuit life has helped me to formulate this apostolic presence as a life that says people are more important than things (poverty), that people deserve to be loved with a love that they can trust (chastity), and the imagination and ambition I bear are nothing to the ambition and imagination God holds out for me in community (obedience). Sometimes in trying to explain this triad to people far from my life, I do feel awkward, as if I am posing. Sometimes when I read or hear something disparaging about priestly celibacy or religious life commitment, I feel powerless. Sometimes when I confront my own compromises and failures in the whole vowed life enterprise, I feel embarrassed. But mostly I feel the great gift of living in awkward times the grace of having tried to be faithful.

I introduced this reflection with an illustration from Patricia Hampl's *Virgin Time*, that of the candle in the Trappistine monastery chapel. The candle represented the lives of those nuns, giving witness to God's presence in the midst of the world or perhaps whispered a hint of the transcendent amid the darkness of human doubt and cynicism or perhaps testified to the power of prayer to guide our values and our conduct. Let me extend the illustration to celibacy. For celibacy, as the Church reminds us, is a gift from God, and, therefore, another instance of God's freedom. The mystery of celibacy takes a lifetime to unpack; it is that kind of gift. Tonight's inter-religious conversation reminds us that celibacy is a gift beyond Roman Catholicism. Tonight we have the opportunity to see it as a universal call from God.

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## CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY PLANS NATIONAL EVENTS

As the Church in the 21st Century Initiative enters its second year, an effort is under way to host programs around the country. The topics for these events will address the theme for the initiative this year, the Road to Renewal. Led by University President William P. Leahy, S.J., and members of the Boston College faculty, programming will include lectures and panel discussions, as well as an opportunity to engage in dialogue with the participants.

As these events are finalized, details will be posted to the Boston College Alumni Association Web site at [www.bc.edu/alumni](http://www.bc.edu/alumni), or you may call us at 617-552-4700 for more information.



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# The Myth of Male Celibacy

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*A rare gift for the few among priests, an artificial construction for many*

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BY RICHARD ROHR

**T**he revelations of last year seem to be the beginning of the end of what some call “the myth of celibacy.” It’s not that male celibacy was always false or deceitful, but it was in great part an artificial construct.

Men, with the best of original intentions, found out that they were not the mystics that celibacy demanded. That is exactly the point. Celibacy, at least in the male, is a most rare gift. To succeed, it demands conscious communion with God at a rather mature level, it demands many transitions and new justifications at each stage of life, and it demands a specific creative call besides. Many who have ostensibly “succeeded” at it have often, by the second half of life, actually not succeeded in the sense of becoming a God lover, a human lover, and a happy man besides.

Practically, however, the demand for celibacy as a prerequisite for ministry is a set-up for so many false takers. Not bad men, just men who are still on a journey: young men who need identity; insecure or ambitious men who need status; passionate men who need containment for their passions; men who are pleasing their pious mothers or earning their Catholic father’s approval; men who think “the sacred” will prevent their feared homosexuality, their wild heterosexual hormones, or their pedophilia; men with arrested human development who seek to overcompensate by identification with a strong group; men who do not know how to relate to other people and to women in particular.

None of these are bad men; they are just on a many-staged journey, and we have provided them an attractive way-station that often seems to work for a while. But then they go on to the next stage and find themselves trapped, searching, conflicted, split, acting out, or repressing in, and often at variance with their now public and

professed image.

The process lends itself to a Jekyll-and-Hyde syndrome, even among men who are very honest and humble in other areas. The price is far too high once you have committed your life publicly and sacredly. I know how hard it continues to be for me, my closest priest-friends, and many that I have counselled and confessed. Many

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*Healthy male celibacy is rare and is probably only useful as an ‘initiation’ stage for seminarians. After that, priests need to have one hand touching the earth, the concrete, the physical, the material, the sexual.*

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of us stay in not because we believe the official ideology of celibacy anymore, but because we believe in our work, we love the people, and we also know God’s mercy. But that loss of belief in the very ideology is at the heart of the whole problem now. We cannot prop up with law and social pressure what the Spirit does not appear to be sustaining. The substructure has collapsed. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1).

Add to that a rather large superstructure of ascribed status and security, and we have a system that is set up for collapse. Studies of male initiation say it is dangerous to give ascribed status to a man who has not journeyed into powerlessness. He will likely not know how to handle power, and may even abuse it, as we have now seen.

In general, I think healthy male celibacy is rare, and it probably is most healthy as an “initiation” stage to attain boundaries, discipline, integrity, depth, and surrender to God. In the long run, most men, as the

Buddha statues illustrate, need to have one hand touching the earth, the concrete, the physical, the material, the sexual. If they do not, the other hand usually points nowhere.

We should move ahead reaffirming our approach to grace, healing, mercy, solidarity with sinners, patience, and transformation while also cooperating with the social system

ing to the many fine men who are attracted to a marriage partner. And what focused intensity this could give to spiritual formation during that celibacy period, instead of all of the hoop games, telling the directors what they want to hear, mental reservations, non self-knowledge, acting out, and “submarine” behaviour that make many seminaries a haven for unhealth. Seminaries would not drive away sincere spiritual seekers, but would attract them. Not men looking for roles, titles, and uniforms to disguise identity, but men looking for holiness and God through which to express identity.

Male sexuality does not go away. It is not easily sublimated or integrated. It is either expressed healthily or it goes underground in a thousand different ways. Sex is and probably always will be a central issue for most males, and it can never develop honestly inside of a “hothouse” of pre-arranged final conclusions.

We should not be looking for a system where mistakes can never happen, but just a system that can distinguish health from unhealth and holiness from hiding. Like no other institution, the church should be the most prepared to deal with mistakes. That is our business. The steps to maturity are necessarily immature. Let’s start by mentoring the good and the true, and also surrendering to that mystery of grace, forgiveness, and transformation that is our birthright as Christians. Many priests and seminarians have always done this, and I hope this gives them the courage to know why and how they are both “sons and heirs” of a true wisdom tradition. Such disciplined sons, and only such sons, have earned the authority of “fathers.”

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# A Time to Seek Forgiveness, a Time to Hope

*Boston's new archbishop sees the crisis calling the Church back to the meaning of the Cross*

*The following is an excerpt from the homily given by Archbishop Sean Patrick O'Malley at his installation as the new head of the Archdiocese of Boston on July 30, 2003 in Holy Cross Cathedral.*

**D**isciplineship means taking up the Cross. Today this ceremony began with a dramatic gesture. At every installation ceremony the new Bishop is presented with a crucifix at the door, so that he can kiss the cross. This is a gesture we all know as Catholics. On Good Friday, in endless lines Catholics around the world draw near the cross to kiss it. We can never allow that to be an empty gesture. When we kiss the cross, we are kissing God's love and mercy that is crucified. We are acknowledging that salvation is not a cheap grace, that we are bought at a great price.

Saint Francis wrote in his last Testament about his conversion. He said that he could not stand to see leprosy; but one day God's grace invaded his heart. Afterward when Francis encountered a leper, instead of fleeing to safety, he drew near, embraced the leper and kissed him. On that day Francis truly kissed the cross and his life was changed, because his heart was changed.

Jesus began His public ministry in Nazareth with a liturgy of the word. Even as we saw our lectors draw near the podium this morning to proclaim God's word, so we might imagine Jesus as lector, taking the scroll and reading from the book of Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me and has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free and proclaim a year of grace."

Jesus has come to reveal to us the merciful face of the Father. In a world of suffering and violence, of injustice and pain, the love and mercy of our God is manifest to us in Christ. Jesus could indeed say: "Today these words

are fulfilled in your hearing."

When the followers of John the Baptist question our Lord about His identity (Mt. 11) with the question: "Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?" Jesus replied: "Go tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them." He has come to reveal the Father's love and mercy for all, especially those in pain and in want.

We who are His Church are called to carry out these tasks in today's world. The concept of a preferential love for the poor is not a modern concept. In the Gospels the poor, the

long penitential rite. And, at the beginning of this installation ceremony, I again ask forgiveness for all the harm done to young people by our clergy, religious or hierarchy.

The whole Catholic community is ashamed and anguished because of the pain and damage inflicted on so many young people and because of our inability and unwillingness to deal with the crime of sexual abuse of minors. To those victims and their families, we beg forgiveness and assure them that the Catholic Church is working to create a safe environment for young people in our Churches, schools and agencies. It must never be business as usual, but rather a firm commitment of every diocese, parish

cross of pain and humiliation, if we stand firm in who we are and what we stand for, if we work together, hierarchy, priests, religious and laity, to live our faith and fulfill our mission then, we will be a stronger and a holier Church.

This should be of some consolation to those victims who have opened old wounds in their own hearts by coming forward. Your pain will not be in vain if our Church and our nation become a safer place for children. I am pleased that so many victims have come to this installation Mass. The healing of our Church is inexorably bound up with your own healing. You are the wounds on the Body of Christ today. I am sure that many are skeptical and think that the Church leaders are like Simon the Cyrenean who carried the Cross only under duress and not from a genuine desire to help. Perhaps the journey began that way, but what we see in the community of faith is a spirit of repentance and a desire for healing. Despite the understandable anger, protests and litigation, we see you as our brothers and sisters who have been wronged. For this crisis has forced us to focus on what is essential, on Christ, on the saving power of the Cross and our call to follow in His mission to make the loving mercy of our Heavenly Father present in this world.

When our ancestors in the faith built this magnificent temple, they were despised for this religion, their accents, their rough ways. They were the object of ridicule and discrimination, the "Know-nothings" were burning their churches and convents. They were very familiar with suffering, poverty, and hardship, and rightly named their cathedral—our cathedral—for the Lord's Cross. Today the Church of Boston gathers at the Cross, still stunned from the shame and pain of the Church's crisis. We come here to ask God to make our suffering redemptive.

*How we deal with the present crisis will do much to define us as Catholics in the future.*

sick, the marginalized are the protagonists, and Jesus defines His mission in terms of being sent to bring glad tidings to such as these. Jesus tells us that he prefers mercy to sacrifice. As God's pilgrim people, we struggle to advance this mission in spite of our shortcomings.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the Holy Father urged Catholics throughout the world to ask forgiveness for our sins and failings that have obscured the Church's mission and compromised our efforts to announce the Good News over the centuries.

I dare say, we of the Church in the United States could not have imagined just how important this gesture of asking forgiveness would be for us. Little did we realize the dimensions of the problems that beset us. As Catholics, each time we celebrate Mass we begin by asking forgiveness of our sins. We are sinners and we say that we are sorry. For us Catholics the third millennium has opened with a

and school to do all we can to avoid the mistakes of the past and create safeguards for the future. Even now, an audit of the compliance of the Charter for the Protection of Children is being done in every diocese. Much has been done, much needs to be done.

Many Catholics feel that it is unfair that national concern on sexual abuse has focused so narrowly on the Catholic Church without a commensurate attempt to address the problem in our contemporary society at large. Yet we can only hope that the bitter medicine we have had to take to remedy our mismanagement of the problem of sexual abuse will prove beneficial to our whole country, making all of us more aware of the dreadful consequences of this crime and more vigilant and effective in eradicating this evil from our midst.

How we ultimately deal with the present crisis in our Church will do much to define us as Catholics of the future. If we do not flee from the

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