

**A FOOTING ON THE PLAIN**  
BOOK 4

**QUESTIONS OF THE DAY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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My foot stands on level ground. . . Psalm 26:12

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## 1 THE AUTHORITY PROBLEM

For many years I have attempted to teach Biblical submission to women - and to men, too. I know that's unbelievable. Even writing it seems like exposing a bad secret.

The whole idea of wives' submission came to me as a thunderbolt from the blue - that is, without a cloud of such a concept in sight I was struck by the power of the Bible's admonition, "Wives, be submissive to your husbands as to the Lord." I had read these words as flat syllables, without an ounce of meaning, for as long as I could remember, but on this particular day here they were being emphatically presented as something that I could no longer ignore. Before this, I had accepted marriage as something like a football game. My husband and I were two teams who tried to gain yardage from each other, or score goals by getting past each others defenses. Sometimes the competition was amiable, sometimes it was vengeful, but there was always competition with the gaining or giving of ground.

So the very thought that I should be on *his* team was revolutionary. Learning to be on his team was similar, I suppose, to the training necessary for a moon walk. Taken from the familiar way of walking against gravity, it was like learning to maneuver in semi-weightlessness. All the assumptions about our relationship were up for review and reform.

It was now, after all, his team. That is how the Bible sees it even though our modern age decries calling marriage by either's name - rather, it is seen to be a loosely joined, two-headed, bi-named conglomerate, much different from the single entity Jesus described. My first understanding of being a team player needed much modification. I had the mistaken notion that the one who headed the team and called the plays was more important and more worthy than the one who simply took orders and carried them out.

This confusion caused no end of trouble. Perhaps at first, this abasement was good for my soul. But, it had some unpleasant effects not only on me but also on my husband. He too, believed that to rule was really the best of all worlds. His anger vented against the opposing team when we were challengers, was in retrospect somewhat justified, but now when we were both on the same team, he still felt that being the commander and having power over people really meant, didn't it, that he was entitled to be angry when his expectations weren't met?

Before, when I fielded my own team, I at least had prestige and wielded power, but now, I felt like a nobody. At first, I rather enjoyed the meek stance - it was like a romantic novel. But this wore thin quickly. To bolster myself, I would return to the scriptures that taught this wifely submission, and there it would all look right

because God was the reason for obedience. The Blessed Mother was the example, the one who never looked for any recognition, who always pointed to her Son, and who accepted totally. I prayed to be like that.

But submission in itself is not the whole answer to a godly husband and wife relationship. We have all seen the distortions among good men and women. That is the reason, I believe, that the Pope John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* has down-played the Biblical role of submission for women, and emphasized mutual submission. “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.” ( Eph. 5:21) At the root of the distortions lies the Ancient Authority Problem. Though we in marriage sometimes despair of it being solved anytime soon, it actually has been solved and the solution lies within reach of every reasonable, praying Christian couple.

The last book of the Old Testament is a cryptic book of prophecy called Malachi. Like many of the prophetic voices, it is full of dire warnings about God’s anger against his unfaithful people and in the last phrase, which is also the end of the Old Testament itself, are these words: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with curse.” One can echo the King of Siam’s cry, “Puzzlement! It is a puzzlement!”

These words speak of a problem that remains unsolved at Malachi’s writing, the very one that the Bible opens with. In Genesis the first three chapters, the grave fatal flaw of earth’s children is revealed. Bluntly stated, it is *the authority problem*. From the darkest recesses of time, authority in mankind has been delegated to the fathers who have exercised it heedless of the hearts of those they order; and from the first, those under obedience to the fathers have rebelled against their intent to govern them. Rebellion on the one hand, and authoritarianism on the other, how can this authority problem be solved? Malachi foresees a “Day of the Lord” after the coming of a prophetic Elijah that will achieve final resolution of the authority problem. It will either be solved then, hints Malachi, or the whole world will remain under the curse.

The problem, as we’ve stated, began in the early moments of Man-male and female’s, placement in the Garden of Delight. There an unspoiled, obedient creation, including its crowning creature, Man-male and female, stood beautifully before its Creator expressing exactly what had been in that Creator’s awesome heart and mind. In fact, this creature, Man-male and female, was made in the image of its Creator to share the Creator’s spiritual attributes. As with anything created, it could only be its complete self in conformity with its Creator’s plan. That is, in our fallen language, called “obedience” or “submission.”

A poison permeates those words in our fallen milieu. Because of sin they have been responsible for immeasurable wretchedness. However, using our imagination upon that creature, Man- male and female, we know how wonderful its life will be if it faithfully lives out its loving Creator’s plan, and how wholly miserable its life will be if it fails to do so. Then obedience is a blessing and disobedience a curse to Man-male and female. Then submission to the plan looks like bliss, and rebellion against the plan looks like hell. If the Author goes unheeded, that is, if the created thing in its freedom chooses for itself whether to heed his Author or not, and chooses not to, then that creature must live with all that the authority problem brings upon him.

In Genesis this is told not in abstract words, but in a colorful story that has at least two facets

- the first (Genesis 1) a close-up view; the second( Genesis 2) an overview. Because the perfect world with its perfect creature, Man-male and female, was perfectly happy, there was no chance of disobedience- none. Why would one disobey when all one's being experienced bliss? It took an intruder with upside- down values to bring even a question into this realm. He had already chosen a deviant path to lordship of his own being. He would transfer this same mind-set to the perfect creation in order to lord it over these creatures. Thereby came the authority problem into this realm, which was no longer perfect. Still basically good despite its injury, it was loved by its Author who resolved to restore his creature, Man-male and female, to reunion with Himself. Union with Himself had been His perfect plan, a reality He imaged in flesh by sexuality and its function. It was now the goal of Salvation History.

In the meantime, on planet earth, a new lord was in charge, one who considered lordship both means and end. The belief that authority means prestige and power and is to be gained at all costs over as many lackeys as possible was imposed on those poor creatures who now were his subjects. This perverted one claimed as much pseudo-authority as he could muster. Jesus would say of him that he had a certain power of aping creation. When asked about aberrant pseudo-people Jesus would say, "the weeds are the sons of the evil one" and "The enemy who sowed them is the devil ( Matthew 13:24-30;36-43)."

In the temptation posed by this Enemy, he led Man-male and female, to believe that he could be like God. Yet, a creature cannot turn around and make something from nothing when he is the result of something made from nothing. He doesn't have the power. This irrevocable opposite role was purposely confused by Satan. He had planted envy of authoring, or authority, in this creature because it was his own prime motivation.

In creating Man-male and female, the Creator was imaging Himself. He, the Triune God - Father and Son, held in His Being the dynamism of the union of two who were ob-positioned. Within Godhead were those principles which were enfleshed in sexuality, facing spiritual functions which united in the Holy Spirit brought creation into being, also filled the divine Persons with ecstasy in their union. From a human point of view, the most mysterious of the Persons is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of Union and Love."The kiss between the Father and the Son," writes St. Bernard.

The Spirit was given as well, in an imperfect sense, to that trinity that was made in the image and likeness of God, Man-male and female. The Holy Spirit wedded himself to their humanity to maket hem the complete holy creatures first conceived in the mind and heart of God. Their perfect nature cannot be explained without reference to the dimension of the Spirit, nor can their unity be described without the work of the Holy Spirit, nor can their relationship as Beloved united to Godhead as Bride to Husband be explained without the Holy Spirit. How else, other than through the marvelous and wholly inexplicable work of the Holy Spirit, can Godhead, pure spirit, be united to Man - male and female, a physical entity. In each of these relationships the Holy Spirit is the Third and Essential Person of the union.

Pope John Paul II writes of Genesis 1:24 in the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, "Can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man?" Seeing such a magnificent parallelism of mankind to Godhead, it is possible to picture the roles inherent in Man-male and female, as somehow mirroring the roles of their

Divine counterparts. Ultimate origins lie with the Father. The creeds tell us “the Son proceeds from the Father” or that the Son is the “only begotten” of the Father. We know that because of the limitations of human language this does not mean what it seems to imply, that the Father existed before the Son, or that the Son came into being secondarily. The Son co exists with the Father. And there never was “a time” when the Son was not, yet the Father was. The words only point to a relationship that though wholly equal and co-existing is also polar and non-exchangeable.

The Genesis stories describe the same thing as true of Man-male and female. The first story asserts that male and female are created together in the image of the Triune God. The second story describes their relationship as having the same kind of dependency by the female to the male as the creeds tell us is true of the Son to the Father. Two equals again have polar and non-exchangeable, but wholly equal roles. The role of authority or authoring of the Father is imaged in the male physiology and psyche. He is given a kind of authoring and attendant authority. The female responds to this authoring and within her womb is formed the fruit of their union. In this she is like the Son who is matrix to all creation. The Father creates all that is through the Son. It was to share the ultimate of joys with Man-male and female, that God shared His own Triune nature. Perfectly, there was nothing in either role to bring pain or sorrow.

Misery came into creation with the perverted reasoning of the Enemy. How totally the values of the usurper have been absorbed without question is an indication of his control over this world. Authority, to him, means prestige and power; response, to him, means slavery and denigration - isn't that just standard worldly reasoning?

Teaching women Christian submission or obedience is therefore fraught with trouble. How does one teach Christian relationship in marriage? How can one teach Christian submission and authority and not end up a man who domineers and a woman who cowers? A frightened woman seldom realizes how very frightened she is, nor does she realize that she is appealing on the one hand, and manipulating on the other, in order to get her way. And the rebellious are just as bound by the authority problem as the falsely submissive - actually both are forms of rebellion. Both the rebel and the subservient are reactors, neither live in Christian freedom.

Satan rules when the man exercises authority as prestige and power, and demands (and receives out of fear) control of the relationship. Too often misapplying their headship and behaving high handedly, it is apparent in their dealings with wife and children that they go through life angry. They expect their wills to be carried out, neither expecting nor allowing discussion, and they cannot accept small deviations from their perfectionism. Christian women often describe going through their daily routines walking on egg shells. It isn't hard to transcribe this tension into the, unfortunately, too frequent relationship of priests and lay people.

This is not to say that the rebellious do not ask many questions that are veiled threats, or that there are no times when authority is so trapped by manipulation that the only sane response is not to answer. A passive-aggressive woman (or lay person), and there are many because of the very nature of human submission and authority, can really drive a man (or a priest) to the brink.

The problems here are so aggravating, the root causes so very deep, there is only one hope. Just as the sin we have described is the primary one - the one that destroyed, at least temporarily, the perfect Plan of God, so the cure must be the primary one - personal acceptance of the salvation of Jesus to forgive sins, and conscious living in

the Holy Spirit. These two supreme graces given in Baptism and Confirmation are then nourished by the Third Sacrament - Eucharist. Here is the Day of the Lord, the Day of the Lord Jesus, of which Malachi prophesied would turn the hearts of authority figures lovingly to those submissive to it, and the hearts of those under authority lovingly to those who have the role of ordering.

Teaching the roles of Christian husband and wife depends wholly on the supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit to bring to repentance, to enlighten and restore. The human will is never seen to be inviolate in a more clear light. The person must desire and seek; the person must open the inner being to the Holy Spirit. Many times the seed drops on ground that may not be ready.

There are other options to the chaffing miseries of the authority problem in marriage. Feminism is one. Feminism's hatred of hierarchy views authority as a role of power just as the lord of this world does. The feminist accepts Satanic evaluation of both the role of authority and the role of servant. Therefore, the feminist solution - the sharing of the role and power of authority and the shunning of servant roles, holds not a shred of hope because the enemy still controls.

God's word gives no opportunity for a change of roles, but much for a change of heart. The Bible holds steadfastly to the order of male and female established in the beginning. It is not St. Paul who reverts to Jewish law by holding women to obedience, a place contrary to that given them by Christ. It is Jesus Christ himself who stands behind Paul's insistence in I Corinthians 11 that women are under their husbands' headship. We know this two ways: 1) St. Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - that is why the words are not his alone, but the Word of God. He is aware of that when he writes them - he claims full apostolic authority for his teaching about woman (I Cor. 14:34-37); 2) St. Paul tells us that he is passing on a tradition given him by Christ. First in verses 1 and 2, "*Be imitators of me, as/am of Christ* I commend you because you. . . *maintain the traditions* even as I have *delivered them* to you," and in verse 23 when he relates the institution of the Lord's supper, "For I received from the Lord what I also *delivered to you.*" St. Paul speaks of two traditions that he has received directly from Christ and is *delivering* to them. This is a formal wording about the handing of sacred tradition, like the messenger asking you to sign for the package. The first of these is the strong tradition from Christ about the submissive role of women, the second is the Eucharist.

In light of the creation of Man-male and female in the image of the Creator, and the two primal roles that bring both fruitfulness and happiness, we can see that this must be the tradition of Christ. It must, therefore, also be the tradition carried on in the Church of Christ, the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

How then do we teach it to those who are prepared? The man who images the First Person of the Trinity, will, of course, learn his role from meditating on the role of the First Person. There is no room for the fallen valuing of authority. Just as God the Father exercises authorship of the whole created order and does so only with the good of the created in mind, so will the Christian man look to that model in his own fatherhood whether physical or spiritual. The Father provides, protects and furthers the well-being of all life dependent upon him. He orders his human family for its well-being; his governance is just. His heart is turned towards those he heads.

The man, unlike the woman, however has another role - he must learn submission himself, for he, even in the exercise of a delegated authority is under authority - he owes obedience to those who have the care of his soul,

the priests and bishops who have a prior and primary authority, and also many times, to an employer. And his stance to God is like his wife's stance to him - obedient and submissive. C.S. Lewis wrote in *That Hideous Strength*, "...the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. . ."

The woman likewise has a model within the Holy Trinity. She, the second person in her own created unity, looks to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It is the principle that emanates from him that explains her being. She is the respondent to the initiative and authority of the man just as the Son is the dependent respondent to the Father. It is not just the human Jesus who only speaks what he hears the Father say, or only does what he sees the Father doing. It is also the Second Person of the Trinity who is sent and never sends. It is he who "not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped" emptied himself and took the form of a servant. The woman's heart will be turned with trust and joy toward headship.

This Second Person in the human flesh of Jesus had two roles on earth. To the Father he displayed the attitudes asked of all men and women who accept him as Lord (turning from the lord of this world) the wholly obedient heart to do the Father's will. To mankind he displayed the loving concern of the authority-face of God the Father. On the one hand we hear him speak manifesting authority as Godhead exercises it - as a service to His children. On the other, we see how we are to respond to God with the same trust and obedience as Jesus.

Just as the Persons within the Holy Trinity have all the attributes but exercise them from different poles, so man and woman share all the same attributes. A woman exercises a delegated authority over her sons - scripture affirms it. A man responds to the needs and desires of his wife. Yet, authority is more to be said of him, and obedience more to be said of her. His role is a service role, and for this reason their relationship is mutual submission.

The puzzlement will vanish in meditation on the Holy Trinity. Malachi's cryptogram about authority and obedience has been solved by the Day of the Lord Jesus. It is the relationship of the Divine Persons that man and woman are created to image on this earth, for their good and their Maker's glory.

**2 JUSTICE FOR WOMEN:**  
A Fourth Century controversy  
sheds light on a Twentieth Century dilemma.

No word is more key to considerations of relationships in this world, nor more heralded in discourse and ignored in actions than the word 'justice.' And among all the social justice issues raised, none is considered more indisputably unjust than the kept place for women in the Catholic Church. From feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether to those eager for the oft-delayed, finally aborted, 1980's pastoral on women, the resounding cry is always "Justice!"

These women, representative of thousands, are certain that they have an undeniable case and no declaration from Rome has been able to silence it. They have examined the scriptures and have found no substantiation to the male hierarchy's claim that Jesus did not intend they should fulfill any place in the Church for which they are qualified, including priesthood. They believe women have been excluded from the roles of ministry to which they have been called. Examination of the literature of the Catholic feminists finds as their goal not just freedom to give input and share decisions, but priesthood. Says Ruether the Church refusing woman her rightful place of equality is "the fallen disorder of injustice created by sinful humans." The verse in Galatians that speaks of equality (3:27), "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ," is the scriptural authority used to wrap up the case.

However, others, myself as one, continue to raise questions and are not sure that this is authority enough. Yet, we are castigated for even asking for authority. It is a dirty word; yet our questions, even those of us who are not schooled in theology, do deserve attention, and perhaps a forum such as this has the breadth to accommodate them.

Isn't it true, that in using the aforesaid verse those seeking this specific equality for women, believe that they are quoting indisputable authority? Yet, the Apostle Paul, the author of that verse, demands that the issue of justice be taken much deeper. Gaining his own insights through the Holy Spirit, St. Paul understands justice for women in a very precise way. He is so sure that God is his source of knowledge that he makes statements about woman's role in the Church unequivocally with full apostolic authority. (see I Cor. 14:34-37) It presents a problem to those who are unwilling to discard as mere cultural bias any apostolic statement made so declaratively.

What is justice after all? The commonly held concept is that justice is treating persons as though they were the same in all regards: the poor and the rich, the white and the black, the young and the old, the male and the female. The questionable word, the word that must be addressed is “equality.” CS. Lewis has two characters discuss it in *That Hideous Strength*

“Ah, equality. . . We must talk of that some other time. Yes, we must all be guarded by equal rights from one another’s greed, because we are fallen. Just as all must wear clothes for the same reason. But the naked body should be there underneath the clothes, ripening for the day when we shall need them no longer. Equality is not the deepest thing, you know.

“I always thought that was just what it was. I thought it was in their souls that people were equal.”

“You were mistaken,” said he gravely, “that is the last place where they are equal.”

Feminist theory tends to define ‘equal’ as “the same as in all regards” With that as its definition Lewis is right; in the soul of persons, their intellect, emotions and will, there is no equality - there is no such thing as equal persons. However, when we picture each of us standing before God, we would agree that equality is there, but it rests in the worth of each person compared to every other person. Just as the sun brings life to a blade of grass and a tree equally as though each were the only plant under its gaze, so God loves and endows an equal measure of worth to each human soul. Before God we are all equals; He is no respecter of persons; He shows no partiality. That we have equal worth agreed, it remains to be seen if it is unjust that equal worth does not bring male and female equal access to the possible roles in the Church.

“What is justice?” Plato’s thoughtful assessment is “right order.” Right ties this definition of justice into a universal moral law of God. Right order tells us that there is an order established by God to govern human affairs and relationships. Both of these concepts are under fire in modern philosophic thought, but they are givens in Scripture and in traditional Catholic theology which is the context from which we must ascertain the question at hand; that is, if we intend to remain under the umbrella of Catholicism.

When God’s order is followed there is justice for all. By following divine order each person gets his due, and is treated fairly by political power as well as by other persons. Those in authority govern as a service, and those under that authority have free access with input to that authority and only stand to gain by their obedience to it.

Following God’s order, the rich never exercise oppressive self-interest, and amply give the poor opportunity and means to leave their poverty; black persons and white persons order their relationships according to the brotherhood they share under the Father God; and man and woman gladly fill the niche each has been given in human family, society, and Church. *Right order is justice.* Justice brings peace first to the individual soul, then between individuals in society, and finally between nations. Justice is a worthy goal.

In Carl Barth’s 1961 essay, “Man and Woman” he addressed the question of the Godly order and justice of male and female:

A precedes B, and B follows A. Order means succession. It means preceding and following. It means super- and sub-ordination. But when we say this we utter very dangerous words which are unavoidable if we are to describe what is at issue in the being and fellowship of man and

woman. . . When it is a question of the true order which God the Creator has established, succession, and therefore precedence and following, super- and sub-ordination, does not mean any inner inequality between those who stand in this succession and are subject to this order. . . In so far as it demands subjection and obedience, it affects equally all whom it concerns. It does not confer any privilege or do any injustice. It lays a duty on all, but it also gives to all their right. It does not deny honour to any, but gives to each his own honor.

Very dangerous words indeed! But they bring to the fore that woman's role well may be more deeply a justice issue than feminism now addresses. The justice that must be satisfied is the right order of woman and man. If it cannot be based on an equality that claims they are "the same as, in all regards," what is it based on? Is there any indication in Scripture of God's right ordering of man and woman?

Of course, there are many such indications clearly and consistently stated. But they can no longer be used effectively in apologetics. Our modern skepticism has eaten away at faith in the Scripture as definitive about much of anything. Its acid is doubt that, in *Dei Verbum's* words, "Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." So to trace the consistent thread of divine order regarding male and female through the Bible, an order that can be shown not to be degradation of one sex in favor of the other, not cultural hangups, not sexist sin, but rather peace and justice, is sadly unconvincing to those who wait to be convinced.

There is another source of truth about the divine order for man and woman that may yet have a chance of interpreting justice to the sexes and convincing us that the Church's order is divinely instituted and is not merely the organized entrenchment of a sinful sexism. This source is fully authorized by the Bible; it is fully developed in Sacred Tradition; and it is, so far as I know, acceptable to the feminist, at least Christian feminists, as a tenet of faith. That source of light is the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

This doctrine was wrought through all kinds of turmoil in the two hundred years that centered in the mid-fourth century. In many ways it has parallels to the present question in the Church which feminism has posed. All of a sudden, in the late third century, like a storm blowing across a lake, the relationship of Persons in the Godhead, the truth about God, was at stake in the heresy of Arianism. The controversy swept up bishops, priests, and people, causing Athanasius to cry, "The whole world has gone Arian."

The story and its conclusion are well known, but not so clearly seen is the bearing both this story and its conclusion have on the present question of the order and meaning of the sexes. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity centers in the order, role, and relationship of Two Persons from Whom is "breathed" a Third. Upon the understanding of that doctrine we come to the Scriptural assertion in Genesis 1, that man and woman are created in God's image, a correlation restated more clearly in Genesis 5 (RSV):

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.

John Paul II explicating this passage in *Dominum et Vivificantem* writes:

The biblical concept of creation includes not only the call to  
existence. . . - but also the presence of the Spirit of God in

creation, that is to say, the . . . self- communication to the things he creates. This is true first of all concerning man, who has been created in the image and likeness of God: “Let us make. . . *Can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man?* The Christian reader, who already knows the revelation of this mystery, can discern a reflection of it also in these words. 1:3:12 (italics mine)

Bearing upon the divine ordering of man and woman is the order of the two Persons, Father and Son, which on the deepest level provides clarity to questions which on the surface cannot be answered sufficiently otherwise. The doctrine of the Trinity established the Son as of the same substance as the Father: “Of one substance, not confounding the persons,” stated the early creeds hammered out at the Nicene council. The sharing of substance, or nature, did not mean that the Persons were interchangeable; they were not to be “confounded”, that is, confused; they could not take each other’s place.

Like the Holy Trinity, Man, male and female, is first a unity. Like the Holy Trinity, that unity consists of two persons united in a third person. At the moment of their perfect creation, the Third Person “breathed by Father and Son is given to mankind to be, in a sense, their “third person” also. The Fall can be understood to be the overall loss of the Third Person to Mankind, the loss of divine life to man and woman, both personally and interpersonally. In sacramental marriage, we Catholics believe, the man and woman are joined again by a Third who promises himself to their ongoing union.

The name Son does not imply that the Second Person is “begotten” after the Father, but merely states that his is a dependent relationship. Persons in the Trinity co-exist. There is never “a time” when one is when the other is not. Similarly with the creatures created in that image. The name woman means “taken out of man.” The persons in Mankind are created at the same time as the above quote tells us. The second creation story of woman being created from Adam’s rib does not mean to negate that, but simply explains the dependent relationship of woman to man in the same way the names Father and Son explain their co-eternal but ordered relationship. In both cases one comes from, or has a dependent relationship to the other but not in time.

In the definition of the Divine Persons the struggle arose over the idea of equality. Arius led those who insisted that the man Jesus who came as a servant, who was sent by God, could not be on the same level as the Father who had the authority to send. Nor could the role of matrix, the Son “through whom all things were made” be seen to be equal to the Father who initiated and by whom all things were made. Yes, the Son was divine, but he could not be on the level of the Father. He was a lesser Being, was the conclusion, not an equal Person in his divinity.

Those who followed Athanasius’ orthodox position said, “not so.” The Son is a full equal to the Father, they are of one and the same substance. Though the Son is begotten by the Father and therefore is dependent on the Father, there was never a time when the Father was without the Son. They receive their name, Father and Son, not because one precedes in time, only because they have irrevocable order. The Father created all things through the Son and the role is never reversed; so, though they share all the same attributes, some are more to be said of the one than the other.

Those unable to hold “equal” but “non-exchangeable” in their minds continued to fight for the monolithic idea of God. Jesus, they continued to insist, was a secondary kind of God. The Father was higher and the Son was lower in quality of divinity. They were not equals.

When the confusion finally subsided the doctrine of the Trinity was firmly established as Truth to be developed in understanding but never again to be challenged. As I say, I know of no feminist theologian who has challenged it though many have sought to find afeminine principle or original model in the Persons. Such a search is a legitimate endeavor. Our excursion into Trinitarian theology also seeks to find there a model for the masculine-feminine relationship.

Does that model originate then in the Son’s relationship to the Father? The Son is the Second Person in the Trinity, as we have just explained; the woman is the second person in the parallel creation, Man. First, second and third have no implication of importance or prestige, all are equal in worth; first, second and third speak only of order and role.

It needs to be explained right here that finding the feminine exemplified in the Son is not a contradiction. Looking at the Trinity from outside of it (that is, *ad extra*) for a principle is like standing on the earth looking at the sun to determine how it relates to the earth. Even as the sun will always be our source of light and heat and we will never be its source of light and heat, so to us creatures the Trinity as a whole will always be to us wholly Masculine. We can never initiate anything with God; we can only receive from Him. Therefore, from our place outside of the Trinity, we call all the divine Persons by masculine names and pronouns in respect of that overarching principle.

If we could ever stand on the sun, which is as absurd an idea as the following one, we might observe matter behaving as we know matter behaves under similar circumstances on earth and could then understand something more about both the inner reality of the sun and our own physical reality and their interrelationship. Within the Trinity (*ad intra*), could we ever stand within God in this extravagant sense, we would observe that the Father manifests a role akin to what we earthlings name “masculine,” and the Son manifests a role we know anthropomorphically as “feminine” as these Persons relate together in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We can see that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity established that at the heart of things there are two principles of being, initiation and response, united in a third principle - love, and that these principles have equal value. These two stances make possible creativity and ecstatic union of the two Persons and are the inestimable gifts of His own being that God shares with Mankind, male and female, in creating him/them even as Genesis tells us.

When the full impact of this analogical relationship of Godhead and mankind is more conscious, several things may become clearer. First man and woman, like Father and Son are equals. Second, man and woman, like Father and Son share all the attributes of their common being. Third, man and woman, like Father and Son, have different roles in that one nature. They are not interchangeable. Fourth, though they share all the same attributes, it is more to be said of the man as it is of the Father that he orders, governs, authorizes, initiates and sends. It is, on the other hand, more to be said of the woman, as it is of the Son, that she heeds, responds, submits, is matrix, and is sent.

What is hard for us to realize because it is not so in the world - both sides are servant roles. The authority side, as well as the obedient side, exists to love and serve the other, even as the Father exists to love and serve the Son and the Son, the Father.

Many conclusions about justice for man and woman may be drawn from this analogy. Some are: 1) justly, there are positions of authority and governance in the Church that are not appropriate for women; 2) the authority side exists in home and Church to provide for, to rightly order, in other words, to serve, those responsive to that authority. When authority does not serve it has ceased to administer godly order; 3) the attitude that woman's receptive role is less important and less honorable than the authority side is completely false wherever it is found. The Church must work to appreciate and respect her role and person as fully worthy and help the woman accept her role and personhood as fully worthy. 4) The receptive role is being lost to woman though it is of her very essence. The Church must recognize its extreme importance and, if she wills, help her leave the market place and the earning of money ( and masculine sports) to again become the heart of the home. This, by teaching her her own importance (Blessed. EdithStein's work on woman is to be studied seriously in this regard), and teaching the man that by nature and design he is the provider whose efforts for the family God will abundantly bless. 5) Gender language in the Scriptures and the liturgy has a profound meaning related to the Persons of the Trinity and their eternal, unequivocal masculine relationship to Man. It cannot be ignorantly discarded or changed without destroying divine revelation that has deep relevancy to our becoming whole human beings.

On the basis of this theology, submitted here by a non-theologian who requests scrutiny and response, it would appear the Church has a clear teaching mission to men and women who look to her for truth and the ordering of their lives. Such guidance will help each of us to become a whole person by leaving behind ideas of justice that belong to a world that cannot comprehend the values of the gospel, and by living out right order for ourselves with all its implications according to our sex.

Many conclusions about justice for man and woman may be drawn from this analogy. Some are: 1) there are positions of authority and governance in the Church that are not appropriate for women. 2) The authority side exists in home and Church to provide for, to rightly order, in other words, to serve, those responsive to that authority. When authority does not serve it has ceased to be administering godly order. 3) The attitude that woman's recept role is less important and less honorable than the authority side is completely false wherev found. The Church must work to appreciate and respect her role and person as fully we help the woman accept her role and person as fully worthy. 4)The receptive role is & woman though it is of her very essence. The Church must recognize its extreme ir and help her leave the market place and the earning of money to again becomehome. This, by teaching her her own importance, and teaching the man that by nature and design he is the breadwinner whose efforts for the family God will abundantly bless. 5) gender language in the Scriptures and the liturgy has a profound meaning related to the Persons of the Trinity and their masculine and feminine imaging of principles. It cannot be ignorantly discarded or changed without destroying divine revelation that has deep relevancy to our becoming whole human beings. Especially disordered is the ascription of motherhood to God, who is the ultimate eternal masculine to mankind's eternal feminine. On the basis of this theology, the Church has a great teaching mission to men and women who look to her for truth and the ordering of their lives. Such guidance will help us become whole men and

women by leaving behind the concepts of justice in a world that has never comprehended the values of the gospel where the first shall be last and the last first.

### 3 EMPOWERING THE SEXES

“Self-definition leading to empowerment” has long been the goal of the woman’s movement, and now men are joining together to empower each other to “overcome the emasculating effects of feminine empowerment.” Gloria Steinem exults in this development. “Women are coming to power on their own, in politics, management, industry, everywhere,” she says, and adds, “The path to power is very hard on men.”

TIME reports that in California, “a lot of passive guys who can’t use their positive energy” have formed an empowerment group with three psychological counselors.” The clients come in all slumped over feeling awful. They’re carrying the old male role around on their backs, the authoritarian provider, but it doesn’t work anymore. They’ve got female bosses now, and their wives and kids are rebelling.”

As man and woman continue to search for the full potential of their sexual identity in the confused world of gender, the fabric of society, already as many holes as substance, continues to unravel and shred. The two, male and female, are tossed around by the four winds; psychology, physiology, sociology, and a theology of sorts. These four blow continual speculation coming up with “new” insights week by week. Theories are so abundant, no periodical in any of the four fields is without its article on sexuality, especially promoting the feminist point of view, and women’s magazines sport two or three “try-this’s” per issue.

Women who have been stabilizers to home and community now run in circles looking for the latest answer to their stimulated need for empowerment. Beginning with a demand to be equal bread -winners, they end by demanding child-support from the same man from whom they wrested self-sufficiency; desiring freedom from menial labor, they fall into the most menial labors - nine to five; fantasizing about the “right” man, they forfeit being the “right” woman, and lose the man who had the potential to be “right” to gain what becomes a string of “wrong” men; wanting to be richer, they go out to seek their fortunes, lose their neglected husbands and become poor - the “feminine poverty.”

The effect on the man has been well expressed by author, George Gilder, “Men need women for their survival, if we can’t find a role as providers we’re in trouble.” He notes that marriages most apt to break up are those of successful career women and ghetto women. “In the first case the provider’s role is usurped by women themselves, and in the second it is usurped by the state through welfare.” Judging from the chaos this is causing in home and family, the break down of monogamy and all the attendant evils, he says, “the sexual shuffle is creating a class of bitter losers.”

Against this background and the growing statistics of latchkey children, violent children, and teenage suicide, it can be concluded that empowerment is not happening. Rather people of both sexes, young and old, are being robbed of their freedom and happiness even while they quest for both in an unprecedented way.

This quest for both sexes is not confined to the secular arena. It is a very present issue in the Church and the effects of empowerment issues are not different in degree or kind from the effects seen in society. Sr. Char Madigan, a prominent feminist spokeswoman in Minneapolis, campaigning for empowerment of women, seeks the removal of all power concepts from theology and Scripture because she believes men's power in the Church is based on the "impotence of another being," woman. Carrying this idea to its logical conclusion she says, "Do away with Lordship and Kingship." These "power-over" words lead "only to corruption and dominance. " Power itself is the "linch-pin" in the cause of violence to women. It is with "kinship" that Jesus appeals to women, not in his "domination titles."

Once the Catholic Church claimed to give direction to the quest of meaning and personal fulfillment in sexuality. At present its spokes-persons often seem hesitant to say anything in support of scriptural tenets. This is because the Church itself has been forced to reexamine the things about sexual meaning that it took for granted. This is regrettable when it serves to undermine the People of God's confidence about the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the truth of Holy Scripture, and the surety of Tradition, but it is to the good when it forces the deeper understanding of the creature, mankind, made male and female in God's own image. It is regrettable when it puts the priest on the defensive about the male monopoly on his calling, but good when it regains as worthy the feminine experience.

Can the Church assimilate the good news and the bad news generated by feminism and come up with an unfolding of Gospel truth that will bring its servants, man and woman, to a new level of fulfillment in their sexuality? Last year (1987) the Pope instructed to the American Bishops to "endeavor to explain as cogently as he can that the Church's teaching on the exclusion of women from priestly ordination is extraneous to the issue of discrimination and that it is linked rather to Christ's own design for his priesthood." Bishops should work for "every legitimate freedom that is consonant with their human nature and their womanhood," and "oppose all discrimination of women by reason of sex."

Upon this instruction from the Pope, the Bishops have formed their committee headed by Bishop Joseph Imesch of Joliet to write a Pastoral on Woman (a failed attempt) which can hardly be complete without also addressing the man. We can be assured that there is a body of truth about man and woman which will become more and more defined and which will give the faithful a sure foundation upon which to understand their God-given sexual meaning and upon which to base their lives in relationship to each other. Clearly the issue of empowerment will be addressed in some form. It will then be clear that the world's view of empowerment must be differentiated from the Christian concept of what full human potential is. The parting of the ways on what constitutes empowering will be dramatic.

The 'city of man' has always seen power as prestige, dominance, and supremacy of one over another - Sr. Madigan is right about that. But the "city of God" promotes none of these attitudes as fitting for any of its members; it sees all of worldly power as inimical to the kingdom of God, even though, regrettably, these distorted uses of power have been part of Church history. Even when entangled in the wrong use of power themselves, however, the members of Christ's body have always called prestige, dominance, and highhandedness, "sin," and a cause for

repentance. The answer to misuse of power in the Church is not to deny the Lordship and Kingship of Jesus, nor the power and authority he delegated to his apostolic Church.

What is empowering for man and woman in that Church? The Church appeals to Scripture and takes her definition from it. In Scripture, power is a gift from God that has one goal, to raise the human person from sin and restore him once more as a child of God. "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become the children of God." John 1:12.

As children of God, man and woman are reimbued with full humanhood unto the likeness of Jesus. In him, they will become fully man and fully woman. The Church defines empowerment then, as the Holy Spirit's gift bringing man and woman to the full human potential they were created in God's image to have. This is quite a different thing than prestige and domination.

The Church alone offers salvation to all from the sin of the wrong uses of power - even to her own members who have assumed the world's values and the oppressive role. She offers hope to the "passive guys" and to the "unliberated and powerless" women whose reach for power has only put the ball and chain on a different leg. The Church's empowerment is salvation, while the world's empowerment smacks of its diabolical teacher, who in Milton's words prefers "to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

Women for twenty years have sought self-actualization as power to a point where that quest has replaced their quest for salvation. To many women, the two ideas - self-actualization and salvation - are synonymous. The idea that in realizing her human potential a woman is saved is very persuasive. Long crippled, deadened, and deposed by the "disqualifying supremacy" of males, salvation can seem to be equated with the new vigor and mastery that comes with a more fully realized selfhood. Salvation whose root word "salus" means "wholeness" is tied then, in this way of looking at things, to woman's coming into her own, to her gaining power.

Self-actualization is, however, hardly a Christian idea or even a development of a Christian idea. It is rather the heretical idea that salvation has to do only with success in this world and contentment with self, and that it is achievable by the person's own efforts. Pelagianism, the heresy that man can be righteous by the exercise of his free will, is very much alive today despite its thorough condemnation by the Church centuries ago. As Catholic layman and world-wide speaker, Ralph Martin is fond of saying, "Better to be partial and go to heaven, than to be self-actualized and go to hell."

St. Paul was concerned with Christians coming to wholeness. He wrote to the Thessalonian community, "May the God of peace himself, sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, and soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful and he will do it." There is obviously then a way for a Christian to be whole - his selfhood fully activated. It, however, demands an interior attitude that lies crosswise to all common ideas of empowerment. As Jesus was a "sign of contradiction," this interior attitude contradicts all ideas of power and for that reason it has become a hated concept.

Almost unmentionable, even in the Church, the word that holds this concept, is "submission." The contrast of power, self-mastery, and authority in society and the way to achieve these is like black to white when we consider how Scripture tells us to attain to our full potential, our wholeness, and our salvation. "Take up your cross and

follow me.” “Unless a grain falls into the earth and dies ...” Submission, the sending-under of self, is the key word here, not empowerment. There is no way to reconcile these concepts which are at total odds with each other.

When we submit we give up ownership of our lives and become lackeys, as the Greek work for servant, *doulos* implies. We are then thoroughly obedient to godly authority. In so doing we imitate him who on a cross demonstrated how the power of God works to make men whole - through the abject helplessness of those who offer their weakness to him. Then he offers His strength “sufficient for your weakness.”

The Scriptures hold up that model of life-giving submission, not only in Jesus the obedient Second Person of the Trinity, but also in the woman, the obedient second person of mankind. The woman, says Scripture, submits to her husband as Christ submits to His Father (I Peter 1,2; I Cor. 11). She becomes a sign to the Christian community of how wholeness and holiness become reality in the very stuff of life. This is not doormat subjection; this is a fully willed and understood trust of God’s ways.

From this understanding may develop a doctrine of mankind; hopefully, the framework for it arising in the Bishops’ Pastoral on woman. (Furthered instead by John Paul II with *Mulieris Dignatatem*) Mankind will be seen as imaging the Holy Trinity much more closely than was clear to us before. Two opposites, man and woman, (not in the sense of opposition, only in the sense of order) are initiator and responder. As such they image Two Opposites (not in the sense of opposition, only in the sense of order) Father and Son who are Initiator and Responder. Unifying these Opposites, the Holy Spirit acts a Third Person to each, forming a triune unity; that is, when the human persons have received His grace into their lives. It is in this union that the creativity and ecstasy lie which are the fulfillment of the human person.

The creativity and ecstasy of the love of the Holy Trinity is meant to be shared with his beloved creature, humankind. The responder role, like the Son in the Holy Trinity, and like the woman in mankind, is that to which all mankind conforms itself in its redeemed relationship to God. Mankind is then the Bride to the Godhead’s Bridegroom. Response of the bride to the bridegroom assures fruitfulness. And fruitfulness is the one sign Jesus held up as a test for the faithful. “You will know them by their fruits.”

Spiritual fruitfulness follows the same rules as biological fruitfulness. The one appropriately made for conception submits to the one appropriately able to initiate that fruitfulness. There is a continuum from the biological to the spiritual. The same rules hold, and the order cannot be reversed. Redeemed mankind cannot initiate its own fruitfulness. Humans have a seed, but it must be activated into life by initiation from above. They are not capable of self fertilization spiritually. The Church made up of redeemed men and women is eternally Bride to Christ, who in representing Godhead on earth is eternally masculine.

Here is the heart of the meaning of sexuality. Something of the essence of reality is at stake in the present ferment. This confusion of sexual roles may be the last and gravest of Satanic attacks - the propaganda that except for the “inconsequential” biological events of conception, gestation, and birth, male and female are interchangeable in society and in the Church.

It is upon unchangeable truth of the imaging of mankind of the Holy Trinity that we can be sure that the development of the Christian idea of man and woman will be based. Christian knowledge which is not head-

tripping, but integral to life, will bring the power to the sexes to conform themselves to the order of God. And this will be happiness.

Those who have begun to grasp it have already experienced its effect. Women are elevated in their femininity when they understand that the Gospel itself elevates the uniquely feminine values of yieldedness and fruitfulness. They begin to comprehend that they are the Masters design - a sign of the heart of reality. They see that they are the image of the Second Person with a role and mission similar to His, and that as such they are fully equal to him who is designated first person. Fully endorsed, then, as the monad of this submission, she will know the happiness of her potential as woman, which includes all the gifts of her masculine side as well, and will be relieved of the stress of striving for the masculine. Such striving she will realize, only devalues the feminine. She will say to those so inclined in her Church, "Please, stop considering me for ordination to priesthood. By that you make me feel that the masculine role is more valuable than the powerful role I have. You put the emphasis on the wrong place. I hold the key to understanding Christianity. If you take this from me, my submissive and fruit-bearing role, you rob yourself of the heart of faith. Don't be deceived as I was once deceived by this same lie of the Evil One. Then my name was Eve. God has changed it now. Now my name is Mary. Follow me, all of you, man and woman, priest and people, if you want oneness with Christ Jesus."

And the man, what will his response be? He will be easy with his authority, no longer guilty about his masculine role, no longer emasculated and in need of empowering. He will not be tempted to overlook his equal but opposite mate. He will honor her and will use his masculine gifts to serve her unstintingly. He will serve in his family, never thinking that headship means prestige. He will serve in the Church, loving the body of Christians which he heads in Jesus' place at the altar, in the confessional, by the bedside, at the baptismal font, behind the business desk and in the counselor's corner, as only the eunuch who represents the King and carries out His loving order. And he will work to safeguard the feminine from the insidious attacks of society which will continue to devalue and disallow her intrinsic worth. He will never be tempted to say, "Sisters and brothers" in an attempt for "equality."

What will be the effect on the family and the Church. Need any pictures be drawn of the fulfillment such alignment with God's word promises? Need anyone's imagination be jogged to envision the ordered peace that will descend on both Godly institutions? Life in the home and in the Church can come together for the Christ-empowered man and the Christ-empowered woman when they seek, perhaps as the last-resort, the truth of their sexuality as the Catholic Church alone offers it.

#### 4 THE PASTORAL ON WOMEN'S CONCERNS: ITS AILMENTS, A DOCTOR, AND THE CURE

Diagnosis of the ills of the first draft of the U.S. bishop's pastoral on women's concerns means noting its pervasive whining tone, its wishy-washy color, then looking internally at its contradictions to Scripture and Catholic Tradition, and comparing it to the vitality, strength, and integrity of what would be a healthy teaching document intended for the Catholic faithful.

After this diagnosis of problems the next step is to recommend a specialist in the areas of concern, and the third to suggest directions toward a cure which the specialist with her expertise points out.

A few years ago Helen Hitchcock wrote that as an editor viewing feminist writing she "would be embarrassed to publish arguments which demonstrate nearly every stereotype with which misogynists characterize the female personality: i.e., hysteria, emotionalism, intellectual ineptness, and self-centeredness."

Embarrassed is not strong enough a word for the reaction of us who study this recent Pastoral, *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption*, only to find this list of disreputable nouns now descriptive of what may become an authoritative teaching document of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. A large percentage of the pastoral consists of excerpts of expressions from the "listening session," predominately voices of anger and dissent. My face blushed with shame at the reiterated cries of torment, the clanking of chains, moaning in dungeons, and begging for justice, all expressed with high Sarah Burnheart dramatics, that has the bishops apologizing, repenting, and groveling.

A tangle of misapplied, misunderstood, perhaps consciously misleading ideas, the feminists have forced this document into being by challenging the Catholic Church to meet its agenda for women: reproductive control by abortion and contraception; equality, meaning to be regarded the same as men in all regards; changes throughout society in family, education, and religion in accord with "feminine experience" often including lesbianism, Wicca worship, and other forms of witchcraft or pagan religion; pressures from orders of religious women for a new role in the life of the Church by new recognition of their "giftedness" with the goal of priestesses, though the goal now lies beyond priesthood to the dismantling of all hierarchy; and a revision of language to do away with all fine distinctions laboriously honed over the ages concerning the truth of sexuality's meaning.

With the very existence of the 2000 year old Church of Christ thus challenged, the task as the bishops see it is "to respond to concerns and profoundly examine conscience," "to reflect on imput. . . according to our heritage. .

.and offer responses and recommendations contributing to ongoing dialogue,” “to remain attentive to collective wisdom and insight of our ecclesial tradition while engaging new. . . questions that arise”, “to respond appropriately. expressing appreciation and offering regret.” This listening, repentance, and response, is not to be “as final conclusions, but as contributions to ongoing dialogue.”

Swayed by a relativity they seem to equate with being “pastoral,” the bishops approach with such a hesitant amateurity one can wonder what success they hope to have with the uncontrollable Katharina who is slamming through the house, banging doors, crashing down windows, screaming and throwing the furniture. Do they really believe a stance of servile flatterer will tame this rampage against the very foundations of the institution through which they have valid authority? The men of the hour must be bishops with a spiritual Petruchio stripe boldness, a healthy sense of humor and timing, and unflappable inner direction. All of this, in the bishop's case, sustained by the Holy Spirit and given in total service to their Lord.

A bishop's task according to *Christus Dominus* (Vatican II) is “to proclaim the gospel of Christ to men.”( We all know that noun includes male and female equally as it has from the beginning of language. And that the use of that single noun, “men,” recognizes both a comprehensive unity expressable no other way, and the headship of the male established by God over mankind. Both referents are scriptural and anthropological). “Fortified by the Spirit they should call on men to believe or should strengthen them when they already have a living faith. They should expound to them the whole mystery of Christ, that is, all the truths ignorance of which means ignorance of Christ. . . They should safeguard this doctrine, teaching the faithful themselves to defend and propagate it.”

And from *Dei Verbum* , “...Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully persevere, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching.” From these texts and many similar ones we gather that the bishops' real task is not so ambiguous. That in hearing out the sides of any issue they begin to teach authoritatively the revealed truth regarding the matter, and do not entertain error as though it had equal credibility with the Word of God.

In this teaching process there will be 1) a definition of terms in light of Christian revelation, 2) a sorting out of basic confusions arising from secular thought and values on the issue, and 3) a leading to a new level of understanding of Christian things. The Bishops' task, regardless of its unpopularity, is to present with the help of the Holy Spirit the revealed truth as it comes to us through divine Tradition, and Sacred Scripture.

Displaying none of these marks, this pastoral is unabashedly swayed by feminism, even though that agenda as outlined above is wholly incompatible with Christ and his Church. Feminist theologian, Mary Malone stated ( *Fidelity* April, 1986) after the Canadian bishops capitulation to the infamous “green kit,” . . . “[the bishops] affirmation of women doesn't as yet really include a critique of the structure as it is, and that they don't see the issues in the radical way that feminists see them, because in order to include women in the Church, we need a new ecclesiology, a new Christology, and a whole new theology of ordination and ministry. And so the radical nature of what is happening is not perceived by them on the theological level. . .”

With a new ecclesiology, a new Christology, etc. what will the new church be called? Certainly not "one, holy, catholic, apostolic" - namely, Roman Catholic.

Why are the bishops intimidated by a movement openly at enmity with Christ's Church? Why do they repeat complaints as part of a teaching pastoral, especially when these complaints show no comprehension of Christian ideas? The word 'heritage' is preferred to "Tradition." Scripture is suspected of taint with cultural blindness. Do the bishops not believe they stand in a tradition of revealed truth? There is a dearth of courage and of prophetic zeal in the name of God that makes the bishops look like puppets of worldliness, mere mouthpieces of relativism in the name of a suspect pluralism.

Where in the pastoral is development of what it means for man and woman to be made in the image of the Triune God? The subject is approached apologetically, even backhandedly, interspersed with words like "subordinate," "domination," and "discrimination," and then dropped. Where are Christian definitions of "equality," "freedom," "authority," "justice," etc.?

Utterly ignored in this bewildering pastoral are necessary clarifications that would readily make sense of woman's role and meaning in Salvation History and would provide a base for further development. It is not as though experts for such clear thinking are unavailable. A brilliant woman whose work is invaluable to this understanding has been bypassed. This even though her relevant book was brought to the attention of Bishop Imesch (chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee writing the pastoral) when it was published. She could be the doctor who has a cure, drastic as it will be, for this very sick document. This metaphysician is a beatified woman, a woman of erudition in psychology and philosophy, a woman of the twentieth century, a thorough feminist (in the complete Christian sense of the word), and a martyr. Neglecting her profound scientific and spiritual understanding of woman, the pastoral quotes instead streams of ignorance by Jane Does, and treats with weighty respect in text and footnotes comparative deviants and upstarts in sociology and theology. "We should frankly admit that for many women traditional marriage is experienced as a trap, that many homosexuals feel unjustly condemned and rejected by the church...." etc.

This woman who offers to the bishops brilliant work on the issues feminism has raised is Blessed Edith Stein. A Jewish convert to Catholicism who was a professed Carmelite for nine years before her death in an Auschwitz gas chamber, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II a year ago. *Woman* is the second volume of her collected works which are being published by the Institute for Carmelite Studies.

She is able to aid the U.S. bishops in their task of "cogent teaching" on the meaning of woman that Pope John Paul II requested when meeting with some of them at Castelgondolfo in September of 1983. "Bishops should work for every legitimate freedom that is consonant with their human nature and their womanhood," and "to oppose any and all discrimination of women by reason of sex. (He) must like wise endeavor to explain as cogently as he can that the church's teaching on the exclusion of women from priestly ordination is extraneous to the issue of discrimination and that it is linked rather to Christ's own design for his priesthood."

Such insights as Blsd. Edith's would further a development of doctrine in a continuum of what is already realized in Scripture and Tradition. With each change of consciousness in society the Church is challenged to unwrap another level of the Truth entrusted to her. The first hasty response to the challenge is to throw out the Truth

- baby with bath. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit Blsd. Edith has taken the more slowly developed response seeking a deeper understanding of what waits to unfold. This is true development of doctrine as John Cardinal Newman understood it - like the development of a baby from an embryo, a child from a baby, a man from a child. There is undeniable continuum. The final development is contained wholly, but yet invisibly in the embryo. An example of the need for development is the hotly contended matter of patriarchy, the governance by males, which Blsd. Edith addresses. She finds it a part of God's revelation for His People in both Old and New Testaments and in the Tradition of the Church. It is not sin, though sinful values (prestige, dominance, power) have attached to it. Patriarchy needs reevaluation and realignment to the Gospel, there is no doubt. However patriarchy itself must not be discarded, but the deeper meaning and intent delved, the insights obeyed.

By delineating three orders; the original created order, the fallen order, and the redeemed order, Blsd. Edith easily clarifies a gross confusion in the pastoral. What is perfect and appropriate under the first and third orders, appears terribly weakened and corrupted in the second. The pre-eminence of man which is obvious in the original created order and obvious, as well, in the redeemed order by the incarnation of God as a man, appears in distorted form as brutal authority in the fallen order. The patriarchy of rule in the first and third orders is leadership proper to the man which serves the woman and their children and is shared with her, but in the second fallen order, where most of the world continues to live, patriarchy has the marks of "greedy exploitation and senseless acquisition." The cure is not to throw out patriarchy, but to purify it according to redemptive principle.

In light of Edith's three orders, which are, after all, only the levels of Salvation History as told in the Bible, it becomes suddenly clear that the bishops in this pastoral have fixed their gaze with the feminists wholly on the conflicts and problems of the fallen realm and do not attempt to resolve these problems by reference to the radical difference the redemptive realm offers. Yet it is the redemptive order wherein lives Christian marriage, the Christian family, and the Church community. Realities there, male headship and female obedience, understood in Blsd. Edith's careful way, are essential ingredients for happiness and individual wholeness. It is an odd position for bishops, the successors of the apostles, to be looking through such opaque post-Lapsarian lenses that they must grope their way along.

In Blsd. Edith's teaching, Genesis asserts man and woman are called to a common vocation 1) to image God, 2) to bring forth posterity, 3) to be masters over the earth. Yet they approach this vocation in different ways which is implied by their separation. Like two hands they work together, complementing each other, and resemble each other, though not entirely. Man has pre-eminence, and woman emanates from man even as the Son from the Father - the original model of "subordinate but equal." God is love and it takes two to love. The two were made to be one flesh "with all faculties in perfect harmony incapable of inordinate desire."

After the Fall God's plan is altered. Adam's sovereignty over the earth becomes harsh struggle, and the woman is placed in subjugation. "The serene community of love is ended." But this state is not to be the final one; sin and error are not to reign supreme. God will reestablish the principles of love, he will redeem fallen man and woman, and the third state will be a restoration of the perfect design of the original order.

The Old Testament catches glimmers of original perfection through the shadows of the fallen realm. The patriarchs in these pages demonstrate both flickers of the strengths of the original order - their reaching out to God

for direction and guidance, their love for their wives and children, their provision for and protection of them, as well as the brokenness that entertains vagrant values of the fallen order, i.e. Abraham's saving his skin by giving Sarah into rivals' harems.

Nevertheless, through the Old Testament everything points to that time when God's restoration process will complete - dependent only on mankind's freely accepting the salvation offered. Despite the oppression of fallen life, the promises given to the woman that she will fight evil and that her seed will eventually conquer keeps woman's course clear - to be wife and mother, to cherish life and watch for the day of salvation coming through her children.

St. Paul may occasionally have let his perspective slip back to that of the fallen realm. So Blsd. Edith wonders. Others have wondered too about the severity of his disciplinary words to women. On the other hand, as a man who had been given insight into the culmination of God's kingdom, he also saw the dire threat that a repeat of the temptations of Eve in Eden was to the infant Church. Woman's freedom from domination of the male was unquestioned in her equality in Christian baptism. But this was to release her from the effects of the Fall and reestablish her in right order in the redemptive realm. The redemptive order still held that rule, understood as Jesus taught it to be service, was reserved to the man. His governance served his dependent but equal partner and was meant solely to benefit her and their children. Upset of this reestablished order would throw the new-born community back into the disorder of the fallen realm. St. Paul was horrified when the woman was tempted to accept again the diabolical valuing of authority, that it should be the object of her desire.

Blsd. Edith believes that the distribution of vocations is all to each sex. Yet, regarding priesthood for women, she sees that in Jesus' acceptance of women as confidants, he did not make them priests, not even his mother. The whole tradition "speaks against it." It is irrefutable that Christ came to earth as a man and instituted men as his official representatives. Such roles of authority could well violate woman's essence and meaning betraying her wholeness, and therefore making reestablishment of divine order impossible.

Jesus bound himself most intimately to one woman. "And just so, He has called women in all times to the most intimate union with Him: they are to be emissaries of His love, proclaimers of His will to kings and popes, and forerunners of His Kingdom in the hearts of men."

Such a call fulfills woman's being without danger of distortion of her feminine nature which Blsd Edith believes is destined "to live one life with another [ or the Lord] like a single being." This vocation is from God, carried out for His sake, and under His guidance. "This natural vocation corresponds also to woman's natural tendency towards obedience and service: 'Obedient I feel my soul, always most beautifully free.'"

Men and woman alike are called into embodying Christ: the ideal of human perfection. In Him "masculine and feminine virtues are united and their weaknesses redeemed. . . That is why we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them while in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination." "Transcendence over natural limitations ... can never be attained by an arbitrary battle against nature and by denial of natural limitations but only through humble submission to the God-given order."

Is there a better course than to pray that the Spirit which inspired Blsd. Edith's profound vision of the meaning and role of the sexes overtakes further drafts of the pastoral? The fate of the original schemata presented at

the Vatican II Council comes to mind. After all, there is precedent for the impetus of the Holy Spirit to compel the discard of ecclesial documents and to inspire a fresh start which is the only cure for this ailing pastoral.

## 5 QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE ‘OUCH’ OF “*MULIERIS DIGNITATEM*”

Pope John Paul’s Apostolic Letter, “*Mulieris Dignitatem*”, “*On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*” has been awaited with impatience by many of us who have been drawn to the dikes to offer our thumbs and fingers against the tides of feminism pounding the Church. We were confident that the hermeneutics of this Holy Father would give us great relief from the pressures of so many cracks, holes, and cave-ins. We anticipated his help the way a contingent of tired sandbaggers awaits the bulldozer with a front-end loader.

After the first draft of the American Bishop’s Pastoral, “Partners in the Mystery of Redemption” had been released, Helen Hull Hitchcock (foundress of Women for Faith and Family) expressed the wish that the forthcoming papal apostolic letter would motivate the American Bishops “to go out and quietly bury their pastoral.” It was the wish of many of us who found the Pastoral impossibly permeated with a feminism that cannot be baptized, and lacking in all that would mark a teaching document of the Church.

Then, when the apostolic letter was finally there before us, we were caught off guard in at least three instances. Dale Vree writing in the *National Catholic Register* (1) its effects on him titles his piece, “OK, I had it coming.” He admitted his “pet peeve was those who whether from right or left ‘proclaimed,’ Mater, si; Magistra, no’ (the Church is our mother, but not our teacher).” He says he had a foreboding that “one day something would come down the pike from the Holy See that I wouldn’t like.”

A convert too, I share with Dale Vree the basic reason for many who have become Catholic - an appreciation that God did leave a voice on this earth to speak for Him, a belief there was an authority that had Divine authorization. Like him, I came into the Church “glowing with certitude that what the Church teaches is correct.”

In writing the story of my Protestant-minister husband’s and my conversion I had professed “Submission to God’s authority is the purifier of revelation (i.e. private revelation). God alone maintains the Truth - a person cannot do it. He can only ruin everything by putting forward the small sliver of truth, which he has the insight to glimpse, as though it were the whole picture. . . (God) will also use that authority (the Magisterium) to whom we submit to protect and cherish and promote the Truth. And it will be the Real Truth, not just that little piece that you and I might fall upon and then be absorbed by. . . (those) who follow their own lights (are) led into peculiar, fanatical twists.”(2)

Vree continues, “What I feared has now come to pass.” He and I share consternation over the same issue. In the papal apostolic letter the pope has told us that we are wrong. I am in the position of often having taught what he now says must be understood quite differently. At least that was my first stunned reaction. Ephesians 5, “Wives, be subject to you husbands as to the Lord has been one of the springboards of Scripture from which I have launched an interpretation of woman’s role that has substantiation from Genesis to Revelation - or so I thought. Of course, this took careful handling of the word “subject” which I found to be not so accurate as “submit.” Before it was useable, “submit” also demanded a semantic defense both in its etymology and in Jesus’ own attitudes described as “submission” to his Father. It had to be understood as an *equal* though opposite stance to the pole of authority. Now, as Vree says, “With great forcefulness and much theological elaboration, John Paul says those words, when properly understood in a broader context, mean that wives and husbands are to be mutually subjected to each other.” I join Vree in exclaiming an “Ouch” to this exegesis.

I had long thought along the lines expressed by another of my favorites, Blessed Edith Stein. About the verses in question she states:

If the man is to be the leader, (“the head”) of his wife - and we can add accordingly, likewise the head of the entire family - in the sense Christ is the head of the Church, so it is the duty of the man to conduct this microcosm of the great Mystical Body in such a way that each of its members may be able to develop his gifts perfectly and contribute to the salvation of the entire body, and that each may attain his own salvation. If the body rebels against the head, the organism will suffer as much as if the head were to allow the body to atrophy. (3)

Another stalwart defending orthodoxy with detailed and perceptive articles for *Fidelity*, Donna Steichen in “The Battle for the Microphone! Who Speaks for Women?”(4) has gone to theologian Richard Roach SJ. for an explanation about the pope’s ideas of family headship. She too is worried over this teaching. “(The pope’s) insistence that ‘the ‘subjection’ of woman to man in marriage must be understood in the sense of a “mutual subjection” of both “out of reverence for Christ,” has in fact puzzled readers who wonder whether, when authority is in crisis everywhere, the pope too could be denying it.”

Father Roach answered her question by denying that the Holy Father was dismissing familial authority; “he expects the family to survive and he expects the father to be the head.” He simply “opposes the notion, still surviving in some groups of exploitative, or tyrannical male domination.” Quoting Father Roach, Steichen continues, “The primary impact of Vatican II is the re-evaluation of authority, of how authority is interpreted and exercised. I think it would cash out in how quasi-familial authority is exercised in religious life. I don’t think there will ever again be the kind of absolute authority that used to exist in religious communities.”

The one non-feminist on the panel of consultants called by the Bishops for their work on the first draft of “Partners”, Dr. Ronda Chervin also mentions in a recent article(5) the pope’s interpretation of St. Paul’s famous passage about the obedience of wives to their husbands. She solves the “controversial issue” by seeing in John Paul’s explanation what St. Paul himself recognized. “the fact that Paul himself saw no contradiction between the

husband as head and the mutual subjection of husband and wife.” She ends her comments with: “Role complementarity is not to be done away with in the Pope’s teaching, but rather purified through mutual love.”

Pope John Paul’s teaching on Ephesians 5 is not the end of my concerns about this document that I so impatiently awaited as ‘the end all to cure all.’ Over the years the more I studied Scripture with attention to the meaning of masculine and feminine, the more struck I was that the relationship between God and human beings can be faithfully analogized, as it is in Scripture, by seeing the masculine principle in God and a feminine in mankind. From the simple concept that human beings can do nothing to *initiate* anything with God, that they are only capable of receiving and accepting from him, it seemed clear to me that the polarity thus described could in terms of human sexuality ( granted an anthropologic view) be considered as masculine to feminine (not male to female). C.S. Lewis stated it in *That Hideous Strength* (6) the words of one of his characters, “(Confrontation with) the male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine to it.”

Following the same line, I have taught Genesis 1-3 as a story of two created unions both made in the image and likeness of God. The first is that of the union of man and woman created in the image of the Triune God, a “two in one” but in a deeper sense a “three in one.” Jesus himself said that God joined man and woman (Matt 19:6) which presents a picture of two opposites joined by a Third, even as the Father and the Son are polar Persons in union by the self-giving of a Third, the Holy Spirit. And the second created union is that of Godhead joined to Mankind in an inconceivable Perfection that was before the Fall. Here too, the Holy Spirit was the Unifier who condescended in love to make a Oneness of the opposites, creature and the Creator. Such a parallel configuration of persons/Persons implied that the relationship of Father to Son, and Godhead to mankind was analogous to the relationship of male to female whom Jung stated were the primordial pair of irreconcilable opposites. Therefore, before God created male or female there was at the heart of reality a principle of generation and a principle of receiving that we humans with our physical perceptions understand as masculine and feminine. Stiff stuff - but it all came out very neatly and easily with a blackboard, a diagram, and a class.

The Pope states unequivocally in section 8 , “This characteristic of biblical language - its anthropomorphic way of speaking about God-points indirectly *to the mystery of the eternal ‘generating’* which belongs to the inner life of God. Nevertheless, in itself this *‘generating’* had neither ‘masculine nor ‘feminine’ qualities. It is by nature totally divine. It is spiritual in the most perfect way, since ‘God is spirit’ (Jn 4:24) and possesses no property typical of the body, neither ‘feminine’ nor ‘masculine’. Thus even *‘fatherhood’ in God is completely divine* and free of the ‘masculine’ bodily characteristics proper to human fatherhood. (italics in all the quotes are in the document)”

I want to say to the Holy Father . . .”but., but, isn’t it possible that the creation of male and female by God is the physical statement of a principle of differentiation among the divine Persons that pinpointed their creativity and ecstatic union which in the creation of sex they marvelously share with us humans? When we see it in the flesh we call it “masculine” or “feminine” because we have no vocabulary for the Real Thing. Yet it is a principle of generation or its opposite - a principle of receiving, that lies at the very heart of things; yes, to us “masculine” and “feminine?” Oh, double Ouch!

Throughout the apostolic letter, however, the Holy Father affirms things which seem to vindicate that masculine /feminine perspective: that “we must nevertheless seek in God the absolute model of all ‘generation’ among human beings,’ and the “spousal love” for His People that seeks constantly to bring them into oneness with Himself. He even writes, “*The image and likeness of God in man*, created as man and woman (in the analogy that can be presumed between Creator and creature), thus also expresses the “unity of the two” in a common humanity. This ‘unity of the two’, which is a sign of interpersonal communion, *shows that the creation of man is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion* (‘communio’).” Nor does he do anything to modify the scripture’s persistent figure of God as “He” and mankind as “she.” May there be some support here?

But my problems only have begun . An article written for *Homiletic Pastoral Review* (6). was titled, “Those Poor Misquoted Scriptures.” Here was an analysis of those verses of the Bible that were most used to support viewing God as feminine or descriptive of feminine characteristics, alongside the more predominant representation of God as masculine. I wrote, “the importance that God in His Triune Persons be always considered masculine to us human beings is so overwhelming that in every case in Scripture the truth of this is rigorously guarded.”

“Isaiah 66:13ff is the favorite of the misquoted scriptures and is always used in this way: “ As nurslings you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you.” This, however is the actual context.

Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream, and you shalt suck, you shall be carried on her lap and dandled on her knees, As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

“Obviously God does not present himself as the mother in this passage. The distinction he places between himself and Jerusalem is very clear. The same holds true for Isaiah 49:14-15, another favorite to substantiate God’s motherhood. “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even if she forgets you, I will never forget you. . . “

“The speaker is Yahweh, the Lord, who in the entire context of Isaiah presents himself as enduringly masculine though with a depth of compassion that surpasses all earthly love, even the love of a mother. Mothers may forget, it’s possible; but The Lord will not forget. This Lord continues, “Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord, your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” The next chapter, the 50th, continues the theme with God identifying Himself as Husband and Father.

“Isaiah 48:3-4 is also a standby text for the Mother-God argument, yet there is nothing necessarily maternal in the picture of God carrying the heavy burden which Israel had become. In fact it is explicitly stated in this passage that the one who carries is masculine!

Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

“Can this be considered to be the Mother-God talking? The context is quite the contrary.

“The humble submission of the soul ‘like a child quieted at its mothers breast,’ in Psalm 131 us a beautiful poetic image of peace which, though it has no bearing on the question at hand, being metaphorical, is often cited.

Over against all these assertions, *Mulieris Dignitatem* states in section 8:

. . . it is understandable that the Bible would refer to God using expressions that attribute to him both “masculine” and “feminine” qualities.  
We may quote here some characteristic passages from the prophet Isaiah: “But Zion said, (Isaiah 49:14-15 is quoted as above) And elsewhere (Isaiah 66:13 is quoted as above) In the Psalms too God is compared to a caring mother:( Psalm 131:2-3 is quoted as above). In various passages the love of God who cares for his people is shown to be like that of a mother: thus, like a mother God “has carried” humanity, and in particular, his Chosen People, within his own womb; he has given birth tin travail and nourished and comforted it(cf. Is 42:14; 46:3-4).

In the concluding argument of “Those Poor Misquoted Scriptures, I stated:

“Throughout the Old Testament God is speaking analogically about his Fatherhood, his husband-hood, his lover role, and never says, “like a Father,” He says he is the Father - I am He, I am your husband, I am your lover. Scripture cannot be found to support the Motherhood of God (or the femininity of God) in a single thread. That may bring some disappointment, but eventually it should clarify all the gender language confusion.”

I am the one who stands disappointed. Disappointed is a weak word to describe my feelings of desolation when I first read the apostolic letter despite all that was there that was so positive and heartening. Dale Vree states he could have adopted a Curranite view and said that the Pope’s teaching ‘isn’t promulgated with infallibility’; hence I don’t need to let it bother me. But that argument won’t work, for it flies in the face of, for example, Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* (25). . . It seems I owe the Pope’s teaching the ‘loyal submission of mind and will’ spoken of in *Lumen Gentium* (25).”

The peace I have found in my own quandary has come from two sources. From the first reading, it seemed I heard whispered one word, “Wait.” I took from this, not to jump to the conclusion that I must stop writing and teaching which was my first impulse; perhaps it is not either-or, but it some way still unclear to me, both-and. Perhaps, sooner or later, the decision will be to stop this work; but for now - Waft!

And the second source of peace is from an old chorus learned in the Baptist Sunday School many years ago,

Trust and obey,  
Trust and obey,  
For there’s no other way  
To be happy with Jesus  
Than to trust and obey

Notes:

1 November 27, 1988

2. Nancy M. Cross, “A Letter to Charlotte”, *Spiritual Journeys Daughters of St. Paul*, 1988.

3. Stern, Edith, *Essays on Woman* ICS Publications, Washington D.C.1987  
p.67
4. December 1988
5. 30 Days November88
6. Lewis, CS., *That Hideous Strenath* MacMillan 1946, p. 315
7. July 1986

## 6 A HIGHER, MIDDLE GROUND: BLESSED EDITH STEIN'S FEMINISM

In time to come, the Twentieth Century's important contribution to the history the Catholic Church will be the II Vatican Council. . . . Yes; but even more significantly it will loom as the century which brought to its apex the Woman's Movement. This historic wave of consciousness, its original impetus no doubt the Gospel, nevertheless arose from stirrings in secular society. Causing a shakedown through the very foundations of the Church, deeper than the Council itself, it has cast doubt on its inspired Tradition, its Sacred Scripture, its hierarchical structure, in short, its very essence by the suspicion, if not the fact, that all has been tainted with the "sin of sexism."

The shattering impact of feminism on the Church has done the inconceivable. It has, at least for the time being, divided the most solidly unified body in Christendom, the Catholic Church, into two bitterly opposing camps. Social theories, political polarities, theological stances, liturgical changes - none of these has had the emotional power so radically to ionize positive and negative as the woman question. And for a simple reason. None of these ideologies have the powerful causal effect on individuals that one woman has. When a woman's concept of herself changes, the whole community around her changes whether it wills to or not.

Regardless of the outcome - whether women are ordained priests, whether language is made sufficiently inclusive, whether male and female become insignificant designations, or not - it is imperative right now that a common ground be found where the questions that feminism raises may be approached with reason. But how? Some have advocated consciousness-raising, i.e. the Canadian bishop's kit, but many who have been engaged in consciousness-raising come out more opposed than before to the goals of the woman's movement. Some believe that those who oppose those goals are simply reactionaries, or pre-Vatican II fanatics, ineffective over all. But the facts contradict such a narrow view. Many who have enlisted to fight feminism's inroads into the Church are thoroughly Vatican II Catholics, educated, enlightened, and thoroughly conversant with the theological issues.

There is, in God's Providence, a Twentieth Century religious woman, a woman beatified by Pope John Paul II and a feminist, who has provided the meeting ground where all but the most polarized may find something closer to the truth of the meaning of sexuality. That, after all, is what Christian feminism must be about - the search for the meaning of woman (and thereby, of man) in God's Plan. It is part of sanctity to have that faculty of rising above the battlefield to point out a greater hope, thus uniting two seeming irreconcilable opposites. Or perhaps it is what Jesus alluded to when praising the way of a "householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." Edith Stein has that gift.

Blessed Edith has already been credited with helping women who have looked to her for balance in the confusion over meaning and role. Her translator(1) states, "I was convinced that she was the needed catalyst in our society's confusion concerning the role of woman. Her writings helped me, as a wife and mother of five children, to establish an equilibrium in my family and professional life. I knew she could have a similar effect on others."

Born in 1891 into a close Jewish family ( her autobiographical story, "Life in a Jewish Family" (2) is fascinating), she converted to Catholicism in 1922, and delayed her call to become a nun to follow the advice of her spiritual director who felt her contribution to teaching was too great a ministry to let go. But the Nazi ban against Jewish persons acting as teachers freed Edith to join the Carmelites in 1933. Here she took the name, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

A brilliant phenomenologist who assisted Husserl, a woman of erudition in psychology, an exceptional educator, but most importantly a deeply spiritual servant of God, Blsd. Edith became because of her Jewish origins hopelessly entangled in the vicious web of Nazism and died in a gas chamber in Auschwitz in 1942. "The witnesses of the past should become signs of hope for all of us," said Pope John Paul II at her beatification in the Cologne Stadium in May of 1987.

That hope may rest particularly in her deeply perceptive understanding of woman which neither minces words about the errors grown up about her, nor denigrates Scripture and Tradition which address and define her.

Blsd. Edith presents the whole woman, not in words alone, with which she was exceptionally proficient, but also in her life. "In exercising her feminine nature magnanimously, Edith Stein reveals to us what it is to be fully human. As that rare phenomenon, the woman philosopher, she inspires women to the highest intellectual and professional achievement; and she points to the interior life, the life of prayer and contemplation as the source of her strength. . . .she demonstrates that the truths of the Christian faith are more than abstractions; she experienced these and lived them passionately. . . . As a woman of intellectual and spiritual stature, she is a witness to authentic feminism"(3)

We no longer have that passionate life to observe, but we do have her words witnessing to her "authentic feminism" in many manuscripts that have been gathered by the Institute for Carmelite Studies in one volume, *Woman*, the second of her collected works.

Essential to Blsd. Edith's theology of woman (and necessarily man) is a clarification that is neglected through much of the feminist writing of the second half of the Twentieth Century. When that clarification is made a confusion that now separates the two camps may lift.

God's plan for mankind as revealed in Scripture, Blsd. Edith significantly points out, encompasses three separate states or orders. First, the pre-Lapsarian order wherein we glimpse the Perfect plan of God for the sexes; second, the post-Lapsarian, or fallen order where that Divine Plan because of human sin is altered, and third, the Redemptive order in which God restores His perfect plan.

In the first and third orders, patriarchy is not a sin, is not riddled with sinful ideas of dominance and subjection, has nothing to do with inferior or superior, but is the rule of males in the mode of Christ to abjectly serve the holy community by governing it under the command of God. The Satanic infusion into a headship meant to be humble service of greed for prestige and power, in short gratification of selfish ego, has made that governance

intolerable in the second order. The massive adulteration of male authority by that alien belief system directly forced feminism into being. This is apparent when a perverted patriarchy is viewed under the second order where most of human life still is lived out.

Blsd. Edith is not blind to that bitter dimension. . . “the relationship of the sexes since the Fall has become a brutal relationship of master and slave. Consequently, women’s natural gifts and their best possible development are no longer considered; rather, man uses her as a means to achieve his own ends in the exercise of his work or in pacifying his own lust.”(4)

When the feminist with a compassionate eye to justice views a world that exemplifies the worst realities of this authoritarianism, it is no wonder that she insists that patriarchy is the problem. However, the woman who continues to view the world through the Biblical ideal believes that the feminist is not distinguishing the fallen order that is so disgustingly apparent, from the perfect order which is not apparent at all - but must yet be gained. She protests that patriarchy is, after all, part of the original plan of God. Can both be helped to see what the other sees and understand it? Blsd. Edith is a source of that hope.

When this distinguishing is not done, feminist Scripture scholars and theologians have found it necessary to disregard Sacred Scripture as being hopelessly sexist and unremittingly patriarchal. In so doing they are discarding truth, often hidden to be sure, but something Blsd. Edith does not do even when she recognizes a certain mix-up in some Scripture passages concerning woman. “We should not be deemed disrespectful to the Apostle if we suggest here in this instruction to the Corinthians, there is confusion as to the divine and human aspects, the temporal and eternal.”

Blsd. Edith finds complete equality of man and woman in their presentation in Scripture, always with the three layered orders in mind. Certain passages reflect the Fall and the end of the “serene community of love.” In them we see the results of sin - dominance on the one hand and subjugation on the other. But originally, though a “certain pre-eminence is indicated in that man was created first. . . it is not a question of a sovereignty of man over woman. She is named as companion and helpmate, and it is said of man that he will cling to her and that both are to become one flesh.” (6). “Nor do I understand that woman is denigrated by having been created ‘for man’s sake’ unless it is misunderstood as if very well could be after the degeneracy of both sexes as a result of the Fall, i.e., that she is to serve man’s own ends and satisfy his lust. That was not intended for the companion standing side by side with him over all other creatures. Rather, by her free personal decision to be his helpmate, she enables him to become what he is intended to be.”(7)

“God is a three in one; and just as the Son issues from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, so, too, the woman emanated from the man and posterity from them both. (8) Herein, lies another important distinction that cries to be made in the debate. Woman is given a relationship to man in creation similar to the relationship of the Son to the Father in the Holy Trinity. There is no first, second, and third in honor or worth among Persons in the Trinity. These words merely delineate a revealed order. Neither is the pre-eminence or dependence descriptive of man and woman meant to imply the value or worth of those created persons. Of course, this understanding demands a *redeemed* frame of mind. A fallen milieu can not be expected to grasp it.

Both in the original plan of God and in the redeemed order (they operate under the same principles) woman's natural calling is that of wife and mother. "Only the person blinded by the passion of controversy could deny that woman in soul and body is formed for a particular purpose. The clear and irrevocable word of Scripture declares what daily experience teaches from the beginning of the world: woman is destined to be wife and mother." (9) "Both spiritual companionship and spiritual motherliness are not limited to the physical wife and mother relationship, but they extend to all people with whom woman comes into contact." According to her supernatural calling, woman is chosen "to embody in her highest and purest development the essence of the Church - to be its symbol." (10)

"In three different ways, woman can fulfill the mission accorded to her by nature and grace and suitable to her individual disposition: in marriage; in the practice of a profession which values human development as the noblest professional activity; and under the veil as the Spouse of Christ." (11).

With keen interest and love, Blsd. Edith describes the woman under that veil as the woman most apt to be fulfilled. "Let us now examine how the essential elements of religious Orders relate to the feminine nature. The motive, principle, and end of the religious life is to make an absolute gift of self to God in a self-forgetting love, to end one's own life in order to make room for God's life. The more perfectly this is realized, the more richly will God's life fill the soul. . . in one word, it is the love of the divine Heart. The deepest longing of woman's heart is to give herself lovingly, to belong to another, and to possess this other being completely. That is why total surrender which is the principle of the religious life is simultaneously the only adequate fulfillment possible for woman's yearning."

"Thus the divine life entering the being surrendered to God is love, ready to serve, compassionate, awaken and foster life; it corresponds thoroughly to what we have found to be the professional ethos required of the woman." (12).

Does this mean that only religious women can fulfill their vocation as women? What about the vast majority of women who marry, or who in this day and age, forgo both religious life and marriage and wed themselves to a profession? Blsd. Edith answers succinctly, "Whether she is a mother in the home, or occupies a place in the limelight of public life, or lives behind quiet cloister walls, she must be a *handmaid of the Lord* everywhere. . . Were each woman an image of the Mother of God, a *Spouse of Christ*, an apostle of the divine Heart, then would each fulfill her feminine vocation no matter what conditions she lived in and what worldly activity absorbed her life." (13)

In considering implications of priesthood for women, Blsd. Edith, writes in her essay titled, "The Separate Vocations of Man and Woman According to Nature and Grace" . . ."In recent militant movements, the women are demanding that their activities be recognized once more as an ordained church ministry (this written in 1931), and it may well be that one day attention will be given to their demands. Whether this will be the first step then, finally, on the path leading to women in the priesthood is the question.

"It seems to me that such implementation by the church, until now unheard of, cannot be forbidden by dogma. However, the practicality of such a recommendation brings into play various arguments both pro and con

The whole tradition speaks against it from the beginning. But in my opinion, even more significantly is the mysterious fact emphasized earlier - the Christ came to earth as the Son of Man. The first creature on earth fashioned in an unrivaled sense as God's image was therefore a man; that seems to indicate to me that He wished to institute only men as His official representatives on earth. Yet, He bound Himself so intimately to one woman as to no other on earth: He formed her so closely after His own image as no other human being before or after; He gave her a place in the Church for all eternity such as has been given to no other human being. And just so, He has called women in all times to the most intimate union with Him: they are to be emissaries of His love, proclaimers of His will to kings and popes, and forerunners of His Kingdom in the hearts of men. To be the *Spouse of Christ* is the most sublime vocation which has been given, and whoever see this way open before her will yearn for no other way.(14)

It is Christ who makes male and female sexuality complete. Blsd. Edith believes both men and women, though their separate call is irrevocable, find wholeness in developing the potentials of the opposite sex. "That is why we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them while in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination." Such completeness she asserts can never be gained by struggling against nature, nor by denying limitations, but only through 'humble submission to the God-given order.'

What woman's destiny is in the encompassing Plan of God, Blsd. Edith believes has been ordered from eternity - "God Himself declares it in the words of the Old and New Testament; it is inscribed in the nature of man and woman; history elucidates this matter for us; finally, the needs of our time declare an urgent message." (17). It will only become clear to us when we consider all the questions raised about her in the light of eternity. And if woman is to find happy fulfillment of her being, all other demands for contrary answers - contrary to the ethos God has implanted in the feminine soul, must be resisted. In the fallen order, woman has been called to do battle against evil (the prophetic words of Genesis 3), yet, Blsd. Edith continues to assert that "the deepest feminine yearning is to achieve a loving union... such yearning is an essential aspect of the eternal destiny of woman.(18)

Religious woman may have the smoothest road toward this eternal destiny, but the married woman also walks it. Her spirituality is encompassed by being a helpmate to her husband, by "making his concerns her own." (19). This concept may be troubling to the Christian feminist of the last half of the Century, but Blsd. Edith insists alongside of this primary focus that every woman should have a profession that gives outlet to her feminine ethos. Again she embraces a balance that feminism in the Church must not lose even when secular feminism ignores it.

That profession must necessarily take a back seat to family concerns through the child-rearing years. She sees the energies and time devoted to family and husband make the woman a mature personality. "In order to develop to the highest level the humanity specific to husband and children, woman requires the attitude of selfless service. . . Surely the development of their God-given nature ( husband and child) is a holy task." (20). "Yet, it is vital here, that she does not lose herself in association with her husband but, on the contrary, cultivates her own gifts and powers."(21)

To encompass such a feminism, demands a comprehensive education - much of it religious education. Education of women, Blsd. Edith knew was key to raising a generation of Christians who would fulfill the design of

the Creator. Many of her essays are devoted to the consideration of woman's nature and vocation and what educational goals may be prescribed for that nature.

Such an education would provide inner and outer resources fit to answer the demands on women of our age. They would be prepared "to earn their own living, manage a household in a rational way and assist the common condition of the economy, which summons them to contribute (as wives and mothers) to the moral recovery of the people. It desires that they pave the way for heaven. That means, it requires women who have a knowledge of life, prudence, and practical ability; women who are morally steadfast, women whose lives are imperturbably rooted in God." (22).

Obviously the feminism of Edith Stein is not simple. It is not something that can be reduced to black or white, but something very carefully attentive to God-centricity and calls upon the whole human potential in a totally Christian way. It smacks not at all of the ideologue camps whether right or left, liberal or conservative, progressive or orthodox.

Can we meet Edith Stein on her high ground, both affirming woman's search for equality, yet seeing that equality will never mean "the same as in all regards?" Is it possible for us to hold to Scripture like Blsd. Edith, continuing to find there the source of light truly illuminating man and woman's soul?

It is part of the criteria of sainthood that miracles be attested to the saint in the form of answered prayer. What greater miracle can we ask than that Blsd. Edith Stein intercede on behalf of women; first, that peaceful consensus may overcome all bitter misunderstanding; second, that women of all states of life may stand freely, lovingly together in the Church she and they love.

#### Footnotes:

1. Dr. Freda Mary Oben , p. vU
2. Stein, Edith, Collected Works, Volume I, Life in a Jewish Family, 1891 - 6. An autobiociranhv l Publications, Washington 1986
3. Stein, Edith, Collected Works, Volume I WOMAN 1987, CS Washington. p. ix.
4. Ibid p. 71
5. p. 64-65
6. p.60
7. p.187
8. p. 60
9. p.43
10. p.9
11. p. 10
12. p.52
13. p.52
14. p.84
15. p.84

16. p.85

17. p.58

18. p.93-94

19. p. 109

20. p.1

21. p.110

22. p.126

## 7 CLICHES ABOUT WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:

Compare These to Christian Ideas

Today's Catholic press often uses common cliché's about women that continue to inflame the underlying controversy, and in few respects line up with Christian belief. In the cause of truth, these statements cry for some solid theological footing. The following eight examples are chosen for their current popularity and are not in any order of importance.

*The cause for all the dissension in the Church is not women, but discrimination against women:*

Though a Christian approaches all complaint with kindness, many would agree with Edith Stein's assessment as they continue to hear women speak of "hurt, second-rate, belittled' feelings. Sensitivity, meaning unreal expectations of how the self must be treated by others, is, she judges, a symptom of a "perverted relationship to God." A Christian feminist, phenomenologist, and martyr, whom Pope John Paul beatified, Blessed Edith cannot be dismissed as anti-woman. She writes,"

For the feminine disposition suffers from the joint flaw which human nature retains from original sin, which Impedes her pure development and which, if not opposed, leads to typical perversion. Usually, the personal outlook appears to be exaggerated unwholesomely; in the first place, her inclination to center both her activities and those of others about her own person is expressed by vanity, desire for praise and recognition, and an unchecked need for communication. . . The dominating will replaces joyful service. How many unhappy marriage [church situations] can be attributed to this abnormality!" (Woman, p. 45 parentheses added)

If it is true that those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives really feel worthless or degraded something is terribly wrong. Rather than increasing the influence of feminism in the Church, the situation calls for a great Catholic evangelization effort! The message? Without the salvation of Jesus we are irremediably damaged goods. God alone gives us the grace to love ourselves because He loves us enough to suffer and die for each individual! No amount of "I'm O.K., you're O.K." will do it. Knowing that salvation, a free gift of God through Jesus, and the amazing realization that we are loved by the Creator of the Universe makes the acclaim of others unimportant! Under the "weight of such a glory" we leave chronic self-hate behind, eventually to love ourselves despite, maybe because of, all our personal warts and wrinkles.

Of course, it is appropriate for those in authority in Church and family to love those they serve. And love is displayed in appreciation, tenderness, and just actions. God may use these complaints to bring those who have authority to appreciate the equality of those they govern and to abandon any prestigious ideas about their role. In the value system of Christ it has none. Actually, the most honored role is that of the obedient ones who follow the way Jesus exemplified in his life and death.

*Women's anger calls the Church to profound interior renewal, a radical conversion of mind and heart:* Women's anger, any anger, displays a need of personal interior renewal and conversion by the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. The need is for relinquishment of self to Jesus with a new life toward God which is the only real conversion. Self and its concerns - recognition of character, ability, achievement, giftedness, etc. are a direct contrast to Christian conversion. The "rights age" has raised unrealistic expectations, making it appear that a person with radical deviation from the norm should have a "right" to be comfortable by having it recognized as legitimate rather than exhibiting a need for healing and change. Anglican priest, Dr. William Oddie (What Will Happen to God) analyses it,

. . . the cardinal error of feminism is to ask an essentially religious question, "Is this all there is? What is wrong with my life?" and to give it a merely secular answer. . . . that the fundamental problem is not to be found within, but is to be laid at the door of certain external socio-political structures, imposed by an identifiable external human enemy. And at the point at which this answer is accepted, the journey of the soul towards God is halted, perhaps even reversed, since an essential impulse towards movement is now lacking: all the natural human instincts to resist personal change have received a fatal boost."

*Women must be given equality with men in the Church:*

The Church's position from its very beginnings, distinct from other world religions or philosophies, has never been other than that man and woman are equals in God's eyes. Equality for a Christian must find its definition in the relationship of Persons in the Holy Trinity. Man and woman hold a relationship analogous to that of the Father and the Son. Here, one is the initiator, the other the responder, yet both are equal holders of all the same attributes of their one nature. Christians shun the world's valuing of authority - that it is better, more prestigious, more honorable, more powerful than the role of obedience. Jesus did his best in word and deed to erase the indelible error that authority means power and is to be coveted by his followers. Satan convinced the perfect monad of obedience, the woman Eve, that her role was not equal to Adam's; she, after all, *merely received* the commands of God through her husband; therefore the evil one who originated thirst for power engaged her in the first "consciousness-raising" session.

When "equal" is mentioned in current schema check it to see that it does not assume to be true what is not true, that roles of authority are more worthy than roles of service. Then remember who it is that thinks like that!

*Women defined by traditional roles are denigrated.*

Clearly there is a difference between appropriate roles for the sexes in a secular democratic society, and the appropriate roles for man and woman in the Church and the family where roles are modeled on the relationship of the Divine Persons. The Church and Christian family are claimed by the Holy Spirit to be the visible manifestation of Divine relationship ("That they may be one even as we are one." Jn 17:22 "This is a great mystery, I take it to

mean Christ and the church" Ephesians 5:32) . This is not so for a democratic society which is the best form of social ordering only when considering the fallen state of the world.

If the Divine Persons have roles, creating man and woman to image these roles in order to share the ecstasy and creativity of the Persons of the Trinity ("God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Gen.1 :27), then these roles ensure order, peace, and fruitfulness, the fulfillment of the meaning of the sexes. The "traditional" roles, so far as they faithfully adhere to that transcendent meaning, need to be "cogently taught." This was Pope John Paul's request of the bishops in 1983. What if "cogent" teaching had begun then, that is, "the meaning made clear," supported and encouraged in every possible way by the Church?

This does not mean setting static boundaries; there is great latitude and freedom within the role. Blessed Edith Stein clarifies these matters very well,

Indeed, no woman is only a woman; like a man, each has her individual specialty and talent, and this talent gives her the capability of doing professional work, be it artistic, scientific, technical, etc. Essentially, the individual talent can enable her to embark on any discipline, even those remote from the usual feminine vocations. Yet, the clear and irrevocable word of Scripture declares what daily experience teaches from the beginning of the world: woman is destined to be wife and mother. This further vocation, therefore, must be reserved for the time after the children mature and she is released from their physical care.

It is simply unavoidable that the world because of its fallen values will *never* understand Christian submission and obedience. Yet it is the primary stance for those who embrace Jesus and the Cross. And therefore the woman who embodies it, and who is the basic common denominator of obedience can expect to receive the same kind of misunderstanding at the hands of the world that Jesus received. We cannot expect kudos; we do expect to be ridiculed.

*Sexism (meaning one sex considering itself more important and gifted than the other) is a sin:*

The sin lies deeper than "sexism" when people hold other human beings as less worthy than themselves. The sin is Pride - a very old one, and one more real than sexism. It is sin, of course, to depersonalize anyone; it happens to men and women alike. Violence, rape, prostitution, and pornography use, abuse and depersonalize both sexes. Through history have not many more men than women suffered degradation and oppression in the often grueling work of protecting their families, and earning their livelihood?

*It is wrong for women to be subordinate to men in the family and the Church:*

It is impossible to think that society outside the Church and the Christian family will ever respect as an equal the one who is subordinate. Yet, in the Trinity, the Subordinate Son, understood only by his relationship, is equal to the Father. Dependence upon the Father does not make the Son less worthy.

The woman's subordination to her husband, the laity's subordination to the clergy in the administration of the Church is simply right order and must not be seen to damage that equality. That is what is meant when we say the Church and the Christian family are not democracies. Subordination in Divine Relationships is between equals -

it is hard for us to think “subordinate but equal” in the human context. It must mean that as equals, eye to eye, each speaks freely and listens intently to each; that consensus is the hope, but that the final decision is made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by him who is given authority to make it.

There is a difference in the kinds of submission - God submits a very great deal “not counting equality a thing to be grasped, he emptied himself” and Man must be eager to submit to the Divine command, “I have hid thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee.” Man and woman exemplify this submitting each to each. Man submits to woman’s need for order, provision, protection, and supplies these even when inconvenient, difficult, or painful to himself. Woman submits to governance which is geared for her own best and the best of her children. This is the scriptural teaching of St. Paul and St. Peter, declared by them to be what they received from Christ ( see I Cor. 11:1-2, I Peter 2:19-3:2).

St. Peter says, wives submit even if your husbands do not obey the word of God (I Peter 3:1 II). And he points out this submitted attitude and the power of it are modeled in Jesus Christ on the cross. This strong scriptural concept of the Godly power of walking in Jesus’ steps has been totally discredited in today’s self-assertiveness fads. Using blatantly ill people as models of submission, we have thrown out the profound Christian idea of submission with trust in God to overcome which is what St. Peter presents, and which has been the credo of the martyrs and saints of the Church through the centuries.

*Baptism makes us one in Christ, and there is no more male or female.*

In baptism men and women are one in Christ Jesus because they are equally freed from original sin by his death. Yet, neither his death, resurrection, or the infilling of the Holy Spirit erases the physical form and function of male and female or sexuality’s inherent meaning. There is not a monolithic Man formed with no distinctions after baptism. Rather there is possibility of union in God of two opposites by Christian marriage (“So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined - - - Matt. 19:5-8), with all the wonder and fruitfulness that the ‘knowing’ of the opposite continues to bring with it, both spiritually and physically. It is this union used as an analogy of two into one that explains the Church. St. Paul’s inspired melding of these two ideas is in Ephesians 5 (the basis for much of *Mulieris Dignitatem*) where he juxtaposes the union of man and woman into one body with the head of that body, the man in one context, Christ in the other.

*Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Sienna are more powerful models for modern women than the Blessed Virgin Mary:*

True, St. Teresa and Catherine never doubted the equal-opposite roles of man and woman, holding their equality lightly, but with dignity. Yet, the writings of Saints Teresa and Catherine, reveal how they elevated obedience to authority, how respectful they were of those in authority - much more akin to the spirit of Our Mother Mary, than anything exemplified by feminism. St. Teresa put herself under strict disciplines devised by her confessor and the Provincial General of the Jesuits to authenticate her call. She gave leadership to her order of women to return them to the discipline of their original rules.

And St. Catherine of Sienna “whose courage and love for the Church caused her to challenge priest and pope” would hardly recognize herself in that statement. She acted only for the love and obedience of her “bridegroom Christ,” and then under spiritual direction. In one of her letters to the pope she wrote, “You know, too,

how needful it is for you and for Holy Church to keep this people in obedience to Your Holiness, for here is the source and beginning of our faith." These words would choke in the throats of those who present Catherine as the epitome of the modern feminist.

he true feminine, if you mean by that the whole and holy woman as intended by God, is seen in both of these women, but more completely in the one whole and Holy woman - the Blessed Mother of God. Imitating Mary's faith and obedience has the power to bring both man and woman into Union with God. What further power could one want?

## 8 OBSERVATIONS ON ARCHBISHOP WEAKLAND'S STATEMENT ON THE POPE'S APOSTOLIC LETTER *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*

How many different Catholic publications have seen fit to reprint Archbishop Weak response to the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*? I have seen it in a diaconate mailing, in *America*, in *Radical Grace*, and referred to in numerous other places, more so by far than the Pope's actual letter. A local priest has handed it around the staff with the notation that his feelings, too, are best expressed by the Archbishop.

As a lay woman who has been much involved intellectually, spiritually, and practically in the daily business of living out woman's scriptural role and meaning, I am truly happy that the bishops, including Archbishop Weak are expressing loyalty to the Pope in his declarative definition of male priesthood as expressly ordained by God. If I wax warm on the subject it is because I have come to believe, along with others more knowledgeable than I, that this issue is the most critical the Church has ever faced - yes, ever! Eve or Mary - woman is that important to ongoing Salvation History!

My only regret is that the Pope's Apostolic Letter was delayed in coming, no doubt because of his "pastoral" concern that so many are reluctant to grant him. In the meantime, shepherds including the Archbishop have caused great stress and may have even contributed to the fracture in the Church that has developed over the "woman issue." Had the voice of the original apostles as recorded in Sacred Scripture been heeded and gently but thoroughly promulgated, this heartbreaking division need never have developed. Firm handling from the first, without the misinformed, equivocal stand of many of the bishops, would have clarified the issues, and in the differentiation process unity would have been maintained. It is too late for that now. And even the way the Archbishop expresses his dismay only adds to the bitterness and anger, and does nothing to really support the Holy Father. Such support would begin to explicate the profound and unequivocal theology that lies behind the Holy Father's brief letter.

The theology lying behind St. Paul's teaching on woman is thorough and complete, and he expressly states that it is a tradition he received directly from Christ and is passing on solemnly, see I Corinthians 11, and follow the argument of verse 1 and verse 32 carefully (it is interesting that headship in the family receives the same weight of Christ's own tradition as the Holy Eucharist). It is not the result of male bias or cultural prejudices.

It is neither because women are inferior, or because women were considered chattel - any careful examination of the Judeo-Christian tradition will prove that. From Sarah on, women were treated with respect and

their husbands heeded their voices: they could not be married without their own consent - Rebecca was asked about marrying Isaac, (and both Rachel and Leah were consulted by Jacob before he could leave Haran), they inherited property by the law of Moses; and could not be dismissed without a decree of divorce. Jesus even called this legal practice into question, saying it was not so from the beginning - by which reference he was recalling his creation of man and woman as equals in the first chapters of Genesis. (See John Paul II's *Original Unity of Man and Woman* ) Jesus said this development of divorce was allowed by Moses because of sin; and sin does result in the degradation of woman's role, and of men's too. It is this sin that St. Paul and St. Peter address in their teachings. Overagainst the sin of fallen creation, from Genesis to Revelation God establishes woman's honorable but opposite role from man's and it is this tradition we inherit. Do we forget that submission, another word for love, is the heart of the gospel? We will richly benefit when we attempt to comprehend the full truth that underlies it. When Archbishop Weakland protests that he now faces pastoral problems, they are there only if he cannot or will not teach the truth. The truth releases and frees women; it brings with it fulfillment for her, and happiness and peace that nothing but a whole woman can give to her husband and her children. There are many great sources of a good sound teaching that does not deny that women now live in the Twentieth Century, but still retain all that is essential about woman's meaning and role in the tradition of Christ. I recommend Edith Stein's *Woman*; there are other sources, but this is a good place to start. Blessed Edith considered herself a feminist, though hardly what is called feminist today because she loved and heeded the Holy Scriptures, and submitted her considerable intellect to the Tradition of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Archbishop Weakland might review what real justice and equality are as qualities of relationship. We can do this by meditating on the relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Here is where true justice and equality originate. And here justice means "right order." Right order, designated by St. Peter as well as St. Paul in the tradition given by Christ will bring justice to men and women and children. Equality does not mean "the same as in all regards," because the Triune Persons are Ob-positioned and their roles cannot be exchanged. The Second Person is "sent", the First Person "sends." The Second Person does only what he sees the First Person doing. Submission of will or one person to another, so refused by feminist reasoning in our antinomian age, seems, to this non-theologian, to be inherent in the Trinity itself.

It seems evident that bishops and priests who have had so much consternation over woman's role in the Church not being the same as men's, really do believe the male role to be superior, and are reacting with guilt which they rightly should renounce. Their guilt of sexism, however, should not be projected on the rest of the faithful who are genuinely puzzled by their "pastoral letters" on the subject. Most women, and I believe most men, do not believe woman's being and role to be less significant than men's, so have no trouble maintaining it with joy. With solid teaching on this matter, all artificially stimulated anger and disillusionment will dissipate. Those who refuse to see the definition of these relationships in the Holy Trinity, or who cannot accept what is plainly there in Scripture, can be encouraged to find a religious expression in keeping with their beliefs. Then the Church, free from internal dissension and disunity, can pursue her divine mission of converting the world to Christ.

The theologians the Archbishop invokes, who are concerned about the Pope's "theological underpinnings," can only be those theologians who have been too eager to disagree with him and with anything orthodox. His

theology is as sound as scripture and Church Tradition can make it and is consistent with the best findings of psychology; it is their theology they should be concerned about. By teaching error and fostering dissent they may compromise souls.

Those men and women who “have trouble with the Church’s authority” seem not to believe that the Holy Spirit has lead her from her birth from Christ’s side, as was promised, nor do they believe that to her has been given the safekeeping of the unfolding of all Truth. If they believe that about her (the writers family forsook all to become Catholic because of this conviction) then they can only desire to submit their small minds to an overarching and infinitely superior authority which belongs to the Author. Such submission of mind and heart becomes one of the richest of all blessings that Mother Church can bestow on a soul as Edith Stein will attest. This is as counter to the spirit of this age as it can be. In fact, it rather separates sheep from goats.

The last three paragraphs of the Archbishop’s statement hardly deserve further comment, because they are merely a thinly disguised complaint. Pains pain, pain! What about all the people who have been and continue to be pained at heart by this kind of flimsy “apostolic” utterance?

## 9 RECASTING TRUTH

What about Rev. Brian Wren's assertion in last week's Bulletin that Christ himself might have proposed the innovation of using feminine terms for God? And that the reason he didn't was because of the stranglehold of patriarchy?

Behind statements like these lies the big question that is posed before the Church in the Twentieth Century, "What is the meaning of man and woman in God's plan of things?" Before we jump to conclusions as The Rev. Wren has, we had better find out if there is an answer to that question. All masculine and feminine references in the end had better be consistent with what God was saying when he made man and woman. Our century will be known as the century when this problem was thrashed out in the Church; and though the answers are far from clear, they are emerging. And where do we go to research this Big Question?

As Catholic Christians we have three sources that will not lead us into a dead end; sources we can trust (what a word in this time of confusion!). One is the Tradition of the Church, the unadulterated truth of Christ that has been handed on to us, the other is the Holy Bible which the Vatican II Council assures us is inspired totally by the Holy Spirit, and the third is the Teaching Magisterium of the Church all three are utterly reliable. If these three things cannot be trusted, the solution to our problem about women in the Church, is not, as C.S. Lewis said, to make priestesses, but rather, to abolish priests. If we're misled here, let's abandon the whole Christian thing, because there is no hope.

Statements like Wren's shed no light on the meaning of sexuality, but rather call into question the veracity of the source of real answers to our questions about what men and women, masculine and feminine are all about. Is Jesus really in mental chains because of patriarchy, so that his words cannot be trusted to mirror reality at all? My word! That does put us in a pickle! Then the Bible certainly can't be really the Word of God, can it? Jesus can't really be much of anything either! My impression is that, being God, he overturned a lot of established, important things without so much as an apology. And that the last thing he would ever do would be to mince words or hedge about something so weighty as the nature of God, his own nature.

Anyway, we have got ourselves into a peculiar view of New Testament times when we think the control of men was so outrageous. If that was so, why did St. Paul have to plead with women to be submissive to their husbands? Weren't they all silent doormats? When I read Wren's statement, "In Christ's time women had no hope of emancipation from male control," I want to laugh. There are so many indications to the contrary - the pre-Christian

Lydia, the Syro Phoenician woman, Mary Magdalene, those women who traipsed after Jesus through the countryside tending to his needs, and those women Paul roared at. No, I rather think things were as hodge-podge and loose in Jesus' day as they are today - pretty typical rebelliousness to God everywhere, and no rigid marching to the tune of men, more likely men were marching to the tune of women. Those men whose wives were out feeding the disciples must have had to get their own breakfasts.

The truth is, we have had to make the Bible look archaic and hide-bound to excuse our disliking and ignoring it.

Let's start by being sharper. If people begin their argument by implying the Scriptures are nothing more than a cultural accumulation of pious thoughts, or determined by some "isms", turn a deaf ear. Then approach the Sacred Scriptures with respect, researching your question with expectation of, not sterile conservatism, but insights from the Spirit that are satisfying.

## 10 PETER, PAUL, AND WOMAN

There is an accusation abroad that the Apostles, as Jewish men of their time, pressed the imprint of their male supremacy bias into the soft clay of the young Church. That bias, it is said, hardening over the centuries, finally baked into unyielding bricks which imprison women.

Did the Holy Spirit lose control of the prejudices of Peter and Paul? What did they believe about woman and her role in redemption? Why did they, in the name of Jesus, have such hard things to say to her?

To understand the apostolic teaching on woman and her role it is necessary to sketch briefly the story of Salvation. The Bible tells of a wonderful creation culminated when God made mankind, man and woman, in his own image. Mankind and God gave themselves to each other freely and lovingly as did perfect man and perfect woman in their holy union. In order for this embrace of ecstasy and creativity to continue in timeless Perfection, mankind needed only to respond with “yes” to God, think his thoughts after him and obey his holy will.

Woman’s relationship to man was made to be the microcosm of this heavenly relationship. The woman was called by God to an attitude of yielded response. Upon her “yes” to her husband, like the base of a column, the tiers of perfect relationship between God and mankind were based.

The one called to respond was free. Freedom meant there was no coercion and therefore God gave them the choice not to respond. To turn to this other choice, symbolized by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, meant to independently decide what was best for oneself. Sadly, this independent decision, not to be responsive, was what first the woman and then her husband chose.

The effect was that an immense gap, Death, opened between mankind and God. He, desiring for his Beloved mankind nothing but reunion with himself, used history to sink supporting piers, and finally gave His Son, Jesus, as the bridge across the chasm. The way was made for saved mankind and God, Bride and Bridegroom, to be once again united.

Many words are used for this state of union with God which is the goal of each of us individually, and all of us collectively as the Church, but the image in the New Testament of the Bride, without spot or wrinkle, the receptive woman who yields to her husband and is made fruitful by him is the enduring one. The necessary attitude for this union to continue is the same as was ordained from the beginning - one of heeding receptivity.

Jesus, fully human and fully God, teaches and acts out both the Bride and Bridegroom side of the equation. He does this in order that we will witness the fitting attitudes of our respective roles. He epitomizes in himself the

overall authority of God but also the full surrender of humankind to God. He thus shows us how both man and woman give himself and herself totally for the blessed reunion.

God's authority was evident in Jesus, the bridegroom. The Gospels are dotted with observations of that authority. But it is unlike the authority for which this world contends. It is gentle, unassuming, and displayed only in self-giving service. The very communities meant to be so ordered, the home and the Church, have often failed to follow this revolutionary pattern of headship. In the Catholic community, true to the sexual analogy of union, the authority is unquestionably male. We see in the light of the analogue that in itself is not the problem. But male authority in the Church and the family has too often been anything but "gentle, unassuming, displaying itself only in self-giving service."

At the same time, the obedient responder has picked up negative attitudes about the role which do not qualify for blissful union of two "perfect beings, holy and whole, free and loving." Coercive authority and sick submission, like a drunken couple leaning upon each other have nothing to offer to our understanding of union in Christ. This coupling is not the result of Christian ordering and Christian response. Quite the opposite, they make a sad picture as they stumble along - prestigious domination on the one hand, and manipulating self-pity on the other.

Seen in this light, the apostles' words sound misogynistic; "Wives submit," "I do not let women teach men," "let a woman keep silence in Church," etc. To hear them aright we go back to their context in Scripture. The apostles had been clearly instructed by Jesus about the heart attitudes of both authority and obedience. If Gentiles lord it over people, it must not be so when Christ's disciples exercise headship and, on the other side of the coin, all are called to obedience - "if you love me, obey!" Everyone is to be as suppliant as Jesus is to the Father's will.

In the union of God and his people which is actualized in the church community, the woman then becomes a most important sign. The apostles recognized her submission and obedience to be an indicator of the faithful's holy relationship to God, in the way a thermometer indicates the temperature. It is a grave concern to them, that this woman in being freed from the Law (both the Jewish Law of Moses and the cultural law which held her in bondage to men) not misinterpret her new freedom in Christ. Such a misunderstanding would call her to reject her specifically feminine role.

Jesus gave a new life to her that was so exhilarating that at first in the Christian community, as today, his pleas about obedience were not heard. Yet, if this continued, the second state of disobedience in the redeemed community could be worse than the first- a community which claimed salvation but which did not obey God. The new woman in Christ was tempted, even as she is today, to let a still unyielded will enjoy eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This danger the apostles knew must be made clear to the community at once. Male and female, they taught, receive equally of all that God gives in Baptism (Gal 3:28); healing, forgiveness and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but woman by these very gifts for the sake of the community must be the first to appropriate them to the return of willing obedience. All mankind must learn from her and follow her model so that everyone, male as well as female, may become a *responder* to God, to be made fruitful by him. If she, the image of these things, will have nothing to do with them, no one will or can.

The apostles saw her threatened by the same ideology promoted in Eden by the fallen angel” who would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven.” Even with belief in Jesus Christ, the temptation was there to the same rebellion. They, therefore, spoke decisively to protect her “from the angels” (I Cor. 11:1 O) whose false notions buffeted her.

When Paul wrote to Corinth this was one of the many problems in the new fellowship. He patiently corrected the errors while not wanting to dampen their enthusiasm for Jesus. He tells them that far better than any of the exciting manifestations of the Spirit that are sweeping the community, is love; and he describes that love in terms that can only be called Christian submission - submission to God’s will and submission to others (I Cor. 13).

The disorder was extensive. Woman, the sign of right order, was attempting to assume authority during the early organization of headship. The report to Paul about them caused him anguish. They were disregarding the Law, not fulfilling it in their Spirit-filled powers. In ignoring it they transgressed love and became detrimental to the community. Paul puts them firmly back under their husband’s authority. (I Cor, 14:34-38)

Earlier in the same letter Paul outlined situations in which the woman could “speak in church” but it was when the order of God was recognized and practiced. Clearly Paul was not a man bound by cultural traditions; he upon God’s guidance had ditched circumcision, dear to his Phariseean heart. The tradition which he insisted be maintained was not one of culture, but one he had learned as imitator of Christ and which he was obediently passing on (ICor.1 1:1)

First Corinthians II is full of symbols for which we need translation. Hair lengths, veils, all these had a common meaning to the Corinthians. Though these things were in themselves cultural, the principles that Paul based upon them are not. It is the principle of marital order that is endorsed by Paul as being part of the tradition he received directly from Christ, even as he had received the Eucharist from him which is presented at the end of this same chapter. The two - woman’s responsive role to her husband, and the Eucharist are related through the reality of union upon which they both rest.

In outlining headship, Paul states simply that for all unions there is a head. For mankind, Christ is the head; for marriage, man is the head, for the Holy Trinity, God the Father is the head. Obedience flows towards the head on all the tiers of relationship.

When the woman adheres to that order, as symbolized in wearing her husband’s veil, she may pray and prophesy in the Church community . This veil is not a sign of inequality of worth, for as Paul states, in the Christ man and woman are mutually dependent.

So sure is Paul that these principle are consistent to Christ that he makes an apostolic statement of full authority, something he does only when he is sure that he communicates God’s will. Churches who fail to recognize this order will not be recognized as legitimate. Such a pronouncement is part of the apostolic foundation upon which our faith is based. (I Cor. 14:34-38) Paul was not confused as to the equality of husband and wife before God. His instructions about their sexual relationship, giving the woman the role of her husband’s body for her own sexual fulfillment, is revolutionary for the time. He says that any abstinence is to be by mutual agreement, and that there are to be no refusals from either side. (I Cor. 7:3-5)

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul's tone is just as practical, but higher spiritual connotations are drawn out. The passage has received rich commentary by the Fathers and most recently by Pope John Paul II. He emphasizes the *mutuality of submission* required of man and woman - the man subject to the woman in his headship, and the woman subject to the man in yielding to his headship. Melded together these two analogies, the relationship of the head to the body, and the bride to the groom who become one body of which the bridegroom is the head, (Eph. 5:21 -33) depict the perfect relationship between God and his people, and between man and woman

What a straightened understanding of the roles in marriage this requires not only of the woman, but also of the man! The woman does not learn a "narrow way" alone. The man is to be "like the Lord" to his wife. It cannot be overlooked, however, that the first one to accept obedience is the woman. Each apostolic entreaty begins with "wives submit" and is followed with "husbands love." (Col 3:18-4:1, I Pet 3:1ff, Titus 2:4)

A common misunderstanding is that because women generally had less status than men in the ancient world, they were obedient and submissive. Such was not the case for Titus, the young bishop. Paul wrote encouraging him to bring women to accept submission to their husbands that God's word would not be dishonored. Their disobedience discredited the gospel (Titus 2:4-5)

Older women have the assignment to be *kaladidaskolos*, "teachers of good things" to the younger women, training them "to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands." This ministry, often overlooked, is a ministry that demands mature faith. We need *kaladidaskolos* today. Only women can teach women in the feministic milieu in which we live. Men are disqualified because of the suspicion of a need to dominate, though this attitude must not be part of any Christian headship picture.

To Timothy Paul reiterates the importance of the feminine sign in the Church. He does not let women teach or have authority over men. The Greek word, *authentio*, means "to exercise power of one's self." It rings eerily of the very first transgression - the fatal choice of Eve which triggered the breakup of Perfection. A woman who exercises her own undelegated power is the anti-sign. Such a one must not teach men.

In the same passage the apostle writes that though the fall began through a woman, women will be saved by bearing children and by continuing in faith and holiness. The Greek *tekogonia* used just this once in the Bible, is also translated as "birth of the Divine Child," and is preferable to the translation "the bearing of children," not because the latter is not fully in keeping with the emphasis of fruitfulness in Scripture, but because the first alternative gives a breadth of meaning which also includes the latter.

The New Testament carries fruitfulness beyond the biological, though it never negates the biological. Woman will be saved because of transmission of the seed which brought the Divine Child through Mary. To paraphrase Paul here, "let woman continue in this fruitfulness, fulfilling her place in the divine plan by bringing into this world in tangible form, love, joy, peace, patience, longsuffering, gentleness, and self-control, with perseverance." Along these same lines Saint Ambrose wrote, "A soul that believes both conceives and brings forth the Word of God and acknowledges his works . . . Christ has only one mother in the flesh, but we all bring forth Christ in faith."

Woman's vocation may seem on the surface to be the least of all. In God's sight, however, by the values expressed by Jesus, it is the greatest of all. The first will be last and the last first. That vocation is fulfilled like it was

by the Virgin Mary, by believing God's word and saying "yes." In this way she repairs the work of Eve who did not believe and was deceived into disobedience.

St. Peter in his first letter amplifies these teachings of St. Peter with a complete theology of submission which he places as the centerpiece of faith in Jesus. Is Peter any more liable than St. Paul to the charge of cultural conditioning and bias in regard to women? Peter heeded the Holy Spirit about the Jewish cleanliness laws concerning food and foreigners even though they always had been a part of him. (Acts 10). Had the same Spirit taught him something different about woman's role, it would not have been ignored.

Peter, first head of the Church, teaches obedience to God's authority as it is delegated in the ordered world. He solves the authority problem for those who heed him, then and now. Jesus is his model. The strong, gentle, and loving shepherd whom Jesus left over the flock, begins by reminding his children of the blood of Jesus which reestablished the covenant (the marital relationship) between them and God. These children are the spiritual house, the priesthood of believers. With mature faith they will submit to every lawful institution for God. The authority of law is God's authority, and wherever that order is, there is God's will. Servants and slaves are to be submissive to their masters, not to just the good ones, but to the hard as well.

This is a difficult idea for modern man and woman who are galvanized to fight for rights, to oppose institutions and jurisdictions in defense of individual freedom. Peter would not agree. His eyes are on his Master. He, a "witness of the sufferings of Christ," experiences a much deeper lesson. Mankind, man and woman, must follow the one who suffered unjustly. Thus, the woman and her submission to her husband becomes a sign of alignment of mankind's will to God. Not only for her own salvation is her submission carried out. It is also for the salvation of her husband. ( Pet 3:lff) A redemptive suffering, her submission is directly related to Jesus on the cross. (2:21)

A woman "mindful of Christ" and "trusting in him who judges justly" moves in God's power, to right the upside-down order of fallen relationships. Peter does not believe this submission is based on any inequality of the sexes - woman and man are joint heirs of the grace of life.

With this apostolic teaching of woman's inestimable worth, she may be guided to understand the vital importance of her role, appreciate it, and happily fulfill it in the family and the Church. The lack of meaning in submission has often made it difficult to accept. When it's full significance is taught again, her worthiness and centrality to the Gospel will move the woman of faith to embrace this essential place. It is she who will then, without self consciousness or extraordinary effort, recast the Body in obedience to its Head, Jesus Christ. The Apostles promise it.

## 11 ADDRESSING A BASIC ANOMALY

Coming to us as an unexpected gift of God, the diaconate has been a great blessing. Bob had given up his ministry in the Presbyterian Church to become a Catholic, and was reassured of his original call to minister when two years later the Archdiocese of Minneapolis/St Paul opened the diaconal ministry and accepted him into the first class. Yet, as we continue, now as more experienced Catholics, to meditate on our experiences in ministry and the meaning of diaconate, we identify more and more problems which remain unresolved about the meaning and role of the Permanent Diaconate. We have come to believe that these will not be set to rest until a basic anomaly is addressed.

These problems center around the obscurity of role which over-identifies with priesthood on the one hand, and implies some denigration of lay leadership on the other. The unclear duties seem in effect, to diminish the priesthood's unique character, and even serve at times to make priestly celibacy more questionable. Also the question of women's possible ordination to diaconate brings a host of other seeming unanswerable questions to the status of the other extension of the Bishops' ordination, i.e. priesthood. We have also noted sadly over the last years the special deacon disease, inflation of ego, which diminishes the effect to the Church that diaconate ordination otherwise empowers.

Though it may seem highly improbable that diaconate ordination can be changed, we believe that all of these problems might be banished like mist before the sun if the actual ordination that permanent deacons receive is realigned to certain Biblical principles, and important distinctions that are obscured by that ordination are re-delineated by a different kind of empowering and commissioning. We would ask theologians to consider this possibility.

There is general agreement that there is no need of a mini-priest in the Church, but that there is need of a spiritually empowered and recognized laity. Rereading Acts of the Apostles, we see that the diaconate historically is such a spiritually empowered and recognized laity. As it is now, however, the deacon is not a lay person, but an ordained minister who has received the sacrament of Holy Orders. *Lumen Gentium* defines the role, "At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed, not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service."

The idea of the permanent deacon being on a "level of hierarchy" might be redefined to see that level as one of qualitative difference that makes it ob-positioned and irreducible to Holy Orders. The sharing of Holy Orders,

which is the sharing of the Bishop's ordination, is essential for the priest as he enters into the full ministry of the Bishop sacramentally and in governance, but it is not only unnecessary but undesirable for the deacon.

The hands imposed on the deacon can empower him to a ministry to which the Holy Spirit and the People of God have called him without being a participator in the Bishop's ordination.

With this different kind of empowerment for the deacon and its different kind of structure there would be no obstacle to the immediate addition of women to the order. As it now stands, the real problem of ordaining women to deaconess is the snarly problem of sharing in the Bishop's ordination which sets apart a man to represent Christ in very specific ways which are necessarily male because of the marital realities of the Eucharist (see Archbishop Cardinal Carters Pastoral, *Upon the Sacrament of Priestly Orders* and Pope John Paul II *On the Dignity of Women*) Upon these premises it will always be impossible to extend the Bishop's ordination to women.

The resolution could be a commissioning by the Christian body of its members to Permanent Diaconate. The "laying on of hands" would be a lay function in this commissioning. The deacon, already established as a leader in ministry of service among the people, is presented by the people, prayed over by the people for spiritual gifts, and then blessed by the Bishop. The line between Holy Orders and laity would be kept inviolate - a line that must be kept for the symbolic values and meaning carried in the Eucharist of the union of two quite "other" persons, God and his spousal people. The vitally important masculine, feminine distinction of "Other", so important to the covenantal marital structure of the Church, Eucharist, and priesthood would stand out clearly and reassuringly to the whole Christian community.

Such a commissioning of deacon and deaconess is consistent with both the Old Testament's differentiation between priest and Levite and the New Testament's role and work of diaconate.

In the Old Testament the line between Levite and priest was inviolate, they did not share the same anointing for their service of God. One represented God more than he represented the people, the other was purely representative of the people.

The Levite by representing the people's first born demonstrated the concept of a people utterly dependent upon and totally surrendered to God. As representative of the people, the Levites functioned in rituals of cleansing and dedication. The Israelites through their tribal leaders laid hands on the Levites (Num 8:10) acknowledging them as their substitutes, and the priests then offered the Levites as a wave offering as the people's special representatives. This principle seems especially appropriate as a base for understanding the differentiation of deacon as truly lay person, to priest as truly ordained person. It would be possible to continue the step of diaconate preliminary to priesthood, realizing that this is a different kind of diaconate than the one commissioned by members of the People of God

In the New Testament the term "diakonia" is fully descriptive of Christ. The Lord is Deacon first of all. He came to minister (Mk 10:45) and to teach his people to minister. Diakonia (table service, servant and waiter) is then the mark of the whole Church, but even as baptism confers priesthood on the whole Church and priesthood is also a specific Holy Order set apart, so diakonia is also a special gift and setting apart for the laity. In listing Bishop and deacon, it may be the apostles were juxtaposing them, in the manner we have stated, the one representing Godhead in the Eucharist and the governance of the Christian body, and the other in an ob-positioned role representing the

service and obedience side of the relationship. From that side either man or woman may be representative of the whole people without destruction of the essential covenantal, marital realities. Cleaner, sharper lines of order between opposites do not destroy love and unity but enhance both to the great benefit of their union in Christ.

## 12 THE ART OF COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

In these post conciliar times, “collaborative” has emerged as one of the key concepts affecting the ministry both of ordained men, and men and women of the laity. The dictionary definition, “to work or act jointly,” is merely a signpost to an experience that can be either very rich and satisfying or very frustrating and disappointing. Stories are rampant, told both by priests about the aggressive actions of ordained deacons and lay people who assume they are carrying out ministry collaboratively, and by lay persons and deacons who complain about the obstructionist actions and words of the priests with whom they are supposedly “collaborating.” The very tensions displayed are rooted in a phenomena that is very new, and extremely promising - that is, in the expanded experiences of ministry that has burst upon us in the last years of the Twentieth Century.

But collaboration, we who are deacons and deacon wives find, does not just happen. We may go happily to our duties assuming we are working side by side with the priest to whose parish or chaplaincy we are assigned, only to be brought up short by a man who seemingly resents any suggestion of “side-by-side.” Because this is a magazine for deacon readers, the problems presented by such situations will be addressed in this article from the deacon’s point of view, and the suggestions for the art of collaboration will be made to him and to his wife. Working jointly, collaborating, is an art. As with any art, skill in collaborating is acquired by study of principles and the observation of how those principles work, then practiced through lots of experience. Here deacons and their wives have a step-up. Marriage has already provided them with the principles of how to effectively act in unison, which is the goal of collaborative ministry, and most have had many years of experience at it already, sometimes successfully and sometimes a shade less than that.

Let’s see how the commonsense rules of working together in marriage may apply to side-by-side ministry with a fictitious priest we will call Father Ed. A sketch of this man begins with his age and training - over sixty, he received his priestly training in rigorous pre-Vatican II style which included theological and spiritual training second to none. He is a warm, ingratiating man full of Irish jokes, who makes friends readily, and who has worked faithfully in his present parish for fifteen years. People like him generally, but they have conflicting feelings as well because Father is an autocratic by nature and by training. Holding his people and their abilities in little esteem, Fr. Ed brooks no interference in managing the parish; no one knows how the finances are handled, what the expenses are or what the income is in his parish. When buildings are enlarged, no one has any input to the plans which emerge from the rectory right into the contractor’s hands. The recently formed Pastoral Council has only consultative

powers unless Father allows more elbow room than that. Frequently when suggestions are made they are peremptorily, unreasonably put down, often with anger. The ordained deacon in this parish fares no better than the Council members, in fact is often referred to as a “lay deacon.” He is never thought of for liturgical duties unless he deliberately presents himself, and then is treated as something of a nuisance. When he brings sacramental needs of parishioners to Father attention - anointing for healing, and confession, Father is apt to jump defensively. Father feels at his age work should decrease, not increase.

Father Ed is purely fictional, but we can be sure that many deacons find the situation this deacon faces anything but fictional, and what can be done? Certainly what usually happens does not help bring collaborative ministry forward one inch. Grumbling, complaining, telling the latest story about Fr. Ed’s unreasonableness only shrinks the possibility of ever enjoying a collaborative ministry with him.

Favored as the method to resolve tensions these days is confrontation. How about confronting Fr. Ed with his chronic autocratic, even domineering ways? Why not get a number of people to gently but persuasively, bring to his attention the need to respect the people who have gifts to share in the parish? Can confrontation do more than to sensitize Father all the more? Can we expect him to shed his disposition and his unilateral high-handedness when shown how they affect the people who would like to minister with him as equals - they tremble to think of it? Or shall we press Father into going to more of the diocesan opportunities for workshops on modern day ministry, or give him books on the subject. Perhaps people could offer to drive to these conferences and be willing to go with him. Will he then see the light and reform his ways of working with people?

Shall we pray a lot? Shall we get other people to pray for Father that he will loosen his tight hold, and be more responsive to his flock’s spiritual needs which include the opportunity to flex their gifted spiritual muscles? When we translate these options into a marriage situation we realize that with the possible exception of the last one, these kinds of actions rarely cause changes in difficult personal interrelationships.

The reason that prayer, however, isn’t so very far off as a solution is because it borders on being a spiritual response to the problem; that is, if it is not just a plea with the Holy Spirit to change somebody, and change circumstances so that they are more according to our personal sense of justice. A spiritual approach using gospel principles is not only fitting for a deacon in response to a difficult relationship, but it promises the most possible growth for both Father Ed and his deacon. And what are these gospel principles? They involve the nitty-gritty of Jesus’ teaching and actions, remembering that “diaconate” means the lackey-like service that Jesus himself extended and continues to extend to us.

This first involves an examination of Jesus’ relationship with his Father. We often fail in dealing with our priests because we resent their ingrained attitude of being “the head” when we want and feel we deserve a response as one equal to another. In this we fail to grasp the attitude of Jesus who though “he was in the form of God (equal to the Father), did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.” ( Phil. 2:6)

It is very hard for us humans to understand Jesus, co-equal to the Father, who minded it not at all that he came only to do the Father’s bidding, that He spoke only what he heard the Father say, that he followed only the Father’s will, even to death. It is this legacy of obedience that he left us to emulate. He showed it to be the most

powerful of unitive forces. He explained in parable and in deed that the right place for any of his followers was not up at the head of the table trying to elbow into a place, but at the foot of that table.

Can we allow Father Ed the prerogative of headship and still know ourselves to be equal to him in every regard? Most Christians still have a hard time with the idea of headship, perhaps because of the abuse of authority they've experienced. They wrongly believe that equality means equal weight in every area of decision making, of authority, of governance. And that the opposite role, of accepting someone else's authority, means worthlessness. The model for Christian equality, however, is the Holy Trinity. Here we see equals assume roles that are not interchangeable. The Father is ultimate authority; the Son obeys his command, the Spirit is sent at the command of both. These Persons we number I, II, and III. Yet, the Third person is not inferior to, nor less God than the First Person. The names, First, Second, and Third refer not to prestige nor importance, but to order and that alone. Archbishop John Roach in a 1987 homily to the National Council of Catholic Women promoted this understanding:

Where Fr. Jerry Keefe has been especially helpful to me is placing our relationships in the context of the relationships of the Trinity. Jesus reveals how personal and warm and tender the Father is. He is the image, the exact likeness, the splendor, the reflection and the glory of the Father. The Father anoints Jesus with the Holy Spirit and clothes him in the most attractive virtues. John says, 'The Father glorifies the Son, he who give me glory is the Father!'

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one, but very different. The Father does not do what the Son does, the Son does not do what the Father does and neither does what the Spirit does. Jesus spoke often of doing the Father's will. He wasn't obsequious; that was his role and he recognized the Father's role. The Father did things unique to the Father. He initiates, governs, presides, creates in a very distinctive way. The Son's role is to respond, to be the word for the Father, to reflect the Father, to be the splendor and glory of the Father. The Spirit is the bond of love animating the Father and the Son. He is comforter and consoler and paraclete and inspiration.

That to be a kind of a lofty ideal for us, but I think it's what we have to aim at. Our roles are different, but that ought to be a source of rejoicing, not resentment. There are things that you as laity do that I shouldn't do. There are things that I do as bishop and priest that you shouldn't do, but the treasure that I share with you in my Baptism is the greatest of my treasures, and unless that treasure is reflected some way, somehow in the way I exercise authority, I abuse not only the authority but the source of my gift which is Baptism.

There is no inferiority or super-superiority in the Trinity. There can't be any among us. I must exercise a kind of leadership and a kind of authority for the good of the church which is not your responsibility. To do that, however, I must recognize not only the dignity of you as persons and children of God, but as people in whom the Spirit resides and to whom the spirit speaks.

Now let's take this insight into gospel-centered relationship and apply it to our deacon and Fr. Ed. All of a sudden, our deacon, still recognizing his worth and equality of calling to Fr. Ed's worth and calling, relinquishes any claim to headship and its prerogatives; they may be, he deliberately decides, the sole bailiwick of Fr. Ed. That is, our deacon accepts as Jesus accepts, a role of obedience, in this case, to Fr. Ed because he believes that God is actually

calling him to a new role. I will leave it to your imagination to fill in the psychological change of climate that occurs for Fr. Ed and for our deacon without even a word being spoken.

With this relinquishment must blossom a new level of respect for Fr. Ed. When he now dictates, as he is wont to do, our deacon will begin (perhaps after some inner struggles) to accept this as somehow manifesting God's will. He trusts now, that God is in it and will bring some kind of change into the situation, no longer, however, on his own terms. In old spiritual lingo this was called "acceptance." And he will treat Father's opinions with respect. This does not mean he will abandon any attempt at giving input to Father. On the contrary, with Jesus as the model, he will even more freely give his own ideas and opinions, but now without the need or pressure of acceptance because trust in God's hand in this has relieved him. Fr.'s anger may still be there for a while, but our deacon will find it non-threatening, because he himself no longer feels confrontative. His very calm, agreeableness will soon ease the tensions always associated with "trying to get Father to do something" in the past.

The deacon, being excited about the potential of this spiritual experiment, may now call some other members of the pastoral council into this experiment with him.

As a result Father begins to realize a great deal of support and acceptance that will feel just like love to him. These people are not just mere "Yea sayers." They are not boot lickers. They are instead, people who know they are worthy in God's sight, people who are grateful for the gifts God has given them, who willingly, in the footsteps of Jesus with trust in the Holy Spirit, are following his way. And this is truly love.

This experiment cannot have the outcome one would expect on the merely human level. We cannot see here one man become more and more dominating and others more and more dominated. There is a dynamic at work here that cannot be pigeon-holed, cannot be boxed up. It is the dynamic of what the Bible calls "submission" which in our day and age is a word which must be translated because of the false accretions it has accumulated in a caustically, anti-authority culture.

Submission is a word based on two Latin words, "sub" meaning under, and "missio" meaning sent. When one is "submissive" in Bible terms, one has been given a mission by God and has been "sent under." The full Philippians quote above instructs us, "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." This is the truest, most powerful submission which has been enacted for our salvation first of all, and secondly, has been given as an example for us to emulate. It is right for Father Ed when he meets it in his co-workers to equate this with love, for submission is love in action, love with guts.

St. Paul defined love for us in the exalted 13th chapter of First Corinthians. Look at it carefully and you will see that it describes not a love like any other so-called love, but a love that could rightfully be described only as submission.

Love is patient, and kind;  
 love is not jealous or boastful;  
 it is not arrogant or rude.  
 Love does not insist on its own way;  
 it is not irritable or resentful;

it does not rejoice at wrong,  
 but rejoices in the right.  
 Love bears all things,  
 believes all things,  
 hopes all things,  
 endures all things.

A person realizing the power in such submission willingly takes the equipment meant for the mission and goes under to accomplish what it is God is sending him to do. The council members and our deacon are now plunging into their mission for God, they are willingly and mightily beginning to accept the task of being “under.” They joyfully realize the potential of “taking up their cross and following Jesus” in the matter of their relationship to Father Ed.

Father begins to enjoy a safety and security he has never felt in thirty plus years of ministry. He can't put his finger on it, but he is more relaxed in dealing with his parishioners than he can believe. He actually, for some unknown reason, enjoys those council meetings, and he sleeps well after them. He can't believe it's because he is more eloquent, or more persuasive than before, but they seem to listen and appreciate him. At the same time, he sees them growing before his eyes, and knows he must be doing something right because they seem to be catching on to what they should be doing in this parish. They actually have some darn good suggestions. When they send him a well thought out note-proposal for some aspect of parish life, he admits at first he riles, but then he thinks about it, and, more often than not, comes to admire the idea. And that deacon! Well, his immaturity is finally wearing off, and he has the makings of quite a decent helper with this parish work.

The deacon uses every opportunity to help people be compassionate about Fr. Ed instead of his earlier mode, unintentional though it was, of actually furthering misunderstanding. His new tack, “Think needs!” That is, think of Father's needs. The congregation is slowly being led by some kind of spiritual osmosis by the deacon and the council into understanding what it must be like to have the total responsibility of this parish. How many people with different sensitivities, needs and wants are there constantly calling upon him, not to say the breakdowns of the physical plants, the debt etc.? There are things they wish could be different, that will always be true, but a mood of appreciation has overtaken the old chronic crabbiness on both sides.

A parish and its priest is like a marriage. Both parties have needs that only the other can fill. The most Christian responsibility for meeting the other's need rests with the one “sent on the mission,” that is the one called first to “submit” which is the one in the “responder position” of the relationship. Actually before the experiment is through, submission will be fully exemplified by both sides of the equation - Fr. Ed will find himself willingly submitting to his flock's needs.

Yes, there is a head which the Bible declares independent of any social cultural bias, in a marriage is the man. Yet, the woman in that marriage is his equal though her role is to respond and yield rather than to head. Both of them respect, honor and are grateful for the role of the other, because both roles are pure service for the other. When each of the partners of marriage puts the other first in mind and in heart, the marriage will thrive. Sometimes, even as the scriptures affirm, the submission may be at first unilateral; but with the dynamic activated by underlying trust in God, this situation in a Christian context will be righted. It is these principles that our deacon is employing with Fr. Ed. It is wholly appropriate that a deacon and his wife exemplify for the church community the principles of

unified relationship. The diaconate is practical, not theoretical; it is demonstrative not notional. The principles of love in the Christian fellowship, laid down in God's word and practiced in the power of the Holy Spirit by generations of Christians have been the dynamo of change the world dies for lack of. Today those principles of love are being lost in favor of mild, sometimes insipid psychological catchwords about relationship that simply don't have the power to bring anyone into the vitality of submitted love.

We may add a postscript to our imaginary parish, deacon and priest. Whom do you suppose has the potential of becoming the most collaborative priest in the five parish area? Is it the young priest just out of seminary who has been taught all collaborative values out of a book, who says he works only in joint ministry, but who continues to do everything by himself; or is it Fr. Ed who still likes the idea of priestly headship, but finds himself relying more and more on the input and ministry of his deacon and the lay ministers who so obviously love him (why? why? he scratches his head) and are so darned talented?

We have deliberately popularized the theology of headship in this article, but it is one that our theologians should seriously tackle by explicating the relationship of the Divine Triune Persons. We should not assume that collaboration means equality in authority and governance, nor should we assume that the one who has authority is superior to those who respond to that authority. The gospel insists otherwise as does the theology of the Blessed Trinity. In a broader sense, this is the problem that first raised its ugly head with the Fall when Satan insinuated to the woman that hers was the secondary and unimportant role because it was one of total response. It needs more philosophically, theologically trained heads than mine to lay it all out for us who are attempting to walk in the *diaconia* of our Saviour and Lord.

### 13 THAT WE ALL MAY BE ONE

In the past few weeks a parade of believers of all persuasions knocking on our door has made it unavoidable that my husband and I relive our conversion to the Catholic Church. In the last such encounter we were waited upon by two youthful ‘elders’ of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and at the same time visited by two women of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both missionary duos were surprised to find themselves in each others company, but not as surprised as finding themselves proselytizing a former Baptist/Presbyterian minister and wife who are now committed Roman Catholics. The afternoon which saw this double arrival of visitors seeking converts (they say that conversion is not their purpose) was just the last of a series of days through which we had been 1) asked by a niece and her “born again” friend to defend our becoming Catholic; 2) confronted by a former Catholic charismatic friend who had left the Church with her family because she was not “being fed;” 3) talked for two hours with a youthful pastor of the Four Square Gospel Church that our twenty year old daughter now attends; 4) received a letter from a young man studying for his doctorate in theology in a liberal university who disagrees with us “on the level of the nature of inspiration, Truth, and ecclesiology” (he means, the Church); 5) and had been praying for a couple who are old friends, whose church is now in their home with the husband as the prophet- pastor.

Each of these persons we like, even love. The four that confronted each other in our study, whom we do not know, are obviously good, dedicated people. Each of these persons is convinced through his own experience with the Scriptures, and his seeking prayer, that the Holy Spirit has guided him to the resolution of a spiritual quest.

This raised again several profound questions for which we had to find answers when we as two charismatic Protestants reached a crossroads in our faith search. At that crossroads there were two signs, one pointed to a mostly personal and highly feeling relationship to God through prayer and Scripture with no one between ourselves and Him (the possible exception, a group of good people headed by a dedicated pastor who generally believed as we did, and from whom, under certain circumstances decided by ourselves, we might accept correction and direction); and the other pointed to submission of self-will in spiritual matters and acceptance of a spiritual authority above and beyond ourselves and our immediate community, through which God would work for our temporal well being , eternal salvation, and unity with all the faithful in all times and places. It was important to us that the direction we chose be consistent with Scripture, because we believe Scripture to be the Word of God.

The questions that were posed at the juncture were: Has the Holy Spirit established a thousand different points on the Christian spectrum, one to suit each kind of temperament? Are all these shades of Christian religion

equally valid? How do Catholics verify their belief that it is the Catholic Church that “is necessary for salvation?” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, paragraph 14) Or “the one true religion subsists in the catholic and apostolic Church” (Vatican II Statement on Religious Freedom) because other religions make the same claim?

When the two men and two women walked into our study fourteen years after resolving these questions for ourselves, I happened to be reading a current publication which began an article with this strong proclamation, “The Catholic Church is founded by Jesus Christ. It is the only church that Christ founded. The Catholic Church is not like other so called Christian churches. It is not based on personal interpretation of the Bible or upon consensus of the people to determine what the code of beliefs are. Rather, the deposit of faith has been revealed by God and is, therefore, the truth and all have the obligation to accept and believe as true, the whole deposit of faith. Since the truth cannot change - the deposit of faith cannot change or be contradicted by new discoveries or new religions?”

This exceptionally strong statement, we had come to believe was Scripturally verifiable. We read it first to the elders of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and then again to the Jehovah Witnesses. The latter left quickly saying they weren’t anxious to talk to people contented with their faith. At our invitation the young men stayed on to finish their witness, but we do not believe that either group had ever before heard what the Catholic Church says of itself.

Obviously, in reading this declaration to these people we have come to some beliefs about the questions posed above. They are beliefs that brought us into the Roman Catholic Church, and though obvious to many Christians, in this day of multiple confusion they may be clarifying to other people who wonder and question. After the Last Supper Jesus gave his disciples a long and very loving talk. The beloved disciple, the one nearest Jesus at this Supper, records it in detail (John chapters 14-17). This was to be his last teaching and his last prayer with these men who had so intimately shared his life. In his talk with them Jesus spells out what his death will ultimately mean to them.

First, when he ascends he will send the Holy Spirit and this will be better for his followers than if he stayed himself, because this Spirit will *be in* the disciples, not just *with them* as he had been. This Spirit will lead them on into all the truth, whereas Jesus had just begun this process (John 16:12). And he will bring to their minds all that Jesus did and taught clarifying his meaning (John 14:25).

At the end of this intense teaching Jesus prays to his Father for these men in whom he has invested so much, and his prayer reaches a fervent peak with these words, “Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou has given me, that they may be one, even as we are one,” and “The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, so the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.” These words are not concerned with only those around him at that table on that fateful night. He begins this wonderful petition with “*I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word.*”

That prayer is then for you and me, for Linda, her friend, for the charismatic former Catholic, for the Four Square Gospel pastor, for our daughter who is seeking, for the doctorate student, for the two Jehovah Witnesses, for the two Mormon elders, and for our dear friends Gene and Doreen, as well as for all the other Protestant friends and

relatives - yes, for all believers in Jesus. (It is well to note that Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons are not Christian when we define that by the essential belief *that Jesus is God*).

Sent to all of us, the Spirit comes to witness to Jesus who is the Truth, to lead us into more than he was able to teach while He was here, and to answer his prayer that “we all be one even as He and the Father are one.” From this we learn that the Holy Spirit’s primary work is unity. He will teach us a consistent message and will lead us in a way that will bring us, different temperaments, strong willed as we are, into oneness - into union with each other and with God, our Father. We are saved by Jesus for this very purpose - union with God.

Why then, are we not one? What frustrates the work of the Spirit? And how may we become one? Doesn’t the answer lie in how Jesus and the Father are one? Jesus makes it very clear how he maintains constant oneness with His Father, and means it to be our example.

First, Jesus does nothing on his own authority because a person who acts on his own authority seeks only his own glory, and Jesus seeks only his Father’s glory; second, he does not seek his own will, but the will of the one who sent him; third, he does only the work he sees his Father doing; fourth, he does not claim his teaching as his own, it is his Father’s.

In seeking his Father’s glory and not his own, Jesus assures us that there is no falsehood in his teaching. God is true, and he has sent Jesus; he has not even come of his own accord. Jesus always does what is pleasing to the Father and he has power only by the Father’s charge. What he says he says only as the Father has bidden him. All of these are Jesus own words and are found scattered throughout the book of John, (5:19,30,36; 6:38,16,28; 8:28,29,42; 10:18; 12:44,49; 14:10) They persistently and consistently proclaim how Jesus maintained perfect unity with his Father.

Is it possible that Jesus, so completely obedient, so deeply expressing oneness with his Father as his very first desire in everything, left His followers without provision for that oneness? Did he leave no way for us to imitate his complete obedience by the denial of our will to an explicit and higher will? Did he provide no way to be sure of authentic passing on of truth by the submission of our own ideas, no matter how spiritual, to an ultimate judge? Did he give us no protection from working for our own glory, even inadvertently, or from psychic persons whose visions demanded our belief? These subtle but ever present tendencies and temptations of our human nature keep us from unity. Is it possible that Jesus who mourned that the people were like sheep without a shepherd, left his own followers to be in a state of ambiguity and confusion, guided only by inner feeling or outer coincidence or latter day visionary?

We came to believe the answers to these questions are ‘No, that Jesus had left a sure way for us to experience oneness with Him and the Father, and blessed unity with all others who abide in him. He had left a Church, but we were not in it.

In the most logical way he appointed a shepherd to feed his sheep and tend his lambs, he established a rock upon which he built his Church - in both cases, Peter, and those who would continue to fill Peter’s place as time went on. (John 21 :15 if, Matthew 16:18, Isaiah 22:21-22). He warned us thoroughly that many false teachers would come in his name, and through St. Paul, that even if an angel from heaven came with different teaching we should not believe him. (Mark 13:5ff, Matthew 24: Gal 1:8).

If we had not been left with this God-given authority there would be no access to Truth on earth - it would be as it seems to be for some, every person for himself, continually deluded by self will, deluded by self glorification, or worse, by Satan himself. Even though persons prophesy in his name, cast out demons in his name, and do mighty works in his name (Matthew 7:22), they may not know Jesus Christ. Seeing what has happened because Jesus' plea for oneness and Jesus' provision for that unity has been ignored, our personal choice of the Catholic Church had no alternative. If Jesus purposely blocked his own will by submission, we had to do the same by submitting to the authority he has established.

The statement, "I was not fed in the Church, therefore the Spirit led me to this other sect and I've been blessed there," or Joseph Smith's (founder of the Mormons) "revelation" from heaven "Join no church," when he was seeking spiritual consolation, have often repeated through history.

In order to be "guided" away from the Church, loss of faith has already occurred in the one so led - loss of faith in the authority God has left on this earth to assure the oneness of the body, loss of faith in the love of Jesus given to each believer for sustenance, healing, deliverance and growth through the Sacraments, loss of faith in his Body and Blood as "food and drink, indeed." This is a grave condition often brought on by a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of spiritual things and sometimes brought on by scandal in the Church itself. In place of this faith that sticks through thick and thin, this believing, has come a desire to have something less demanding of perseverance, something easier, more exciting, and more immediately rewarding to the feelings.

Are all these sectarian believers abandoned by God? He sends his blessings on all - even the evil, and these men and women are not evil. Their prayers are answered, their faith is honored. However, enduring in the true faith is a solemn responsibility, especially if one knows the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. The hearts of all who love God must ultimately long for oneness with all others who love Him and who want only to obey His will. That longing proves irresistible and daily brings people from all denominations and sects into the Catholic Church. It means submission of will and personal spirituality to an overarching authority which is, paradoxically, freedom to the believer, and the answer the one Church offers to the confusion and contradiction of belief among Christians. Through the grace of God, this is the testimony we have to give to those who ask, strangers who knock upon our door and all our friends in Christ Jesus. May we all be one.

## 14 A CONVERT REFLECTS ON THE CHURCH

“Oh, my own crowd, the wonderful Evangelicals, with their love for the Gospel and their zeal for God - how they would leap for joy if ever they returned to the ancient Church and thronged in by their hundreds and thousands, singing, praising and bursting with pure joy at the discovery of the liturgy.” With this inspiring quote from his new book, a news article about Tom Howard’s conversion to the Catholic faith momentarily renewed for us converts, my husband and myself, that intellectual peace and emotional security that swept us at time of our like decision. Living in the Church for the past fourteen years has found that peace and security ruffled considerably, but it was nice to find that it had never really gone away.

We came into the Church with a boundless awe and joy at what we had discovered - we had found the pearl of great price, the treasure buried in the field! We had gone out and sold all to possess it - all - family, friends, even our life work (my husband was a Protestant minister) had gone up for forfeit. This marvelous treasure had lain next door to us all our lives, but it lay undiscovered, tangled over with all kinds of prejudice and misinformation. When that obscuring thicket was brushed away we found ourselves truly and for the first time in the Presence of Him whom we had grown to love through the Scriptures and through prayer. We gave our hearts anew to Him there in that first communion with a peace at having come home at last. A peace that surpassed anything else in our Christian experience to that date.

“Coming home,” these are the words that are heard with every sincere conversion to the Catholic faith. There was “a sense of homecoming, of picking up the threads of a lost life, or responding to a bell that has long been ringing, of finding a place at a table that has long been vacant,” said Malcolm Muggeridge about his becoming a Catholic. Pat Boone’s daughter, Cherry O’Neill and her husband, Dan, spoke of the experience as “like coming home.. .The Protestant church (was) a good and benevolent stepmother who pointed the way to my real mother, who pointed my way home,” said Cherry.

Within this *home* was the *unity of the family* that Jesus had prayed for fervently in his last prayer. Here believers gathered who accepted the headship he had left to make that unity possible - instant ecumenism. Here because of submission to that headship of Jesus, they were one as He and the Father were one, and in the same conformity of individual will to the One Will. What a warmth of love we felt for the whole body of which we were the newest cell. It did not matter what small place that cell might have, it was home! We fit and it felt good.

We read the lives of the saints hungrily, and found that now we were brothers and sisters with them. Realizing, as John Henry Cardinal Newman had, that should second or third century saints suddenly appear on a London street in the nineteenth century, they would have searched church by church until they found the Roman Church where they would recognize the Real Presence as they had known it in liturgy sixteen hundred years earlier, we experienced the marvel of the universality of faith over particular time and place. A real family lived in this home, a family that reached out and back to all generations that have been and that will come.

In the years before our conversion, we had gradually come to acknowledge our need for the supernatural feeding of the Eucharist and the healing of Penance. Afterward, each contact with the Sacraments brought us to our knees in awe of God's nearness and His provision for refreshment to body and soul, not to us alone but to all through the ages who approached Him with faith.

We compared our new-found home to the waystations of the Hobbits. As they journeyed to complete their mission, they stumbled, battered and weary, into places of refuge where they were given rest and strength to continue. That was fantasy, but this Church was no fantasy, it was real. We, too, weak with fatigue, sought heavenly comfort from the struggle of our daily mission in "enemy occupied territory," as CS. Lewis named the secular world.

We thanked God for the priest. He kept the waystation, made ready the Divine food, bound up the wounds, provided a place of rest, gave the encouraging words that empowered, blessed us and sent us back on our way - the work of Christ among the brethren. His tending of the waystation was a work so important that there was none on earth to equal it.

At first these realities of the Church were so clear and visible to us that nothing distracted us from them. But gradually and sadly we became aware that there had entered into the sanctuary forces bent on destroying the very truths that were the Church. That attack goes on with greater and greater intensity. It is against the unity, against the order, against the sacramental system, against the hierarchy through which the priests work is guaranteed to be the authentic work of Christ. Agendas whose intent is to tear down the Catholic Church are embraced like Cleopatra embraced the asp. It is called "renewing the Church," or "transforming structures" but the "renewal" and "transformation" offers destruction with nothing visible to take the place of what it desires to destroy. There are vague formulations - everything is sacrament, all are priests, woman church, feminine experience, inclusive language, democratic leadership, the horizontal model, pluralism, - nothing more and a lot less than the Protestant church forms from which we came. There we had priesthood of all believers, democratic government, and women preachers, but we also had the Scriptures. The effects of liberalism had made disastrous inroads into our churches, but our heritage from the past insured us some Bible belief, at least for the time being. But these agendas know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. References are made to a scriptural base for these pretentious changes, but they are references that have no chapter or verse, they cannot be found. Scripture, in fact, to be useable at all in the new "concept of church, must face a drastic scissoring. The rituals proposed and in some cases enacted are parallel to witchcraft exercises - new earth symbols, exaltation of the human body and soul, sharing of intuition and wisdom in poetry, and prayers to Mother Goddess/Father God.

The smoke from these “spiritual” bonfires have a debilitating effect on the priest. As he breathes the fumes one sees him develop “sagging knees and drooping hands, a dejected mind and a gloomy face “- symptoms of a man with an evil wife says Sirach. Like such a man, his authority has been undermined, he has been shamed that he “only” keeps the waystation and that he is *a man*. He has been forced out of his domain to drain away his strength and zeal in programs that should be peopled only by those sustained by his pastoral care for them. Here he tries vainly to prove that he isn’t misogynistic or clerical. He becomes more and more uncertain of his divine call, and more and more apologetic for his work. Looking at him, calls forth only pity, not young able men inspired by his faith to help him and eventually take his place. It is a wonder that under the circumstances he is able to hang on at all. In grief for Holy Church, who is discernable in the Old Testament as Jerusalem, the prayer of Daniel is piercingly appropriate:

O Lord, according to all thy righteous acts, let thy anger and thy wrath turn away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy hill; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people have become a byword among all who are round about us. Now, therefore, O our God, hearken to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplications, and for thy own sake, O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is ( being) desolate(d). O my God, incline thy ear and hear; open thy eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive, O Lord give heed and ; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

In his biography, that great convert, Newman, quotes from one of his letters, “Are you aware that the more serious thinkers among us are used, as far as they dare form an opinion, to regard the spirit of Liberalism as the characteristic of the destined AntiChrist? In vain does any one clear the Church of Rome from the badges of Antichrist, in which Protestants would invest her, if she deliberately takes up her position in the very quarter, whither we have cast them, when we took them off her. Antichrist is described as the *anomos*, as exalting himself above the yoke of religion and law. The spirit of lawlessness came in with the Reformation, and Liberalism is its offspring.” Newman wrote this while he was still a Protestant - today he would see the Church of Rome, or at least some of her members, vigorously and deliberately picking up and reapplying the badges of AntiChrist - *anomos*, exalting themselves above the yoke of religion and the law of Christ. Some of us who are converts left churches, which like small boats had been dashed by a growing liberalism against the rocks. We have seen the results and are sickened at the attempts of the same breed of anti-authority rebels who drill holes to sink the venerable Ark. Why does God allow it? Both the Old Testament and the New Testament reply. God is testing his Church. He is allowing, as He always has, the lawlessness in hearts to be revealed. By our own arrogance, by our own disobedience, by our own independent revelations, suiting our own narrow purposes, we are allowed to judge ourselves. No one stood at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to take the fruit out of Eve’s hand when she made a wrong choice, and no one is protecting the rebellious now from the condemnation of their own choices. In

time the sheep, obedient and flock-like, willing to be shepherded, will be easily discernable from the goats who will stand out, solitary and independent. The division of the two will not be by the rod of God, it will be by the inexorable rule of freedom of choice.

A friend of Tom Howard's sees his writing entering into a second phase, "Instead of trying to lead Evangelicals to the Church, he will lead those in the Church to reassess what they already have." The Church has a great need for such help, but in the full flush of Reformation consciousness, which Howard sees as an event that rents the very fabric of Christianity, dividing its intellectual content from its sacramental form, it is doubtful that those who need his help the most will not label him a reactionary fundamentalist and view his "help" with scorn. In the meantime, the sorrow is that the young and immature in the Spirit are being misled, and that many who are looking for that God-given waystation cannot discern her in the dust and upheaval. It is our task to refocus on her eternal truth so as to be effective in our witness, and to proclaim that she still exists, that she always will exist. Jesus promised that "the gates of hell would not prevail," and each new happy convert affirms it.

## 15 IS IT MERE CONSERVATISM THAT MOTIVATES CONVERSION TO ROMAN CATHOLICISM?

Two recent news items raise a question about an improbable action some people continue to make that runs counter to every major trend in America. The death of Malcolm Muggeridge brought attention again to his spiritual journey that began on the far left and ended (on this earth) on the far right enclave in the Catholic Church; and yet another prominent churchman, Lutheran Pastor Richard John Neuhaus, involved in the early 60's with Fr. Daniel Berrigan, shouldered the cross that conversion certainly is, and within the past few months, did the same.

At a time, when from all indications more and more people are disenchanted with Catholicism, and openly critical of hierarchical authority, clericalism, woman's place in the Church, rigidity about sexual orientation, and the Church's stern moral and sexual strictures, when dissenting talk is the mainstay of talk shows, and theologians sign up to express their disillusionment with Rome, one really wonders what motivates these converts. That wonder increases in the face of the fact that these well known names are only the ripples on a great underground tide constantly moving toward the Church (though less than previous decades) made up of little people like my husband, ten of our eleven children, and myself. What is their motivation, what was ours?

Our own Baptist friends of a long, loving association, in a recent past midnight discussion, pummeled our reasons for becoming Catholic as too 'spiritual' and wondered why we were not political and social activists. They on the other hand are fully involved in social justice - from solidarity with people in Nicaragua, to lives dedicated to implementation of priesthood of the laity here at home. We knew many Catholics who would have agreed with them, folks who from their words would make good Baptists because along with their social concerns, they often mouth dissent with the Church. Journalist-activist Penny Lernoux before her untimely death, said she would leave the church if she lived in the United States, "To hell with it. But in Latin America, it's the people, they are my commitment, We have to stay and fight."

We laid awake the rest of the night trying to figure out what the divergence from our Baptist roots to the Catholic place we are at now, really meant, and where the exact point of that divergence is. What does cause people to join a religious group that is more and more often called by some of its own, a "dysfunctional family"? Dr. Harry Thiebout, the prominent psychiatrist who worked and wrote extensively in the field of chemical dependency, made a study titled, "Conversion as a Psychological Phenomenon" about alcoholics who came into an inner religious experience. Perhaps its time for someone to do the same about those folks who gradually or suddenly step over into the strange world of Catholicism. They themselves call it conversion. That's quite different from Protestants

changing from one denomination to another when that word is never used - we know, we did that too at one point, leaving Baptist antinomianism for the Presbyterian Church as part of our journey.

The dictionary definition of conversion is, “A spiritual and moral change attending a change of belief with conviction, specifically the experience associated with and involving a definite and decisive adoption of religion.” Most converts to Catholicism are previously active Christians in some Protestant denomination. It isn’t Jesus Christ that they are converted to. They have already had that primary confrontation and its attendant commitment to His person. So what are they being converted to that is attended by “a change of belief with conviction”?

A search through the multitudes of testimonies is instructive. The ability to explain, enigmatically to be sure, but concisely, is the forte of “the wisest clown in Christendom,” Malcolm Muggeridge. He didn’t hurry in his decision to become Catholic, in his own words he “relished merely sitting on the fence.” But in “Confessions of a Twentieth Century Pilgrim” he tries to answer the question in a few words.

“What then is a conversion? The question is like asking, ‘What is falling in love?’ ” In an interview with William F. Buckley Jr., he explains just a bit more, “You see another human being and for some extraordinary reason you’re in a state of joy and ecstasy over that person, but the driving force which enables you to express that and to bring it into your life is love. Without love, it’s nothing, it passes. It’s the same with seeking reality, and there the driving force we call faith.”

But what is there to fall in love with in the Catholic Church? This remains a mystery to those who chaff under what they consider the Church’s betrayal of the hopes raised by Vatican II. When Episcopalian Fr. Peter Dally and his wife Mary courageously determined to become Catholic, the bishop to whom they went to formalize their conversion explained how he saw them and the seventy or so other Episcopalian priests who at that time were leaving their church for Catholicism country-wide, “My feeling is that you are all pre-Vatican II men.”

Mary Dally herself has an explanation which overrode the troubles their new allegiance has caused them, “we realized more than ever that reunion with the See of Peter was God’s greatest gift to us on our pilgrim journey in faith.” But isn’t this just an expression of a conservatism that is probably the trigger for a love for a Church that is bound and wholly committed to the past? After all, American theologian Avery Dulles in speaking to the Catholic Theological Society of America back in 1979 said that “Roman Catholics no longer require belief that all bishops originally received orders by direct apostolic succession from the apostles” and that Catholics today recognize that Christ’s Church is not confined to Roman Catholicism. Theologian Hans Kung has also asserted that “one eucharist is good as another.” These two have been articulate spokesmen for the liberal side that makes such news. That makes Peter and Mary Dally look to be the reactionaries the Archbishop suspected they were. Archbishop Hunthausen in their home ground of Oregon seemed to think so, and refused to ordain Peter Dally as a Roman Catholic priest.

If it is psychological conservatism that makes so many convert, is it to be seen as a positive or a negative? The question then becomes, “What is this religious conservatism?”

Clare Booth Luce, another famous convert to Roman Catholicism, and her husband Henry Luce were both close friends of John Courtney Murray, S.J., whose contributions to Vatican II Council’s “Declaration on Religious Freedom” were so telling. She then sponsored a series of annual lectures in honor of Fr. Murray in cooperation with

“*America*” magazine which can hardly be considered “conservative” though it may have been more so then. Yet, when we get down to her “Real Reason,” as her three part apologia was named in *McCall’s* magazine, she lists four disillusionments that brought her to Catholicism: liberalism, Freudianism, Communism, and humanitarianism. Politics or at least ideology fitting the credo of a conservative looks to be the great motivator here.

As has been true in the momentous conversions of the past; Chesterton, Maritain, Newman, Ronald Knox, Dorothy Day, Gerard Manley Hopkins, those of the present time in their apologia a strike recurring themes - ones we have learned to expect. They have to do chiefly with one phrase of the creed. “I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” Therefore the Catholic convert consistently tells of his discovery of and thirst for unity with the most authoritative and oldest of the Christian traditions.

Another recent convert (1988), former professor at Gordon Theological Seminary and outspoken evangelical, Tom Howard, expressed it this way;” ... [Evangelicals] feel that it is worth starting over and over and over again with the Church, no matter how much splitting and schism this may require, just to keep the thing pure. It was on this point, among others, that St. Augustine attacked the Donatists. And it is for this reason that there are so many hundred of very small evangelical denominations and congregations. Some of the “cardinal” parishes in evangelicalism are totally independent: the minister is accountable to no bishop or synod or superior of any description.

“This tendency began to bother me, as the years went by . . . There has got to be a Magisterium, and not just a clamor of voices. Christianity is not analogous to Islam - - a religion of the Book alone, it is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, says St. Paul in Ephesians 2:20.

“. . .If we are to believe Jesus’ words to [apostles], and St. Paul’s teaching about his own apostolic authority, and then the witness of the men who had themselves, some of them, been taught by the apostles - Ignatius and Clement and Polycarp and Irenaeus and Justin- then we find indeed one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and not a clutter of privately launched enterprises, no matter how earnest or laudable those enterprises might be.

“I eventually found myself crowded along to the place where I either had to say, ‘But none of this matters: all God wants is for us to be earnest and fervent’ or I had to say, ‘Hum. Independence won’t do. This is not the apostolic pattern.’”

John Michael Talbot, the Christian songster, now a Franciscan Catholic troubadour, relates a stage in his spiritual search, “One of my main growing concerns during this period was in regard to the church. I would go out across the land to sing in churches and was horrified at the fragmentation, the division between brothers. Every group had their own ideas about where the church was going, their own interpretation of the Bible - all different. Who was right? Someone had to be in the wrong. It seemed like such a scandal. I wondered where all these denominations and sub-denominational entities had come from, so I began earnestly to seek answers to these ecclesiastical questions, primarily through the study of church history.”

His biographer, Dan O’Neill (who converted to the Catholic Church with his wife Cherry, Pat Boone’s daughter), continues in his book about Talbot in “Troubadour for the Lord”, “As he looked into the writings of primitive Christianity and the life of the early church, he found his anti-Catholic bias and Protestant ideas were shaken severely. His first realization was that there was an awful lot of history between the apostles and Luther, yet

he had never been taught about those crucial centuries. He discovered the most direct descendant of the early church was none other than Roman Catholicism, which traces its heritage back to the apostolic era. Once he examined the Reformation which fractured the church in the 1500's, he had to question his status as a Protestant. "Why should I protest?" he would ask.

" . . . he found in the early church the seed that possessed all the potential and promise of the Catholic faith we know today. One of the central features of John's faith, and what he had come to view as his final authority as an evangelical Protestant was the Bible. Now he discovered that our scriptures were not ever codified into what we now call our Bible until several hundred years after Christ, through a process of canonization which from time to time, included different groups of writings until the present configuration evolved. This took place within the Catholic Church.

"My questions of authority were really answered as I looked at the formation of the Scriptures," John states. The authority of the Scriptures was established by the God-given living authority of the early church, through its hierarchy, its worship and its life-style. God's own authority had established the authority of the church. So the authority of the Scriptures comes from the authority of the church and not the other way around as many believe. If we negate the authority of the very church that authorized the Bible, we negate the authority of the Bible itself. .

Dr. Thiebout might look into this oft expressed need to be part of a continuous unity and find it to be related to antipathy or fear of independence. He and Dr. Stanley Milgram, another doctor and teacher of psychiatry (author of "Obedience to Authority") might find it a childish need for supervision and security that should have been outgrown at the onset of adulthood. "A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do, irrespective of the content of the act and without limitations of conscience, so long as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority." The need to be "right" along with the idea that there is a discernible, universal *Right* is also manifested. All of these psychological motivations may propel people toward a conservative frame of mind because, by its own admission (Joe Sobran) conservatism, "has a pessimistic view of human nature," and therefore tends to look for controls and boundaries, as well as cohesion because the conservative often senses "things are falling apart."

Early in the '80's Dale Vree, his wife, their two children and their publication, "New Oxford Review," became Roman Catholic. Unlike many others who came professing its beauty, Dale really didn't find the Roman Church all that appealing. "The thing about Roman Catholicism," he said, "is that as a natural man, I don't find it particularly attractive. Liturgically it's not thrilling; doctrinally it's difficult to accept. Even some of its moral teachings are hard to practice and accept." "But," writes Greg Erlandson (reporting for the "National Catholic Register"), "in his study of the Bible, the Church Fathers and history, Vree said it became increasingly clear that 'to be a Christian is not to concoct one's own philosophy, but to submit one's will to Christ.'"

Here the note is struck that takes the testimonies of converts out of the column labeled "psychological immatures" or "ideological slaves" and places them in a category beyond such human judgments. Reviewing our own guidance to the threshold of the Church, it is the place of vindication I myself hoped to find in researching this article - obviously I cannot be impartial.

Too many converts to the Roman Church have undergone severe trials in order to carry through on their move away from Protestantism to be labeled weak dependents. Too many have gone against the grain, personally and in their families, to say they are excessively other directed and not self-motivated. Too many have embraced uncertainty in their occupation, pain in their relationships and acute spiritual suffering to be impelled only by fear. They are certainly courageous people who show an independence that is uncommon. My own husband upon bending to what he heard God say to him on a retreat, the next day went to his superiors and had his name “struck” from the roles that named him a Presbyterian minister. With the stroke of a pen he negated four years of seminary training and sixteen years of happy, fruitful associations with friends and comrades in the Presbyterian ministry. To say that our respective relatives took this without upset, people to whom we owed faithfulness, would be far from the truth. He himself had not made the intellectual journey these others describe, but simply heard God speak to him through meditation on the 55th chapter of Isaiah which came across with no uncertainty, “I was to take my family and join the Catholic Church.”

As for the other possibility, that becoming Catholic is a move toward the right, there is ample evidence that though that may often appear to be part of the package, it is not because of psychological or ideological reasons. Rather, it is because of the nature of Christian faith, therefore, the nature of Catholicism. Here, while other denominational churches have defected from such hard doctrines, the Church believes in and teaches original sin; this is the reason conservatism and Catholicism seem to have parallel mistrust of the unredeemed human being’s ability to pull himself up by the boot straps. It also holds that Jesus Christ is coming again, and that until He does, the world, in going contrary to His will, is truly falling apart. It also believes that Jesus cries for us “to be one as He and His Father are one,” which translates in the Christian heart as a deep desire for unity with all who love Him - those living today and those of all ages, a unity to be found from the beginning and until the end only under the authorized headship of the Pope.

Dale Vree has stated - “if you’re going to be Roman Catholic, you must believe that the Church will never fail, that its doctrine will not be abandoned or compromised.” There is in that very unchangeability - which means no change (however, in Talbot’s analogy, open ended development of the seed that is in that unchangeable doctrine) the necessity to submit one’s will to what one believes is the explicit will of Christ himself.

I think of Caroline Jonah of Detroit and her submission to Christ. An ordained Methodist minister, it was the Eucharist that won her, even against her will, to Catholicism. After an experience of God at an Episcopalian monastery during which she, like my husband, heard, “Will you give up your ministry for Me she began to go to daily mass in a church near her home, “Wondering why in the world I was doing this, and what I was looking for. I just found that I was looking for something I wasn’t finding. I couldn’t imagine keeping a prayer life going that is not centered around the Eucharist.” She prayed constantly to determine God’s will and eventually with the help of a Catholic spiritual director priest, she decided He meant her to become Catholic. “To say no to God is spiritual death.”

In her brief ministerial career, Jonah held the Chair of the powerful Commission on the Status and Role of Women for the United Methodist Church. After her experience of God at the monastery she gave up her position, and since becoming Catholic she said, “I have not been terribly active among the women of Catholicism. I am not a

spokesperson for them. I am not 'God's gift' to them I don't see myself as any kind of gift to anyone. I live my life the way I live it because I understand that this is how God is commanding me."

Though Jonah admits, "I may be wrong, there are absolutely no guarantees that anyone who thinks God has spoken to them has heard God," yet she believes, "one must live out one's life believing that you are truly doing God's will." Doing God's will seems to be consistently the motivation of converts to Catholicism. Though Mrs. Luce when she began her article with "a convert has hundreds of reasons for doing the best thing he feels he has ever done," agreeing with G.K. Chesterton who similarly declared, "The Church is a house with a hundred gates, and no two men enter at exactly the same angle," nevertheless, she is quoted by John Donohue in "America" to the effect that she became a Catholic because God gave her the gift of faith; because she wanted to rid herself of the burden of sin; because Catholic doctrine seemed to her "the solid objective truth," and because she discovered the beauty of "Holy Mother Church." When her friends continued to question her, she sent them a compendium of Jesus' words in the Gospels: "For, I said, Jesus Christ Himself was the Real Reason"

## 16 A REVIEW – MARY TODAY

by M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O. , Doubleday 1987, 144 pg.

### MARY: HOW CONTEMPORARY SHOULD WE GET?

In the conscious efforts made these days to egalitarianize, and politicize everything, even the Blessed Mother is not exempt. M. Basil Pennington, who has written many books on religious experience and prayer, has now taken up his pen to bring modern preoccupations to bear on Mary. He has even molded his book to democratic preference, asking a “legion” of people what they would want in a book about Mary. Of course, this can have merit. When we as God’s People grow in understanding, doctrine develops among and through the faithful and we need to see the revered ancient things growing in new light in our consciousness.

Scanning the Scriptures, the Tradition, and the modern apparitions, there are many places where Pennington catches the glint of new lights off the radiance of Our Mother - the way he brings out the full significance of “yes,” the yes of Jesus and Mary, and our own “yes” to God is rich and telling. Mary’s “yes” and our own leads us into participation in the being and goodness of God. But this isn’t automatic, we must, like her, constantly make that choice. And to the extent we say, “yes” we, too, are mediators of grace. I have especially longed for explanations of the significance of Jesus’ asking the rich young man, “Why do you call me good? One is good, God alone.” Surely Jesus was testing the man to see whether he understood that he was in the presence of Almighty God. Pennington does not disappoint and carries me on - everything that has goodness participates in the being and goodness of God. That is beautiful, and I would like to ignore the little warning flag that just around the corner may lurk a pantheism that has deluded many a contemplative - Juliana, Meister Eckhart etc.

Pennington describes Mary’s welcoming of God which gave God a full humanity. From his humanity, you and I are part of a body of which Christ is the head. How welcome is the assurance that, “As Mary formed and nurtured the Head, she exercised a maternal role in regard to the members. In the flow of time, this gestation still goes on. Mary is ever pregnant, ever mothering.” Such a mothering brings us into the Unity of the Church - brothers and sisters together.

“Brothers and sisters.” Does that offend anyone? There is an order to humanity which has nothing to do with good, better, and best. I rile when the self-conscious effort is made to reverse this phrase every other time it is used to “sisters and brothers.” Pennington does this, poor writer; he is damned, I suppose, if he does, and if he doesn’t. But kowtowing to feminism and other “isms” is the weakness of monk Pennington which makes it difficult

to enjoy this otherwise solid book. These sections, and there are more than a few, are ponderous, and platitudinous in the new lingo. And some of it simply does not compute.

To quote the author, "(Mary) is able to step forth in the midst of the most privileged of her theocratic people, the priestly ones, this hick from Nazareth in the sophisticated town of Am Karen, and with incredible power and outrageous prophecy sing one of the most daring songs of liberation ever chanted . . ." And so, true to the spirit of the age, we have Mary emerge from Pennington's pages as the foundress of liberation theology. Is the Blessed Mother really to be seen alongside Her Son as "commissioning us to establish a political state wherein we carefully exercise our freedom and live according to our dignity as the freeborn children of God"? Do we see her "daring" to proclaim this "in the heart of the hierarchy of the theocratic state" I don't believe that Mary recognizes herself in such modern political ideology, so similar to the Zealot position of her day which her Son pointedly ignored.

In the utterly pragmatic 1980's it has become doctrinaire to see "the poor" in the Gospel to mean those without material means. It is a twisted interpretation. The *Anawim* of Israel were those poor in spirit, humble, teachable, those who knew their limitations. Nicodemus, Zaccheus, and Joseph of Arimathea were three materially rich men who met the test. Anyone familiar with spiritual truth, recognizes that the materially poor can be anything but poor in spirit, that is, dependent and submissive. Such words convey ideas that are a colossal mistake from the point of view of liberation theology. There the concept of trusting God regardless of outward circumstances, trusting right down to the wire, is not only passive but leads to outright oppression. So Mary must be seen in this harsher but more realistic light – she, too, was a liberationist?

Father Pennington following this line is very hard on men, on the male hierarchy, and therefore on the Catholic tradition of male governance. He over-idealizes the feminine, appealing to men in Jungian style to allow their feminine side to flourish. He wouldn't agree with those who think we've already overdone the feminizing of everything - mostly religion, turning it into a subjectively oriented "feeling," and thereby losing the strength and clarity of objective thought.

By a strange quirk, near the end, the author elevates the idea of submission for all - "We do not wish to outgrow this subjection (to Mary as her child), for unless we be as little ones we cannot enter the kingdom." We have always understood Mary, who is Woman, to be the embodiment of submission, not as a mark of humiliation, but as the central attitude of the Gospel; therefore, why must we take such pains to apologize for woman's role, or make such efforts to elevate her to some role as liberationist or theologian? Woman is to be the gateway for all believers to embrace the submitted walk of Jesus. If she loses her way, rejecting this God-revealed role, who on earth will regard it enough to enter in?

Pennington writes, "Mary has to be liberated from an imaging that comes almost exclusively from male and priestly hierarchy and theologians and which hurts the true image and role of women in the Church. Feminist critique and experience do need to be heard in forming a renewed theological understanding of Mary."

Frankly, I have not read a feminist critique that I thought had anything positive to offer me as a woman, or anything to offer the Church, who is called to be the feminine respondent to God, either. Estimates vary, but why should 5% of women, mostly disaffected nuns, be causing a writer and thinker like Pennington to write, "We can only conclude that age old male dominance has consciously or unconsciously betrayed evangelical liberation"? I

believe when men view the history of the Church in this way they are only making a personal mea culpa to having believed at some point in their lives that women were indeed inferior. Everyone hasn't thought so. That belief certainly does not reflect the mind of the Church. "Me thinks he doth protest too much."

Such truckling to feminism sours what otherwise might be a good contribution to the literature on the Blessed Mother.

## 17 A REVIEW – Woman: First Among the Faithful

by Francis J. Moloney, SDB;

Intro by Thomas I- Green SJ; published by Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1986

Rev. Francis J. Moloney has the kind of credentials after his name that awe any lay student of the Bible like myself. He is head of the Biblical Studies Department at the Catholic Theological College in Melbourne, Australia, and that just begins the stream of his positions of honor, awards, and writing achievements in biblical and theological studies. Like a professional ball player with a homerun arm, he has come to the plate in *Woman: First Among the Faithful* bearing all this like a balanced bat ready to knock one into the stands for woman's place in the leadership of the Church. From my dubious point of view in the bleachers, however, it looks like an infield hit which will be good for only a couple of bases and the rest of the team of pro-woman's ordination will not be able to get him home.

Father Moloney and Fr. Thomas Green who writes the Introduction to this book both state their enthusiasm for women's fuller participation in the ministerial life of the Church. Green admires the fair handed approach of Moloney which allows, as he says, "Scripture to reveal its own truth on the matter." His own perspective is disclosed by these words, "500,00 years from now, when a Church historian is lecturing to a class of men and women preparing for ordination, I expect that Vatican II will be considered part of early Church history. He(she) may well say, 'Back in 1985 the post Vatican II Church had problems and blind spots which are strange for us. But perhaps we should not be surprised. After all, they lived too close to the time of Jesus to have digested His words fully.'"

Taking the New Testament writings in chronological order, Fr. Moloney works through Jesus, St. Paul, Matthew, Luke, the Apocalypse, and the Gospel of John, interpreting the major woman texts. Woman is presented as an important image - bringing out a theological meaning beginning with Jesus' "extraordinary internal freedom and absence of ambiguity" in his relationship with all women as equals to men. This perspective is accepted wholeheartedly by St. Paul, then by Matthew and Luke in turn, is underlined again by John the Seer in the Apocalypse, and is brought to a "fitting conclusion" by the Fourth Evangelist.

What is the thrust of this theological meaning of woman for Father Moloney? It is that woman is first in faith, not only in time (as Mary conceived Jesus through her faith, or as the women were the first to proclaim the risen Lord) but also by the quality of that faith. Time and again his exegesis of these texts points us to the woman as

the model and exemplar of true Christian faith. It is the woman who is courageous, who is undaunted, who believes Jesus and receives him openly and warmly. It is the woman who comes to him without pride asking only for his love and forgiveness, not counting the cost. It is the woman who gives her all (the widow and her mite). On the other hand, the man, yes, even the male disciples, lack faith, lack courage, allow pride and position to blind them to the message of the Kingdom of God. Time and again the woman leads in faith and the man follows only slowly.

Clearly, then, Christianity has meant from the first to liberate woman from being the subservient second - best to the man, the one who walked behind her liege Lord by three steps, and revealed to all, on the contrary, that she who was last of all was indeed first in the Christian system of value. The truth of this evaluation has only been forced to the surface by the woman's movement in the Church, says Father Moloney. It had to be reaffirmed because somewhere along in the early centuries, social pressures forced a diluting of this radical vision and women were "gradually pushed back into roles that they had previously in the pre-Christian experience of the communities." It is this "pastoral problem" that is reflected in the later Pastoral epistles where subordination of women reasserts itself, and in the "interpolation" found in I Corinthians 14. There is "an accommodation of the radical Pauline message to again set up barriers between male and female. The later church did not distinguish between the authentic Pauline and the later interpolations to these letters written under the pseudonym of Paul." Such texts have lost the vision, Father says, and are responsible for a grave set back in the liberation of women and are "at the heart of a male superiority complex that has dogged the church.'

Father Moloney continues with the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse where the truth of woman's primacy in faith, opened by Jesus is furthered - woman becomes a symbol for all humanity. "The woman' is the example of "receptivity upon which all disciples are to model themselves. And Mary, the mother of Jesus, models a "journey of faith" which clearly shows that 'the woman' is not just first in the order of faith, but is to be followed. That means that "women assume the role of leaders."

Why does this reviewer, a lay woman, not even a participant, who can only afford a bleacher seat in the arena of the Biblical scholar game, perceive this effort of Father Moloney's far short of a homerun for women's ministerial leadership in the Catholic church? What is there in this carefully laid out argument that lacks the right punch? or even foul's out?

Really, the swing and the pitch are almost ideal. I loved Father Moloney's substantiation to woman's meaning in the New Testament. It is not just the New Testament that presents the woman as epitome of the mystery of faith. The Old Testament from beginning to end, from patriarchal wife of Genesis to Tobit's Anna and Edna, present the woman as first in faith. The New Testament is the flowering of this bud of truth whose seed was spoken by God in the garden - that woman's seed will be he who will bruise Satan's head. Woman is the fruitful one. Her very morphology exemplifies the truths of the life lived toward God. To be fruitful (and Jesus had this one criteria for discerning those in the Kingdom "you will tell them by their fruits") one must submit to the opposite and receive. Throughout the Bible this is the posture of life that will bring us back into union with God - submission of the individual and the community to God as a wife submits to husband ( an age old analogy that has much to do with Scripture insisting God be Father, husband, lover, and never feminine). It is the woman who is model of receptivity and acceptance of his Word which will bring forth much fruit.

Yes, woman is the sign in herself of true faith in God. And she is used in this way as a theological idea as well as an important individual person who unfolds God's salvific plan. The three books of the Old Testament named for women, Ruth, Judith and Esther, present each a deeper level of this truth.

Women are equal to men as partners in the divine Plan of salvation. St. Paul is right in knocking down all the divisions "there is no male or female in Christ." But this must be laid against the inevitable - men and woman are different, their sexuality is a sign of something much deeper - it is a sign of the equality, but non-exchangeability of the Persons of the Holy Trinity in whose image they are created. As Athanasius' creed has it, "of one substance, not confounding the persons." If this concept is lost in our attempt to blend man and woman into egalitarianism we are compounding the confusions. Oneness of equals does not mean obliterating distinctions; it means what it means in the Trinity. Oneness is a union of opposites in the Holy Spirit - a union of diversity, not a blending together toward indistinguishability. So though there is no male and female in Christ as better and best, there is definitely male and female in Christ. Sexual differences are not to be ignored. Paul states this clearly in everything else he ever wrote on the subject - see Ephesians 5 which is certainly not an interpolation!

For much of Father Moloney's warm-up swings, I cheer heartily. He looks great! But then, there are those little tell-tale signs that all is not well and that, indeed, instead of being impartial with the scriptures he does have, to change metaphors, an axe to grind that he decries in his foreword.

First he lists those Catholic feminist scholars with words like "wonderful sensitivity to the complexity of the theological problem" . . . "the balance and skill of these scholars." And who are they? Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Ruether, among others. These women have long since discarded even a vestige of balance, if they ever knew it, their sensitivity is more to goddess worship, perhaps even witchcraft on occasion, than to Catholic Christianity which they have expressed unadulterated contempt. His endorsement of these people discredits his vision at the plate. He is myopic - one of those men who might possibly mistake a pigeon overhead for a baseball. Help!

And there is another vision problem that is not slight. The condescension of our modern scripture scholars in the smugness of the words "contemporary scholarship," oversteps its bounds. It is one thing to determine as scientifically as possible the origins, circumstances, and histories of the words of the Scripture, all very permissible to gain deeper understanding of the texts in a positive sense. But it is quite another, that once having done this, we jump to the conclusion that some things are authentic word of God and other things, well, they are "interpolations" which simply show a backward slide, away from the Truth. Such a rendering of scripture ignores the Master author of scripture, the Holy Spirit. No matter who wrote it, no matter how it was inserted or when, the words as we have them are inspired words, and though we find it difficult to make them blend because of preconceived prejudices, we cannot obliterate the things that don't fit our theory because "modern scholarship concludes" the troublesome spot was "interpolated" or written by a "psuedo Paul." This blindness in Moloney is typical. He must excise all that does not show woman as a leader in faith, a person to be followed, because his true goal is to promote priesthood for women. He states, "are we conscious enough that when it comes to faith it is regularly women, not men, who lead the way? Even if we have arrived at that consciousness, given the structure of the Church as we have it today, is it possible for women to assume their role as leaders in the area of faith?"

Given his agenda, what to do with those authentic Pauline discourses, for instance I Corinthians 11? Here women are admonished to wear a hair-covering or else not prophesy in Church. He works this around amazingly to mean that women are to prophesy as women, not as aped men with short hair. In other words, they are equals and can do these things as women - they don't have to pretend to be men. In reality I find the text is quite clear from its first words, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God," that unless a woman is under her husband's authority and acknowledges it by wearing the head covering (granted, a purely cultural expression) which signifies that headship, she is not to prophesy. Otherwise, out from under that authority, the angels (the fallen ones who deceive) can bring through this unsubmitted woman, false prophesy to the church - a reenactment of the Fall (see II Corinthians 11:8 and Galatians 1:8). This idea is very distasteful to feminist scholars. In fact the Fall, its participants, male and female, their meaning in the myth, and the reality of the Enemy are very distasteful to feminist scholars. But blotting out this starting point makes it impossible to accept those Pauline words 'women submit, men love' which are repeated many times throughout the all the epistles, not only in the later pastoral ones. And the correct understanding of the order of Christian marriage, headship and submission, lie close to the meaning of woman, and the truth of mankind that Jesus, Paul and the apostles taught was centered in her. It also has everything to do with the ordained order of the Catholic Church.

It is essential that if the woman is to be seen, just as Father Moloney so carefully teaches us, as the first in faith, that she be seen also as the first in submission. There is no point to Jesus and his life, teaching, death and resurrection, if it is not to make a way for mankind to once more come to union with God. That union that was originally lost through woman (as first in anti-faith as well as faith) and then man embracing self-determination and discarding submission to God's will. Woman is used through scripture to be the sign that points the way - she either accepts God's ways with an obedient heart, or she leads the way to disobedience where each one does his/her own thing. Yes, she is the first in faith, but that faith cannot be seen to be self-authenticating, otherwise it smacks again of prideful self-determination and autonomy.

The kind of faith that saves is emblematic in woman's morphology. How does she conceive? How does she bring forth fruit? She submits to "the other" to impregnate her. It is as plain as her physiology and its functions which the feminists try to erase in vain.

Yes, woman is the sign or the symbol for all humanity. All humanity, man and woman, must follow Christ and submit themselves to God (The Other) as he did, "I do only what I see the Father doing." "I do not do my own will, but the will of the Father." The gospel of John is brimming with these declarations and they are the truth of 'the woman' who like the two pillars on both ends holds up the entire gospel - Mary at the wedding feast of Cana (chpt 2), and Mary at the cross (chpt 19). "Woman!" says Jesus to give her the attention-getting title. "Woman!" Woman unsubmitted to her husband as her head (or to those who have that same God-given authority - not to just any man) brings to birth all the error that leads to the Fall again and again existentially. Mankind unsubmitted to the authority God has placed over it brings to birth the same vile fruits of autonomy and pride over and over again. It is woman first in faith. Yes, a thousand times yes! But be cautious here as to what it means to be first in the Kingdom, or last for that matter.

What deep, comprehensive teaching needs to come in the Church as to what submission is and what it is not! It cannot be done in the space of a review. But mark this! It is not what the world peddles - that weak, stupid, flaccid, spinelessness. It is rather. . . Jesus!

How is woman first in the Kingdom, which I agree with Moloney is the thrust of Scripture, and still not meant to become a ministerial leader in the church? The story of the Indian maiden, Sacajawea from the story of Lewis and Clark gives us an analogue.

Sacajawea brought to Lewis and Clark all her insight and knowledge about the terrain through which they were traveling for the first time. She was their guide because she was well acquainted with the territory - it had been her home. On the basis of the solid information she brought to them, they could make enlightened decisions. I have no doubt they considered her of inestimable value to their expedition and could not have conceived of it without her, but she was not the leader of the expedition and did not make the decisions.

Herein is the secret of the spiritual first-ness of woman. She does indeed have a primacy in faith both in time and in quality, but these insights cry for discernment. By their very nature, the very environment from which they come, the spiritual/psychic dimension, they can be influenced as much by evil as by good, and it is only through submission to God-given authority that deception is ferreted out of this powerful spirituality.

In fact, to be first in the journey of faith, she must be served by headship. Here is the place of authority which exists to serve the faithful in making possible this sweet foregoing of self-will - a true sign of faith. And it is submission to this work that God asks of men. Their abdication of the weight of this role of headship has been the root cause of the feminist upheaval some say some. ( Tom Bethell, F. Michael Jones).

It is because submission to God-given authority, and its first sign in the woman is an absolute necessity for mankind on its trek back to oneness with God that St. Paul has such a fit when disorder afflicts the first charismatic community (I Corinthians 14: 34). Read it again and you'll see it is not an interpolation; or if it is, then the Holy Spirit made sure someone came along to clarify things. These women were out of order! Their disease of arrogant autonomy threatened the life of the whole community. They were not under headship - in Paul's language they had discarded the veil. If they would not learn Christian submission, who would? Christ's sacrifice would be in vain. The blighted community would be back at point one. It was essential that these women were signs of true faith, with a willing, chosen, intelligent submission at its heart. Dear God! It is the woman! And she must be first in obedience! The same is true for that awful text from I Timothy 2:11, which I would love to fit into this picture for its beauty and completeness, but which space does not permit.

I have other problems with Moloney's interpretations. He wants to free Mary from any vow of perpetual virginity with Joseph before their marriage, saying it is totally out of keeping with a Jewish girl's expectations of marriage, and unsupported by scripture. I would like to have him consider Ruth as a forerunner who Mary well knew had made such a decision in striking out to follow God, and also St. Paul's early instructions, within forty years of Mary's decision, for just such an engaged/married/celebrate life for converts (I Corinthians 7).

This book is well worth reading for all its positive information about the spiritual role of woman in Scripture There is as the writer says, "a remarkable unified presentation of the place and function of woman" in the

scriptures. But let us not jump with Father Moloney to an expectation that we will evolve out of our male headship “hangups” toward egalitarianism in the Church. That conclusion is far from obvious and he strikes out.

## 18 FOUR FAVORITE CONVERTS TO CHEER ME

In this troubled time when contrary opinions dash up against the age-old teaching of the Church with vehemence, my small mind gets shaken. I foolishly vision that the foundations may be loosening; that the threat to the truth that drew me to her may be greater than the Church can bear. It is then that I begin to feel very old and tired; aware of my inability to be much of an apologist which Dr. Jeffrey Mirus, publisher of Trinity books, describes as one “who makes specific truths acceptable to the minds of others.” Along with most enthusiastic late-embracers of Catholicism who attempt to introduce the Church’s profundity to others, apologetics is a challenge intrepidly undertaken. Now that many of the key concepts to any such presentation have fallen into unexplainable disrepute even among highly visible churchmen, the proverbial rug continually tugged out from under my feet, I find myself tiring in the struggle.

Where can one turn for rejuvenation when current books and periodicals merely act as disseminators and stimulators of recusancy? I pick up again the writings of any one of many converts to the Church whose fresh perspective is perennial. With the beauty of Christian logic these men and women help me recall how it was when we were drawn into the strong, comforting arms of Mother Church whom we had come to believe gave the spiritual food of God from “her consoling breasts.’ Thus strengthened, we entered with grateful awe into the way that led to the treasure houses of her profound wisdom. Unaware that anyone could dissent from such an emollient of mind and body, the deep impression of unity brought a peace beyond description. Now I believe it will only be recaptured, then on a heightened scale, in heaven; because, for now, the clamorous voices of anger have pulled down a brassy barrier that blocks that vision. The cross these days is Jesus’ demand to love those whose hard countenances, prickly complaints, and perpetual protests are present in every Church context.

The comforters are thousands upon thousands who have sung and sing God’s praises under much worse conditions; but I turn chiefly to four converts who have stated in unrivaled ways Catholic things that were for them and me, the baited hooks. Two main tenets of belief drew my husband Bob and me into the ark of Peter. First, we believed that somewhere truth without error must wait for any diligent seeker; it cannot be that Jesus’ promises and fervent prayers for ultimate unity of the flock are futile. Second, there must be an authority on earth that Jesus left to protect and promulgate that truth, so that obedience to that authority will guarantee its acquisition.

We had come to these two tenets through a simple scriptural experience. Briefly told, after years of a good but contentious marriage, I reluctantly decided to take the apostolic directives about a wife’s relationship to her

husband as though they were indeed the word of God. Gradually this strong-willed woman, through many trials and errors, learned “submission,” and found it a gateway not to bondage but to spiritual power and freedom. Establishing authority in the family in the way that the Bible said God had designated, turned our edgy household into one of peace. When it sank in, both Bob and I recognized two things; 1) there is truth available in God’s Word that is utterly dependable, and when conformed to in day-to-day practicalities brings “abundant life;” and 2) obedience to Godly authority activates that power in our lives.

Does it not follow that what is true for the human family must be also true for the whole Christian family, that is Christ’s Church, the one being the genotype of the other? Can it be seen, then, how this clergy family, fled the ambiguities and antinomianism of the Baptist’s “freedom” and sought both the truth, (which means doctrine) and the power to live it freely under the authority (which means obedience) instituted by Christ in His Church? My four favorite converts have written convincingly about these things; and when the wearying dissent against authority and dogma presses down, renewing spiritual friendship with them is sheer refreshment

On a list of those most affecting others to conversion to Catholicism, Gilbert Keith (G.K.) Chesterton’s vigorous intelligence first brought him, through the grace of God, to Catholicism and then to its defense. As the forward to *Orthodoxy* explains, “But the most scintillating synthesis of his philosophy and deeply religious faith was manifested in his masterpiece, *Orthodoxy*, written when he was only thirty-four and which tells, in his inimitable, soaring prose, of his earth-shaking discovery that orthodoxy is the only satisfactory answer to the perplexing riddle of the universe.”(1)

Wrote the convinced and convincing G.K., “People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity; and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. . . It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one’s own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob. To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom - that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.”(2)

Once I delve into Chesterton’s book the only quandary is what to share - there is so much heartening stuff. Who can analyze the probability of miracles, or the errors of immanentism more decisively than he, who can draw out the fallacies of so-called “liberalism” better, or describe more clearly that being “spiritual” is not always the be-all-to-end-all; who more completely and convincingly than Chesterton defends the truth of original sin or explains more cogently that as Christians we look outward, not inward for truth? This cold water of sparkling reason always refreshes my parched soul!

One more succulent quote must suffice: “So since I have accepted Christendom as a mother . . . I have found Europe and the world once more like the little garden where I stared at the symbolic shapes of cat and rake; I look at everything with the old elvish ignorance and expectancy. This or that rite or doctrine may look as ugly and

extraordinary as a rake; but I have found from experience that such things end somehow in grass and flowers. A clergyman may be apparently as useless as a cat, but he is also as fascinating, for there must be some strange reason for his existence. . . I have not myself any instinctive kinship with that enthusiasm for physical virginity, which has certainly been a note of historic Christianity. . . I simply conclude that I am wrong, and that the church is right; or rather that I am defective, while the church is universal. It takes all sorts to make a church; she does not ask me to be celibate. But the fact that I have no appreciation of the celibates, I accept like the fact that I have no ear for music. The best human experience is against me, as it is on the subject of Bach. Celibacy is one flower in my father's garden, of which I have not been told the sweet or terrible name. But I may be told it any day.

“This, therefore, is, in conclusion, my reason for accepting the religion and not merely the scattered and secular truths out of religion. I do it because the thing has not merely told this truth or that truth, but has revealed itself as a truth-telling thing.” This attitude is the highest pitch of Christian obedience - relaxed, inquisitive, trusting and expectant.

John Henry Newman, who was made a Cardinal twenty-two difficult years after his conversion to Catholicism from Anglicanism where he had been a distinguished clergyman, has a mind con-joined to Chesterton's. Mindful that neither have been officially canonized, it is hard not to believe that in heaven they enjoy great conversations about the glorious eternal things. My fondest dream would be to be judged worthy, through the merits of Christ, to join the circle of listeners around them thrilling to their insights. Both Englishmen, Newman went to his reward in 1890 when Chesterton was merely sixteen, agnostic, and still considering painting as his vocation. Writing one of the great literary and spiritual classics of all time, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* [ Defense and Explanation for His own Life], Newman carefully traces the progression of his thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit from Anglicanism to Catholicism:

“The Anglican Theory [ theological idea] was very distinctive. I admired it and took it on faith. It did not occur to me to doubt it; I saw it was able and supported by learning, and I felt it was duty to maintain it. There was only one question about which I had a doubt, viz. whether it would work, for it has never been more than a paper system . . .”. “. . .Is it not wonderful then, that in May [of 1843] I addressed a letter to a friend . . . ‘at present I fear, as far as I can analyze my own convictions, I consider the Roman Catholic Communion to be the Church of the Apostles, and that what grace is among us [Anglicans] (which, through God's mercy, is not little) is extraordinary and from the overflowings of His dispensation. I am very far more sure that England is in schism, than that the Roman additions to the Primitive Creed may not be developments, arising out of a keen and vivid realizing of the Divine Depositum of Faith.”(4) (my additions are in brackets[ ] ).

With a gigantic yet thoroughly baptized intellect, therefore one submitted wholly to Jesus Christ and His Church, Newman bursts through the fetid air of our time with clean-cut declarations that he did not come to lightly by whim. In *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* he writes one of my favorite encouragements by adding on to a quote of Bellarmine : ““Next, all Catholics agree in other two points, not, however, with heretics, but solely with each other: first, that the Pope with the General Council cannot err either in framing decrees of faith or general precepts of morality; secondly that the Pope when determining any thing in a doubtful matter, whether by himself or with his own particular Council, *whether it is possible for him to err or not, is to be obeyed by all the*

*faithful.* And as obedience to conscience, even supposing conscience ill-informed, tends to the improvement of our moral nature, and ultimately our knowledge, so obedience to our ecclesiastical superior may subserve our growth in illumination and sanctity, even though he should command what is extreme or inexpedient, or teach what is external to his legitimate province.’ (5)

Obedience to Godly authority promotes spiritual enlightenment and holiness! How this empties the ashtrays of stale cliches built up in the “rights age”!

Speaking to women ( available to us in a collection of her works called *Woman*) specifically on this theme of obedience, a woman of this century has had the courage to emphasize it, and more. I turn to Edith Stein when the befuddlements of our age threaten to suffocate my feminine logic and intuitions about the relationship of faith and womanhood.

A Jewish convert to Catholicism whose life ended in one of the hellish “cottages” of Auschwitz, Blessed Edith was beatified by Pope John Paul II three years ago. Her life was a shining example of one whose brilliance was put at the disposal of God, bringing her in time to Christianity and Catholicism. A student of phenomenology and theology, she masterfully presented both in books, then relied on this knowledge in her studies of Christian woman which she presented as “feminism.”

It is a faith-filled feminism which if recognized at all would not be accepted in the regions the feminism of our day inhabits. When clouds of this oppressive thought blow in, I turn to words like these: “Participation in her husband’s life requires subordination and obedience as directed by God’s work. It is in accordance with nature that man serve his concern directly. The wife serves his cause for his sake; thus, it is reasonable that this happen under his guidance. That the duty of obedience extends also to the wife’s immediate domain - the household and the upbringing of children - is probably derived less from the feminine individuality than from the natural vocation of man as guide and protector of his wife. The natural vocation corresponds also to woman’s natural tendency towards obedience and service: ‘Obedient I feel my soul, always most beautifully free.’”

Blessed Edith and Cardinal Newman see eye to eye on that! Christian through and through, obedience is seen by both of them as true liberation. Yet, Stein is not naive about what can happen if this leads to a surrender that is truncated. “The deepest longing of a woman’s heart is to give herself lovingly, to belong to another, and to possess this other being completely. This longing is revealed in her outlook, personal and all - embracing, which appears to us as specifically feminine. But this surrender becomes a perverted self-abandon and a form of slavery when it is given to another person and not to God; at the same time it is an unjustified demand which no human being can fulfill. Only God can welcome a person’s total surrender in such a way that one does not lose one’s soul in the process but wins it.”(7)

Standing because of alphabetical order right next to Stein on the library shelf is my fourth favorite convert, Dr. Karl Stern. These writers’ works make good companions because he and Edith Stein share a very great deal. Both are converts from Judaism to Catholicism, both suffered great personal loss by the persecution of the Nazi’s - Edith to ultimate degradation and death, Karl to the wrenching loss of family and friends, and final exile in a foreign land. Do they sit now among the delightful councils of the blessed, sharing forever further enlightenment as God grants it to them? I pray so. In the Foreword of his own apologia, *The Pillar of Fire*, Karl Stern writes about his new

Catholicism, “Seen ‘from outside’ a conversion is something adventurous and anarchic. We know from the story of poor Don Quixote how foolish it looks for someone to take ideas so seriously that he really rides away from home. However, the fact that the first voyage of Columbus appeared like a gigantic Quixoterie did not disprove the existence of the sought-for continent. *If there are certainties, one must be able to find them.*” (8) (italics added) And from the end of the book, “The Incarnation was perpetuated in a very specific way in the Holy Sacraments, particularly in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in the Communion of Saints and in the visible physical unity of the Church. There are many saintly Christians in the world today who do not believe that faith in Christ necessitates faith in those other things. . . That disbelief in the sacramental life of the Church has two roots. It is firstly based on an ancient and profound disrespect for Matter, and secondly on the development of what the philosophers call Positivism which arose with modern science(9) . . . Catholic orthodoxy is the only form of Christianity acceptable to me(10). Karl Stern and Edith Stein enjoy another profound correspondence in thought that never ceases to revivify me after the stultifying effects of reading another revisionist ‘doing theology’? The first book I ever read of his, a classic, “*The Flight From Woman,*” gave intellectual formation to my personal experience about the meaning of my womanhood, and I’m forever in his debt. He wrote, “In the end one gets the impression that some villain arbitrarily divided humanity into two camps. Behind it all is the following idea: it is wrong to view the two halves of mankind as convex-penetrating and concave-receiving in equilibrium because the concave-receiving quality in itself implies humiliation. The very posture of receptiveness means slavery.” (11) ...“since the French Revolution and the rise of the feminist movement, the cry for equality has changed into an assertion of sameness? (12) . . .“What began in feminism as a movement of liberation is bound to end in a slavery worse than the first.” (13 “On the one hand there exists a tradition as old as mankind: that sexual polarity is the expression of *urprinzip* which pervades all levels of being; on the other hand, there exists a new approach which considers that tradition as a naive cliché and relegates it to the museum of prescientific oddities. If the second approach were assured . . . I doubt whether the Judaeo-Christian tradition would survive. The unspeakable mystery of the *and* - of God *and* His Creation, of God *and* His People, and of Christ *and* the Church - would be conjured away.”

The *and* will not pass away in the Church; authority *and* obedience are to the souls of Christians a thoroughly invigorating pair.

#### Notes

- 1 Chesterton, G.K., *Orthodoxy*, Image books, 1959, Forward
- 2 p.101
3. p.156
4. Newman, John Henry Cardinal, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Image edition, 1956, p. 292-294.
5. Newman, John Henry Cardinal, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, (1874 ) Pelican Classics 1973, p.174
6. Stein, Edith, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein Vol II, Woman*, ICSPublications, 1987, p. 44,
7. *Ibid* p. 52

8. Stern Karl, *The Pillar of Fire*, Harcourt, Brace and Co, NY, 1951, p.4
9. Ibid p. 298
10. Ibid. p. 300
11. Karl, *The Flight From Woman*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965 p.13-14
12. Ibid. p. 14
13. Ibid p. 15
14. Ibid p. 273

## 19 STEALING THE THUNDER OF FUNDAMENTALISM

The Bishops, always aware of the damage Bible fundamentalists do around the fringes of the Church, in 1987 distributed a Pastoral Statement on Fundamentalism meant to counter inroads of fundamentalistic sects among the Catholic faithful. In the nearly ten years since that pastoral statement was issued, the leaching of baptized Catholics toward *sola scriptura* religion continues unabated, not just in South America where hundreds of thousands are reported to have left the Church for these Bible-based evangelistic sects, but also in the United States where such groups are proliferating. Many like the immense Evangelical Free Church in Crystal, Minnesota, have become institutions drawing thousands, as many as 40% of whom are fallen- away Catholics.

The Bishops clearly hoped to promote good preaching and teaching, and that surely can help. However, the *Pastoral Statement on Fundamentalism* may have been too polite and not hard-hitting enough, therefore overlooked not only by the vigilante, anti-Catholic media, but also by priests and teachers. This is a serious problem that needs musculature in prayer, in grappling with the Bible fundamentals, and in reliance in an ever deeper way on the Holy Spirit to inspire preaching, even fiery preaching, from the Holy Word of God.

The fundamentalist leader gains his mesmerizing appeal not only by his vision of the Bible as having been dictated miraculously whole and intact by the Holy Spirit, but by thinking he himself as peculiarly blessed with similar interpretative, infallible earphones. (With so many infallible teachers in these sects, why is it so hard for the fundamentalist to believe in one who is truly authorized, and who on certain specified occasions, inspired by the Holy Spirit, really speaks infallibly? This might be considered in homilies.) The Catholic Church has long been the dog for this kind of Bible-believing person - or rather the Beast, or worse, the whore of Babylon (Revelations 17). That much does not change over the years. With uncompromising vigor, Catholics are pursued to bring them to a “born-again,” “saved” place. Those most susceptible are sincere, simple souls who are seeking more of God and fervently looking for certitude of faith, or lately, immigrants to this country who seek an accepting community. The fundamentalist leader plays on this need with an amazing egocentricity that has no room in it for history with its times and climes, for the age-long line of believers that has brought wisdom of interpretation to the Word of God, and certainly not for of a God-given authority that has sorted through this accumulated insight separating the false from the true. Creation, time, God Himself, are reduced ; there is no place for any idea of “mystery”. Indeed, it is a word freely mocked by Jehovah Witnesses. The leader sees himself as the progenitor of the truly faithful. It is as though the whole world and the Bible itself were created just prior to the birth of this individualist, who is given a

clean page upon which he alone writes for the spiritual blessing of all and generations to come. Where was Christian faith before Amy Semple MacPherson and her Four Squares, before Charles Russell, founder of Jehovah's Witness, before Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon, likewise, before this proselytizing group that meets just around the corner in a storefront or an abandoned denominational church? Catholics in the pew need to be reminded often of the vast tree with its massive roots that is their faith, and how those roots, unlike any other, are being fed by the Life Himself in unbroken continuity since the Apostles. They need to know the record of these groups which are broken off by their own doing from the vine, and what happens to such branches.

Leaders of these groups, powerful in a religious spirit which can be, and often is, demonic, lead people into blind alleys. Witness Jim Jones and the outcome of his leadership. In Minnesota we have observed one group who believes it is being prepared to rule the world after the Second Coming. These groups are everywhere; there will be quite a battle as to which are chosen to do this ruling if they ever cross paths. Seeing the need for order and rule, they cannot conceive of it having already been given to the apostles and their successors. The naive, under their spell are eventually bound by fear, if unintentional, through the controlling leadership. My files bulge with sad accounts.

With no patience for submission to a place on the periphery of God's circle - God alone being the center, or for the need for an authorized mediator - that Church ordained by Jesus Himself who must have left provision for the fulfillment of his fervent prayer that "they all be one"- rather, a fundamentalist sees himself as in the center of that circle with a wire from God running right into his ear. He believes with certainty that the Catholic Church's connection was cut off long ago, or is, worse, now attached to hell. This incorrigible spiritual pride is one of the dangers of fundamentalism to the human soul. "Thank God I am not like other men, adulterers, fornicators,..."(the Pharisee viewing the Publican).

In a commendable openness to ecumenical dialogue the Bishops do not warn about these dangers in their Pastoral Statement; but the susceptible Catholic needs to be reminded that "The devil prowls around like a lion, seeking someone to devour."( I Peter 5:8 - written by the first pope of the Church), and that he must not trust every Bible teacher, but must "beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Our Lord speaking in Matthew 6:7) These would make a fine homily on how we as Catholics discern the true from the false; a homily to be preached often. For the apostles, being Christian was not enough; we sometimes forget that; and Christian heresy was precisely what got their dander up. Just reread II Peter, Jude and II John, alongside the struggles of St. Paul with the usurpers of the apostolic role in I Corinthians.

False prophecy is endemic in these groups from the beginning; false, because time proves their universally catastrophic prognostications unfulfilled. (How many times the Jehovah Witnesses have been wrong should be rehearsed now and then by the preacher whose flock is being stalked by relentless Jehovah Witnesses. It is not, as I read in a Catholic magazine, "a Christian" organization, to be smiled upon.) These attributes are present in all fundamentalist groups, even to some extent charismatic prayer fellowships, which the last two popes have been very positive about generally, but whose members need to be aware of the dangers of demands for spiritual conformity. I write from experience. This is quite a different matter than submitting to an authoritative orthodoxy which transcends the psychological and is Truth.

False for all their glitter and startling insights, one is reminded of St. Paul (Gal 1.) warning that if even an angel should come with a different doctrine than the one he has preached (he preached only the apostolic tradition, the kerygma - see Galatians 1:15-20, 2:2 and 2:9) the hearers should reject it and a curse be put on the messenger! Catholics need help to realize the spiritual war that must be waged against the forces that would destroy the Church and its life-saving, life-giving Word and Sacrament. Even the popular Bible Study Fellowship is not free from assumptions that are anti-Catholic. Too many Catholics are naive.

The document by the Bishops mentions the warmth of these Bible-believing groups, but eventually fundamentalists do not get along together for the above reasons. Yes, these communities are very loving exteriorly for a time, but they are seed beds of new fundamentalist weeds as "holier" leaders arise to contend with the old, leading splinters off to greener spiritual pastures. The spirit here is not the Holy Spirit discerned by submission to godly authority which insures the unity of the Body of Christ. Besides power plays they are also very prone to excesses of sensuality as is so well pointed out by Ronald Knox in his analysis of the phenomenon in his excellent *Enthusiasm* (it was his favorite book, too).

The Bishops' 1987 paper lacked warning about tactics of the Enemy of Souls, and the subtle deception which is his forte. Alongside the fact of the origin of the Bible in the Church as part of her Tradition, the faithful need the protective discernment of the Church which Christ specifically left, or the Bible is used by Satan. The Bible itself reports this and tells the further struggles of St. Paul and St. John with those who, empowered by the Spirit, felt no need for any authoritative discernment. These early fundamentalists ignored apostolic authority, and were smitten with their own pipeline, input from Satan and all. (I Corinthians and II Corinthians, III Letter of John).

There is, however, a positive side of fundamentalism which the Catholic Church is more in a position to appropriate than the fundamentalists themselves. The Holy Church has the mandate to teach authoritatively *The Fundamentals*, for she is the fundamental Church. She believes in the inerrant Scripture more than any other so-called Christian Church - just note how much of the Bible is ignored in fundamentalism! (i.e. "unless you eat my body and drink my blood, you have no life in you." That's a pretty big ignor-ance. Note how Jehovah Witnesses bypass Jesus' calling himself I AM in John 8:58 - their founder has retranslated this, wishing it away in order to fit his rehashed Arian doctrine.)

Yet, Catholicism is also the calculus of Christian belief, but most of us in the pews, and some of those who preach are not aware of the fact that one and one are two. There we are, ignorant babes just waiting for the fundamentalist to explain how his Bible arithmetic works. "Wow! You mean that the Bible says that if I generously give first to God, I will be able to better pay my bills?" Why didn't the Church ever tell me that?"

In a series published in *Faith and Reason* based on his doctorate dissertation, Father Peter M.J. Stravinskis has presented much research about the phenomenon of fundamentalism, what its content is, and how the Church may best react to the dangers present in fundamentalist proselytism. "The failure of the Church, however, to impart her own teachings unambiguously cannot be blamed on the Fundamentalists ..", he writes, and further cites the Holy Father in his 1992 opening address to the bishops of Latin America. '(T)he Holy Father very bluntly locates the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of those who should exercise a shepherd's care. . ."

One of the weaknesses in the Church has developed because “Clergy and religious are exposed to ‘abstract’ training.” That, along with the current splits because of ideological differences which are taking missionary and evangelistic energy from the Church, and which displace any simple but appealing Bible presentation. These red-herrings are making the inroads of Fundamentalists easier. The fundamentals that all Christians can rely upon for the living of their daily lives can be taught from the Bible. The Bishops’ paper warned about “simplistic answers,” but a holy and blessed way of life is laid out in the Bible, and many of the daily problems are given solutions. More today than ever, people need these fundamentals stressed. The spiritually starving are just as vulnerable to the politics of fundamentalism as the starving are politically vulnerable to power-hungry manipulators. The Bible is full of promises that can be relied upon as fundamental to faith - true, these are just the milk of Christian faith, there is also meat to come, but milk is where to start.

Rather than lean toward intellectual, scholarly explanations of scripture, the times, circumstances, *the sitz im leben*, of the books of scripture, emphasized by the Bishops’ paper, people long for knowledge of God’s will for their lives and the power of it. We have all experienced the mysterious working of God’s word - having the daily lectionary reading, or the readings at Mass, speak directly to our need. We have all in distress or in deep questioning, opened our Bibles to find exactly those words that in the most satisfying way eased our distress. So perfectly came this answer that no one could convince us that it was “too simplistic.”

Yes, we need to know the situational bearing of a text, but it is more important to realize that God’s word speaks on many levels, and even though written ages ago in a different situation than my own, addresses my spirit intimately. The Church is there to protect me from deceptions and autonomous, independent interpretations, but it is not there to water down the truth that God wishes to speak to me, or to diminish my faith that His Word gives insight and direction. Fundamentalists do see God working in the ordinary everyday experiences - they pray, often successfully, for everything from parking places to healings for their children to financial concerns right down to the penny. It is in this very area that the Church can steal some of the fire of fundamentalism.

Let the Church teach her children in the way they understand. We realize that many Catholics will never be versed in historical, textual criticism, but yet have a basic commonsense approach to God’s Word which says) 1) it’s eternal (speaks to me where I am), 2) its no nonsense (means what it says) and 3) has power (will help me do what it directs). In this, averting the problems of fundamentalism, the Church reclaims fundamentalism’s thunder by affirming much of that approach with this important difference: Satan wants to use Scripture to divide Christ’s Church: we must have the Church’s protection. This demands a submission of heart that keeps Satan out. Devotion is no guard against deception. Fervently wanting God is not enough when coupled with a disregard for the safeguards God has already given against deception. Fervent desire to accomplish a journey even when headed in the right direction is not enough to save us from grave accidents if we do not believe in the system of stoplights and refuse to obey them.

There are Scriptural guidelines for many dimensions of life that the Catholic seeker wants to be put in touch with. Many more resources are available for direct Bible teaching than are mentioned in this sketchy outline:

- 1) On Healing. This is inner psychological and outer physical healing as per Frs. DiOrio, Kelleher, McDonough and Scanlan, are often preliminary to the healing of the soul. Sermons on the healing tradition in the Church may include the continuation of Biblical-type healings at Lourdes.
- 2) On Deliverance - Evil stalks the unsuspecting in astrology, New Age, etc. The reality of the spirit world as per Jesus' petition - "deliver us from evil," Fr. Scanlan's work and Fr. Michael Pacwa will alert Catholics to the Bible's and the Church's continual vigilance against the tactics of Satan.
- 3) On Stewardship- The right use of money, tithing and fruits, identifying needs from wants, and denying the siren-song of materialism, is a critical area for every Catholic family and the Bible has the basics they should all know.
- 4) On Morality - Fearless teaching of consistent Bible views on sex, relationships, the love of money, honesty, etc. - whenever such themes are preached or taught their origin in the God's Word, especially from the mouth of Jesus must be made clear. These are not ideas concocted by moral theologians.
- 5) On Selfhood - People are swept by psychological fads, but the Bible teaches us how to become really whole not according to psychology but according to "lose your life for my sake and the gospel." It is not "I'm OK, You're OK;" but something quite different that the Bible lays down as being the way to being complete.
- 6) On Brotherly love - which is the care and concern for others. Charity requires that the cup of cold water be given to the needy as though given to Jesus himself; and this teaching of true brotherly love begins in the Holy Scripture, not in the local Justice Commission, and often is quite different from their emphasis.
- 7) On Womanhood - The Holy Father's *Mulieris Dignatatem*, Helen Hull Hitchcock and her *Women for Faith and Family*, books by Donna Steichen, and William Oddie will help clarify the Bible's and the Church's positive teaching on woman and her meaning and role over against the deceptions of feminism. The Bible's clear and edifying teaching on man, woman and family, cry to be thoroughly understood and preached without dissembling.

Considering the span of centuries and cultures represented by the human authors, the Bible is amazingly consistent in these areas, proof of the overarching authorship of the Holy Spirit who speaks today to the believer. The fundamentalist tackles all these areas with lopsided emphases, but the Catholic Church can present an overview with clear teaching. The Pope does it! Unfortunately the seeker is too often subjected to a variety "isms" in preaching and teaching which are anti-Bible - feminism, Buddhism, Jungianism, transcendentalism, psychologism, aneagramism. The common man is fed up with these things. Who can blame him if he ends up someplace where these things are refuted and the Word itself addressed.

The Church should rise in defense of her teachings which are all more truly Biblical than the sects. Catholic, Bible apologetics is carried on by Scoff Hahn, Patrick Madrid, Peter Kreeft, and others, along with Mother Angelica's scripture based programs. They cry to be heartily supported by our Bishops who give the undergirding that all apologists and Bible preachers must have. The Catholic Church can within her tradition and upon her solid

Scriptural foundation enthusiastically proclaim fundamental “bom-againness” with all its implications in daily life, and in the only true sense.

## 20 IN DEFENSE OF KNEELERS

It is probably my conversion experience that conditioned me to love kneeling at worship. I have clear recall, even to the emotion that was present, of the first time as a Protestant I entered a Catholic retreat house chapel. There the contemplative sisters of Mary Reparatrix in Detroit kept vigil before the exposed Blessed Sacrament carrying out their apostolate of reparation for sin against the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The very air was electrified - charged with Something that made me gasp. My eyes could hardly take in the scene, it was so unlike anything I had ever experienced in all my previous Baptist/Presbyterian life. Kneel? I wanted to flatten myself against the cold stone floor and never move. Here present was a Steamroller Reality that I had heard sermons about, studied, theorized about, and longed for - “oh, if it could only be so!” and here IT actually was. Not an experience meant only for heaven, or only for mystics, but here HE was. Though it was over twenty-five years ago, my heart still beats hard re-encountering in my imagination that first experience of overwhelming Presence.

How could such a monumental thing be kept hidden? I had taught against the Catholic Church, part of a tradition in my evangelical family which had been carried on by my Baptist- preacher grandfather, and had been given me as a legacy of generations. How come none of them had ever known that the Real Presence of the Jesus they loved and served was right around the corner in the Church they loathed? Furthered by reading *This Tremendous Lover* by Dom Eugene Boylan who explained just why I encountered the Real Living Lord of the Universe in that small chapel, I began to make visits to Catholic churches in the area in which I lived. In each of them was that awesome Silence that vibrated with the Presence, and I knew from where that Being emanated; the love and consciousness of Jesus radiated from the Tabernacle. Had I encountered the Lord of the Universe out in a meadow, on a street corner, or in my kitchen, there would be one position adequate to express my thunder-struck wonder, my gratitude, my love, my sheer happiness - would fall on my knees. There was one position natural to the awed soul in the radius of the Tabernacle - on one's knees.

When through the amazing work of the Holy Spirit ( a story too lengthy to be told here) thirteen of us, my Protestant minister husband, our eleven children and myself, were accepted into the Catholic Church, we expressed what so many converts do - we had “come home.” Surely, this was the church that Jesus had founded and had meant for his followers to the end of time. He had not left us bereft of his Presence; at each Eucharist he gave himself in the continuing sacrifice of Calvary so that the gulf between man and God could be bridged. He himself was present with us. It was no theory, it was real.

Personal experiences like this one of mine are powerful. They turn lives around. In our case, thirteen people were immediately affected. But they hardly form a convincing argument for decisions that affect the whole community of Christians. Why just because one person's knees grow weak in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament or the Sacrifice of the Mass should it be an argument that all people be required to kneel?

What we must look for here is some undergirding principle. There is a place for what Cardinal Newman, the great thinker about the way Catholic doctrine develops, called the "illative sense." This illative sense can estimate the true value of a person's personal convictions. It is the connection a person of faith makes under the impulse of the Spirit with the reality of the faith, and when a large number of Christians of all times and cultures make that connection, we call it the "sensus fidelium." I have a sense that this personal conviction of kneeling in the presence of God is truly a matter touching and connected to revealed truth that is witnessed to in the cumulative belief and practice of the ages.

The move to do away with kneelers in church follows the liturgical change which eliminates kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer. There are at least two strands of consciousness which have brought about this rejection of kneeling. The first is the new emphasis of immanence over against transcendence in our realization of God.

The Old Testament relates how the otherwise unknowable God revealed himself over the two thousand years prior to sending his only Son for the final and complete revelation of his nature. Gradually through the Israelites' own experiences in their milieu of geography and history, the majesty and exceeding power and glory of the one true God broke through and was embedded in their consciousness through the words of the prophets. Through God transcended - was above and beyond - all nature which he had created, he nevertheless revealed himself to be with his people. "Being with his people" meant in the words of the poet, "Close to them as breathing, nearer than hands and feet": in a phrase, that is true "immanence."

Depending upon which aspects of God's reality receives this emphasis, his complete otherness, his infinite, overarching majesty and power - transcendence, or his nearness and abiding among his people - immanence, the form of liturgy reflects one or the other. Vatican II stressing the People of God as Church, has brought around a more immanent consciousness than the consciousness of the transcendent that preceded it. This is meant to be a realization of true immanence, but it more often than not has degenerated into a mockery of what immanence really means.

It is the immanence of God that is reflected in the United States Bishop's document, *Environment and Art in the Catholic Church*. The space in church is now to lend itself to a community gathering around the altar, no more looking far away over the heads and backs of multitudes of worshippers who are negligible in themselves, and up at a ceremony reflecting only the transcendence of God. Now the emphasis is to be on the people and God-with-them. God has endowed these people with his salvation, therefore, they are worthy. They are not negligible to the proceedings and they do not grovel before him. Yet, it must be noted that this document also calls for liturgical space to accommodate postures of standing, sitting and kneeling. The instruction of the American Bishops in the front of every Sacramentary is that the people should kneel from the Sanctus to the Pater Noster.

The Renew process which has been popular in a majority of dioceses around the country is also devoted to an immanent concept of God. We look for and find God in other people is its theme. We hear God speak when we listen to other people, and we discover him working in their very human experiences. Therefore, within the community of persons one finds God. This, however, seems to stretch the idea of immanence beyond its original scriptural revelation.

In the later chapters of the Book of Isaiah, the prophet speaks God's Work to the exiled people. They are prone to despair that the great promises of their return to Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple given them through the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel will ever come to pass. Years have gone by and they seem no closer to being freed from captivity to continue their mission for God. Mighty Babylon shows no signs of weakening its hold on the world or on them. The prophet's task at this point is to expand their vision of Almighty God toward the understanding that he holds all human history in his hand. Even a pagan warrior, Cyrus the Mede, is his chosen instrument, says the prophet. He is not God for only a small group of Semitic folks; he is God, Creator of the Universe. This Mede will be his servant to release the Hebrews from their captivity and all the world will know that Almighty God is with them.

The transcendent, all powerful God is with them, but is never identified as being barely distinguishable from them, or as experienced only in these people. The prophets never say to look for God in the eyes and words of their companions or to find God with the people, nor does Jesus. Rather it is, "I am the Lord and there is no other, besides me there is no God." That tremendous voice thunders into silence all the squeaks of espousers of immanence who misunderstand what immanence really means.

"Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel,  
 'Will you question me . . . or command me concerning the  
 works of my hands? I made the earth and created man upon  
 it, it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I  
 commanded all their host - - I am He who blots out your  
 transgression for my own sake, and I will not remember your  
 sins."

Yet this almighty, transcendent One is also he who 'will feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs in his arms, carrying them in his bosom, and gently lead those that we with young.' The same One who loved and cared intimately for them is he who "sits above the circle of the earth."

Writes Peter Kreeft in a recent article in *National Catholic Register* (using the perspective of a demon from hell), "Thanks to enormous effort in recent years, we have managed to make the most dramatic thing in the universe - the ritual murder of God Incarnate to save human souls from hell - resemble a Barry Manilow song or a Rod McKuen poem. 'Thus saith the Lord' now sounds like 'Listen to the Warm.'"

The sense of the sacred and utterly holy that threw me upon my face in the chapel of the Reparatrix Sisters is being anesthetized by the demand that we see God immanently, which is twisted to mean seeing him in the men and women who worship with us - a family around a common meal, rather than totally dependent suppliants around the dripping cross of the Christ, God Incarnate, engaged in the awful work of forgiving us our sins, whose very flesh and blood we are about to partake. The woman sinner whom Christ forgave knew enough to throw herself at his feet. Unless each of us individuals, whom Jesus, by the way, "did not trust himself to because he knew all men, and

knew what was in man” (see John 2:24-25), literally falls on his knees before this awesome action taking place in our midst, we will never see God in each other. To quote Kreeft, (again, in the words of a devil speaking of God as “The Enemy”). “The Enemy’s Son has been moved to the periphery, both physically (when the tabernacle is moved to one side) and spiritually (when Liturgies focus on abstract notions of ‘community’ instead of the alarming concrete and present Enemy).”

I was quite at home in church as a Baptist and a Presbyterian (not in the sense of the final homecoming at becoming Catholic); but “at home” in the sense of being in a well-worn livingroom where I put my feet up. That is, I ambled in, greeted all my friends, sat and chatted with my neighbor until the organ volume raised against the din of conversation was able to catch my attention. That Baptist church built in the early nineteen hundreds was fashioned to house a family - that is, in a semi-circular shape around the pulpit; no one would have thought of kneeling. What would they kneel to? It was the picture of immanence falsely understood. But such immanence was all we had. Even the Word of God which the central pulpit symbolized was restricted to the narrow interpretation of one man - in my case, my grandfather, who refused all connections to any greater or deeper level of church. Such false immanence - a congregation of people who may or may not act on the Word of God as they receive it through preaching and teaching only, is a very disappointing thing if you are looking for evidence of the Transcendent.

The ambassador of the Holy Spirits charisms to the denominational churches and the Catholic Church, Dr. David DuPlessis, minister of the Assemblies of God, now deceased, often used an incomplete analogy about most Christians by describing a group sitting at dinner with frozen steaks on their plates. One by one they discussed what was on their plate, the kind of meat, its mineral and vitamin content, the sire and dam of the animal from which it came, its effect on the human body when used as food, etc. In the meantime they became hungrier and hungrier. What they needed, said DuPlessis, was to quit talking about it, put that meat on the fire and eat it!

Even David DuPlessis, with all his impact on the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church, never realized that what is talked about in other tradition is Actual Living Presence in the Catholic Church, a Transcendent Reality that offers himself as food indeed, thus being with his people in an incredible way.

Theory is blown away by a transforming experience. When you merely theorize it is perfectly appropriate that you sit around a table and weigh opinions, each equal to each, but when the Holy appears the reaction must be “My Lord and My God.” Can we imagine St. Thomas crying out those words without falling on his knees?

The second kind of consciousness that wants kneeling in church excised is linked closely to the first confusion about the meaning of transcendence and immanence: it is the man or woman who believes kneeling signifies lack of self-worth, a hark back to extremes of breast beating and mea culpa. In this self-ist age of the exaltation of the human spirit, it is congruous to liturgists that the “whole and holy persona should kneel down like a begging child. Such an attitude of pride Kreeft again addresses in the words of Snakebite. “The ‘experts’ are simply snobs, but they’ve succeeded in pinning the label of snobs on their opponents, the simple believers who loved the old Liturgy and wept when it was taken from them. What an admirable job of reversing the roles of victim and victimizer.” Those who feel their inadequacy, meaning their total dependence upon God’s grace, who long to be obedient acceptors and responders to Almighty God, even strong men and worthy women, only display their full stature when they kneel down before the Real Presence. What a witness to that Reality they are!

As to the weak argument that the early Church did not kneel, how can we be so sure in light of the “hymn” St. Paul records in Philippians:

“therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven on earth and under the earth.

The early Church is not the be-all-to-end-all, or Salvation History would have culminated in the First Century. Assimilation of the message and meaning of Jesus Christ has brought men to their knees, and as the Great Rift between heaven and fallen earth is more discernable with time, so should be the awe with which we encounter the One who gives himself to bridge it for us.

If those powerful kneeling figures are removed from our churches, the witness to the actual presence of Christ that inspires them to their knees leaves too. How many converts to the faith have been made by the mere observance of strong men and worthy women on their knees?

## 21 THE SKY TALKS TO US

Lately a news article described an experimental kind of therapy for troubled youth. For a certain period each day they were taken to a spot where the sky was visible from horizon to horizon. Here they stretched out on their backs and spent a quiet interval simply staring up into the eternal blue, projecting their thoughts into the clouds. The effect reported on these upset kids was that watching empty space was calming, and centering. Children who were all in knots, or who were belligerent, or withdrawn - all kinds of problems were responding to sky therapy. And the young subjects of this treatment loved it.

Therapies come and go. What is highly extolled today is often cast aside tomorrow, but this particular idea may have a longer than usual life because it ties into a theme of faith.

The sky has always held the imagination of mankind. The religious impulse has continually forced the eyes up; the skies speak eloquently of the great Creator who looks over all creatures. Regardless of the other particulars of a religion, it is clear that the sky has a prominent role in them all. Gods and goddesses have always thought to populate the heights, living just above the dome of the heavens, or shrouded with clouds on the tops of great mountains. Sun and moon, and the planets have been worshipped from the times of the Sumerians and Egyptians. Muhammed rose to the heavens, is Muslim belief, from the rock in Jerusalem that bears his last footprint.

Grand prophecies about the sky's manifestations appear frequently in the Bible whose apocalyptic literature in both the Old and New Testament speak of cosmic happenings that will be seen by all peoples - up there! The angels at Jesus' Ascension questioned those standing struck with awe, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The American Indians worship the sky Dr. Robert Coles records in "*The Spiritual Life of Children*" (Houghton, Mifflin 1990) interviews with children of many faiths. A ten year old Hopi Indian girl from the Southwest is quoted, "The sky watches us and listens to us. It talks to us, and it hopes we are ready to talk back. . . Our God is the sky and lives wherever the sky is. Our God is the sun and the moon, too; and our God is our people. This is where we're supposed to be, and if we leave, we lose God." Her people living out their days and nights under the friendly gaze of the heavens (and where on earth are there more of them than in the Southwest), feel in their hearts that they are spiritually at home.

Perhaps some of the disorientation of us moderns who have trouble grasping the spiritual meaning of our lives might ease if we could get back in touch with that immediate canopy that overarches us. Instead, we live surrounded by buildings, in dense communities where the sky is seldom seen, or our view is obscured by fuming smokestacks and steam vents, telephone poles, and billboards. We all watch the weather news faithfully on T.V., yet the great panorama of weather may be viewed first hand right out on the eastern and western horizons. Whenever do we read its signs for ourselves? Jesus himself referred to those flagrant indicators when his enemies were testing him by asking for a sign from heaven. He replied, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘twill be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”

We don’t even read the sky for its information, does that make us even less likely than the Sadducees to comprehend the meaning of our times and our place in them? It would seem that some contemplation of the heavens, some quiet observations of what they continually speak, might have a connection to our heart of hearts where God’s messages are decoded. David wrote in one of his glorious psalms,

“The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech  
and night to night declares knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;  
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.”

Something great and wondrous, something of God, is being communicated by the sky to those who let its vast silence into their souls. The wisemen who sought Christ looked to the sky (for how many eons had astrologers watched and read the heavenly signs?) and finally found Him for whom the ages waited

Those who frequent the Eucharist of the Lord Jesus may just have a primary key to that mystical communication. Fr. Louis Bouyer, writer of many books on spirituality and liturgy that continue to be authoritative, describes in “*Liturgy and Architecture*” the early celebrations of the Eucharist in spaces that the developing Church set-apart for it. The space itself was meant to help Christians to comprehend the mystery that was enveloping them at mass. A mobile congregation, without pews, the liturgical group actually moved from one place to another. The first part of the liturgy, then as now, centering in the readings of Scripture, the Gospel and the homily, were held in the central section of the space, but at the Preface to the Sacrifice of the Mass, the whole body of initiated participants moved to the eastern end of the building. They faced the wall beyond which the rising dawn could be imagined. Upon it was a backdrop of fresco, or mosaic “emphasizing the foretaste of eternal glory to be found in the eucharistic celebration.” “The Christians in their churches, hearing the word, are led by it from the Ark to the altar. And beyond the altar itself, they look toward no other earthly place but only toward the rising sun as toward the symbol of the Sol justitiae [ Sun of justice] they are expecting.”

As Jesus came to them with refreshment and strength in His Body and Blood, they looked upon this heavenly scene, a reminder that this mystery was sustaining them in time “until He come again.” They were “showing forth the Lord’s death, till He come.” The participation in this mystery, proclaimed the sky vision, was

only a link to final participation in the greater one - ultimate union with Christ! The Bible ends with palpable longing for that Coming Again from the east:

“I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches, I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.” . .

Bride say, 'Come.'”.

“Surely, I am coming soon.”( Revelation 22:16-17)

When receiving communion, imagine scanning the clouds of heaven for Him. It is a contemplation that brings Him closer for this day. Look to the eastern sky!

## 22 “CALL NO MAN FATHER”

Have you ever been asked with raised eyebrows why we Catholics call our priests “Father” when Jesus says call no man ‘father’? The passage in Matthew 23:8 reads:

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father who is in heaven. Neither be called master, for you have one master, the Christ.

Another version, the last line reads

“Nor must you be allowed to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ.”

Do priests have trouble answering this? As an apologist for my Catholic faith, I find it is an opportunity to explain many aspects of our rich heritage that even Catholics are not acquainted with. What follows is the explanation I have made to my Protestant and Catholic questioners.

If we are to accept this passage literally in the nature of fundamentalism, without gleaning Jesus’ meaning, we should never send a Father’s Day card, write “Dear Dad,” teach a child to say, “Daddy,” or call our own fathers, “father.” We should not address ourselves or others as “teacher.” Christian schools would have to call the one who instructs, something other than “Teacher.” We all acknowledge our earthly fathers as being our “Father,” and our mothers as being our “Mother.” It would be a strange kind of scrupulosity if we refused to because of this scripture passage. Is it somehow more disobedient to Jesus to call our priest “father?”

We know what Jesus means in this instruction. He means that God is the origin of everything. He is the first Cause of our lives. All other causes are secondary to him. We did not originate in our fathers loins or our mother’s womb, but in the hand of God before the world was made. Their loving union that conceived us was dependent on God’s prior and primary love and creation. St. Paul tells us in the Letter to the Ephesians, “. . . even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.” We are told that we were chosen to be gathered into the eternal plan of God before the world was made.

Also, the Master above all earthly masters or bosses must be obeyed, even if this means the earthly master must be disobeyed. We must always be aware of the Holy Will of God. It is more binding on us and comes before obedience to any human will. This is only when what we are asked to do by our earthly authority is really contrary to the expressed will of God - like breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

As for teachers, we know there is no Truth to be taught other than himself; he is the Truth and the only Teacher. All other teaching is secondary and dependent.

Jesus was fond of hyperbole. He spoke in exaggerations to make his point dramatic and capable of penetrating deaf ears. He let us know that he meant nothing less than the full meaning of his words - he wasn't kidding. We do not really believe that he meant us to cut off our hand if we have a kleptomaniacal problem. Yet, he said, "And if your hand or your foot offend you, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire." Didn't he mean we had better be serious about getting free of evil compulsion? We had better not make excuses, but do something drastic about it; confession, penance: prayer, counseling, etc. Sin against the Ten Commandments is serious business.

Interestingly enough, though he warned about taking an earthly man as our ultimate cause, "Call no man father", he did not warn us about an earthly mother, but instead gave us his mother and told us to call her "mother" as one of his last acts from the cross. It cannot be as dangerous to our souls to think of having a human mother - one in whose womb we are formed, as it is to mistake the father who initiates our conception as our only progenitor. In calling Mary, "mother" we still fully acknowledge the heavenly Father who created and fructified the spiritual seed that brought us into the Kingdom of God through her.

Then the same St. Paul who recognized our origins with God before the world began, writes to his Thessalonian children .."For you know, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you." He wasn't disobedient in this strict orientation to God the Father by expressing his fatherhood over those he had brought into the faith. He was a spiritual father in this sense to all those to whom he brought the gospel. He had oversight of their development, he took it upon himself to chastise and to encourage. He sounded often like Moses - "Did I give these people birth that I should have to carry them?"

In II Corinthians 11 he speaks like a father giving away his daughter as a bride. "I betrothed you to Christ as a pure bride to her one husband." And in the 12th chapter he says "And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children."

It is in this fathering sense of St. Paul that we call our priests, "father." We are not claiming them as our origins. But there is a deeper sense we use the word as well.

The Eucharist is the new covenant in the Blood of Christ. Covenant is the binding love of family, the original love agreement that brings a family into existence. We have Jesus in the

Eucharist as Priest and Sacrificial Lamb, the same one Sacrifice that was consummated on Calvary and which sacrificial meal we continue to eat. Standing in for Jesus High Priest is this man, a priest of Jesus' own order, and the father of this particular family, who is presiding at this family meal. He is a celibate father whose children are spiritual children. On the one hand, these children are his brothers and sisters, on the other, he is their spiritual head, himself a servant of the apostles whose head is in Italian, "Papa."

When Peter was given preeminence in Christ's Church as the rock on which Christ's Church would be founded in Matthew 16:16, he was also given keys of the Kingdom, and the power to loose and bind. Dr. Scott Hahn in his exegesis of this passage leads us to the reference in Isaiah 22:20f which scripture King Jesus is using to establish an ongoing chair of authority in his Kingdom. He takes Isaiah's reference to the Davidic Kingdom and its hierarchy in which the Chief Steward of the Davidic Household was given keys of authority. In this passage the steward is told he will be father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the house of Judah. In the new Davidic Kingdom established by David's greater son, the chancellor role, or the Chief Steward role, is filled by the first of the apostles, Peter. Jesus establishes a Chief Steward to have earthly authority - to carry the keys of his Kingdom just as David's steward carried the keys of the Davidic Kingdom. He also gave the first of the Apostles the power to bind and loose just as David's chancellor held this power in his name.

This figure who will have full authority in the new Davidic kingdom is to be "father" to the New Jerusalem. The person taking this chair may sometimes be unworthy - the conclusion of this passage of Isaiah tells us that, but that unworthiness cannot eliminate either the chair or the authority of the chair which is passed on to succeeding "fathers". Therefore, we have the Pope - the "Papa." No Catholic considers him the source of their being, of course they call only God "Father" in that sense, but they have Scriptural authority for calling the priest and the Holy Father, "father." Also, and this is of great importance, the Church holds the Scriptures as the whole and holy Word of God. Yet, the Church is more than the Scriptures and has more authority than the Scriptures alone. The Bible is dependent upon the Church, for the Church precedes it. The Church and the sacraments and the apostolic message existed before the New Testament. Paul tells the Thessalonians to heed both the written word and the oral tradition, and to cling to them in II Thessalonians 2:15. Before the Gospels were written we Catholics had a holy Tradition that included the words of the institution of the Eucharist. St. Paul in I Corinthians 11 says he received those words directly from Christ! He had no New Testament or written account of them before he wrote these words himself. In that chapter in a couple of places he says he is handing on a tradition given to him (the other is about woman's role). So as Catholics we have a Tradition that is of equal weight with the Bible, but which never contradicts the Bible. It is wholly as inspired as the Bible, and from this Tradition, we also have security in calling priests "father." We can be sure we are not contradicting the will of God.

Sometimes these questions, I find, are the windows we can open on the world of Catholicism to our questioners. There are just a couple of these Bible references to be prepared to share - the actual words from Matthew 23:8f; the words establishing Peter as Chief Steward, Matthew 16:15f, and Isaiah 22: 20f, which is the Old Testament reference that explains what Jesus was doing in giving keys and authority to bind and loose; also I Thessalonians 2:10 where St. Paul speaks as a father over his charges. We can all be ready as St. Peter tells us (I Peter 3:1 5)" to make a defense to anyone who calls us to account for the hope that is in us, yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

### 23 THE ATTRACTION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS TO CATHOLICISM

What is more paradoxical than the two groups of fervent Christian pilgrims meeting each other on the road, one group joyously heading toward Rome, the other just as joyously moving away? In a recent issue of *America*, a Catholic convert to evangelicalism, Mark Christenson, appraises the phenomena of Catholics leaving the Church to encounter Christ “more directly” in evangelical Protestantism. His analysis is one that every convert from evangelical Protestantism to Catholicism will surprisingly agree - up to a point. Both groups would shout “Yea” to his beautiful definition of the apostolic message, “Christ came to free us from the encumbrance of sin providing us with what we could not do for ourselves: restore us to God for eternity.”

As one of those who has walked the way to Roman Catholicism from the most evangelical of Christian backgrounds which includes worship and spiritual formation in Baptist, Presbyterian and Pentecostal communities, I frequently meet the Marks, so dear and so passionate for Jesus, who say they “were not fed” in the Catholic milieu and who have shed their cultural bondage to “a mere human system” in order to be “born-again” by a conversion to personal faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ. At that moment there is a feeling similar to those experienced when faced by one’s own teens as they radiantly untold under the influence of their first love. They exude joy, and fill the house with happy songs, lovingly acquiescing to all the things they bridled at before. You cannot but be caught up in their submission to new love. . . yet there is so much more. . .so much more, but at this point not a word of it is speakable. Will they eventually find the real thing? One can only place the painful interim in the hands of God.

Mark has explained well that he and uncounted others are drawn to evangelical Protestantism by the “unobscured centrality of Christ, constantly kept in the fore through the preaching of the Gospel.” He aches to tell his “dearly loved family and friends that is why I . . . and most leave . . .the Catholic Church for Evangelicalism. . . because we met Jesus Christ, and He changed our lives in a way that we never knew in the Catholic Church.” What does he think about those who have met Jesus and are propelled to the Roman Church in obedience to Him? I recently received an amazing letter in response to our family’s testimony in *Spiritual Journeys* ( Daughters of St. Paul), a book which recounts twenty- seven personal experiences of conversion to Catholicism, including among others the stories of writer, Leonie Caldecott; philosopher, Ronda Chervin; foundress (Women for Faith and Family), Helen Hull Hitchcock; theologian, Thomas Howard; professor, Peter Kreeft; author, Sheldon Vanauken; psychologist, Paul C. Vitz; and publisher, Dale Vree.

My correspondents, Captain and Mrs. Joseph Strada, USN wrote, “Father Hardon told us that he recently brought Lee Atwater into the Church here in Washington - - this despite Life magazine’s claim that, while Atwater was reading the Bible, he was not attracted to ‘organized religion.’ In addition, we were dazzled by the Lord in our own parish when the pastor of a nearby Evangelical Presbyterian Church announced that he, his wife, and their four home-schooled children wished to join the Catholic Church! Bill’s co-pastor was Gerry Matatics, who converted five years ago and now writes for *This Rock* as a member of *Catholic Answers Inc.* Bill attended the same conservative seminary as Scott Hahn, the brightest Presbyterian scholar that seminary ever produced, who is now a Catholic apologist at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Bill is now pursuing a Ph.D. in scripture at Catholic U (pray for him!) and is burning to serve the Church with his wonderful knowledge of Scripture and its ancient languages. He reads Hebrew, Greek, Syriac. He told me that he joined the Church because he came to realize that because Scripture is so complex and (often) culturally obscure, ‘we know so little’, and thus without an infallible, external authority (i.e, the Catholic Church) ‘we are adrift in a sea of uncertainty.’ Bill was ‘tried’ for ‘heresy’ by his former church and summarily ‘excommunicated.’ This is more serious than it sounds - -even though they recognize no sacraments - because he and his family are surrounded by his former congregation, who must shun them or face a similar ‘penalty.’ Bill wasn’t even allowed to appear at his own trial,’but has petitioned for a public retrial so that he can evangelize for Catholicism! This family has sacrificed everything to buy the field that holds the buried treasure of Faith. Would that we had one-tenth their Faith, Hope, Fortitude!”

Mark Christenson wants the bishops who framed the *Pastoral Statement on Fundamentalism* to know they missed the mark in ascribing “a desire for simple answers, emotionalism or a lust for certitude” to the motivation of Catholics who are heading for Protestantism. As can be discerned in the quote above, in a sense, those of us who convert to Catholicism can be accused of desiring an intellectual platform made up of answers and certitude. As to emotions, we converts are overwhelmed by Catholicism’s beauty. All this is an adjunct to that personal relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that became ours during our Protestant years.

It is certainly not the vision of Girzone’s popular books, “Joshua” and “The Shepherd” or the hopes for liberalization by “the new pope” of Rev. Richard McBrien’s fantasies that attract us converts. It is, rather, the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church to married priests, to ordained women, to uncritical ecumenism, to homosexual practice, and to relaxation of the ban on contraception that unanimously are the drawing cards. It is also a conviction that obedience to the Holy Father is a spiritual necessity in a Christian’s development. An acquaintance with the apologiae of the continuing stream of converts makes this clear. Recent convert, ex-Lutheran pastor and intellectual, Richard John Neuhaus has a word to the McBriens and Girzones, “There is a very real danger that much of what is considered most creative, imaginative, liberating and progressive subsequent to Vatican II will end up being but a pathetic reflection of that universalized, homogenized, and I think, gutless, way of being a Christian in the world.”

St. Mark’s Gospel delineates a progression that we converts from Protestantism to Catholicism embrace. Like the disciples early contact with Jesus only as a teacher and traveling companion, we have in our evangelical churches eventually come to that moment where with Peter we accept him totally Lord of our life. The high point in our spiritual experience, the Way only begins at that moment. To be fossilized in that experience is not the intent of

the Holy Spirit; much lies ahead. Though we indulgently may seek to hug that moment to us, growth in the Spirit demands we set one foot before the other. Blessed with a new consciousness, from there on we learn to heed, we learn to submit, to obey, and eventually to die. We set our faces resolutely toward Jerusalem with our Lord.

Slowly evolve several realizations. First, we begin to long for unity with all those who love the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, those of the present and those who have gone on to eternity. Second, we begin to doubt the rationale of Protestantism - that its formation in the 16th century re-established the true Church. It begins to dawn on us that if it could be true that the Holy Spirit was unable to control the Church through those benighted centuries, there is no assurance that He is controlling her now. No, it cannot be that the gates of hell actually did prevail against her, and that the original established community failed. There is one Church which Jesus established; it was born in water and blood on the Cross, was baptized on Pentecost, and lives vitally today- That community must have a head and, we begin to realize as Protestants, we are not in that Church or under that head. Obedience to Him requires that we bow to the authority He has designated in Peter and his successors. Thirdly, we desire not only to love, but also to know. And as happened with Pastor Bill, we cannot accept either that Jesus left us “adrift in a sea of uncertainty”, or that his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity, has led his children in such diverse paths all the time assuring each group of their inerrancy over against the others. One recalls CS. Lewis’s fictional professor, rubbing his chin and exclaiming, “Whatever has happened to logic? Don’t they teach logic anymore?”

After the Marks have met Jesus and know who He is and what He has done, they want to obey Him. Obedience promises an end to self-will. As convert Dr. Scott Hahn expressed it, for an Evangelical to become Catholic in response to obedience demands crucifixion - which though painful and usually avoided, is a big step to spiritual maturity. It brings love for the brethren, who are those who love Jesus. In loving, you want unity with all those who love and obey Jesus. This brings you to consider the fellowship of Christians, and you find it appalling. As a Protestant you hunger for that unity and can no longer tolerate the illogical rationalizing that continues to break the Church.

It is not possible then to ignore The Church and the essential role in it of the Holy Father. Under that headship real obedience, the nitty-gritty setting aside of self-will unites all the colors and shades of personality that are Christian. Submission of will and obedience is what makes unity, yet retaining all the beauties of diversity. CS. Lewis makes this abundantly clear (The essay, “Membership” in *The Weight of Glory*), “The sacrifice of selfish privacy which is daily demanded of us is daily repaid a hundredfold in the true growth of personality which the life of the Body encourages. Those who are members of one another become as diverse as the hand and the ear. That is why the worldly are so monotonously alike compared with the almost fantastic variety of the saints. Obedience is the road to freedom, humility the road to pleasure, unity the road to personality.” This is so different from the meaning of pluralism as stressed by the dissenters from Church authority. (The questions remains: Why didn’t Lewis put all this together and become a Catholic? He certainly was not a Protestant.) As the Gospel of John makes so clear, the unity that Jesus desired for us, “as my Father and I are one’ depends on His thorough-going submission to the Father’s will. Through that obedience the Holy Spirit unites in Himself the Two made One. When Christians submit, they have the Holy Spirit fully uniting them and giving them obedient hearts in place of former

rebelliousness - that's the way St. Paul explains it in I Romans and Ephesians. Evangelical Christians can never know the peace of that surrender to the headship of Peter.

Yet there is a problem with the present day Catholic Church which Mark's search underlines. Somehow today we see lack of the elementary levels of evangelism. It recalls to mind a statement made by the renowned Jewish convert to Catholicism, psychiatrist Karl Stern, "The Catholic Church is a church of the multitudes. Consequently the outsider approaching her, faces a thick layer of mediocrity. . ."

It is that external layer of unformed Christians who have not yet confronted the reality of Jesus personally - or in Protestant language, "have not been born-again by accepting Jesus as their personal Saviour," who, without seeking the inner layers that lie so close to them, assume they are not there, and move out and away into the Protestant experience. It is striking to us converts that there are so many of these; that there are so many who sit in the calculus of Christian faith which is Roman Catholicism Sunday after Sunday, but have not had the experience of discovering that one and one is two. The Catholic Church is the only place to receive the whole Christ - the constantly advancing course, so to speak, yet its Kindergarten and Elementary instruction is lacking. Certainly there is truth in the old saw regarding religion, "Sitting in a henhouse does not make one a hen."

The starting place with Catholics must be as Mark Christenson rightly sees, a deliberate presentation of Jesus as each individual's Lord and Savior; this cannot be assumed, as I believe many priests and religious do assume it, nor can it be left for Confirmation classes to accomplish. We well know that maturity in faith comes as the Holy Spirit wills, and not all children in a Confirmation class are appropriating what they are taught. Teachers in the Church must never give up the primary presenting of Jesus even while they go onto teach other things - He must be the centerpiece of each lesson, of each homily. Set into the pulpit in a local Salvation Army church is a little plaque with a quote from John's gospel that reminds the preacher each time he addresses his congregation; "Sir, we would see Jesus!"

After that essential experience is deliberately offered again and again - no believer is ever offended by its repetition; and only then, can the Catholic appreciate these words of the most renowned convert of the 19th century, John Henry Cardinal Newman, "There is in the Catholic religion a depth, and a power, there is in its Credo, its theology, its rituals, its sacraments and in its discipline, a fullness that fills us; there is a liberty in it, but also a support, in comparison to which the neglect which men, even if they be in high places, prove to have in our regard or the misunderstandings of which we might be the victims, weigh no more than dust. There we find the true secret of the Church's power, the principle of her indefectibility and the bond which insures her indissoluble unity. There, truly, is the beginning of the peace of heaven." Only that group securely within Rome's commodious, motherly lap can shout "Yea" to that.