

A FOOTING ON THE PLAIN

The Catholic Family

Book Two

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1 ONE WOMAN'S "ILLATIVE SENSE"

Would any sincere Christian have difficulty in stating which issue in the last half of the Twentieth Century has caused more turbulence in the Church than any other? Many have named the woman question as being that issue. Imbedded in the questions of the meaning of her sexuality are all those issues from abortion to the right ordering of the Church through priesthood. Yet, it is this very question - the role and meaning of woman, this time intimately discovered and lived out in my own life, that brought this family of thirteen from a strong Protestantism into the Roman Catholic Church.

When one has a spiritual experience, it is common, though incautious, to extrapolate it as holding a truth that is universally applicable. We all are tempted to do it. Cardinal Newman gave me the words "illative sense", which is the thinking which develops from a concrete experience, and is then "guided forward by 'first principles' to come to an explicit new knowledge." In the course of reflecting on my personal experience, it would be vain to think that any truly new knowledge would be added to the overall body of faith-understanding, though it was certainly new and dramatic enough for us - it changed our lives.

Yet, thinking about our concrete experience may have aided something already known but now shrouded in controversy to emerge more clearly for others. I think so when I see the intense faces and lighted eyes around the table in a study of Scriptural woman, or as I lead a seminar on Edith Stein's *Woman*. We have certainly tried to carefully test such thinking by the first principles which we find in the Scriptures and in the Holy Tradition of the Church, being dependent on apostolic utterance in the New Testament, the pastoral pronouncements of John Paul II and others of the Magisterium, and the writings of Blessed Edith Stein in order to formulate a "Meaning of Woman." But the thinking did, indeed, begin with concrete experience.

The experiential impetus of my "illative sense" began more than thirty years ago. Remembering details that long ago isn't always easy for a woman of my age, but there is ten minutes of my life in the 1960's that will ever shine crystal clear. It was just a few moments in time but it separated disillusionment, discontent, grumbling and anger on the one side from freedom, hope and joy, newly born, on the other. The setting where this transformation happened was for a senses-starved Protestant, simply tremendous; that is, so filled with the numinous as to be nearly electrifying. The great gothic Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul in Detroit was dimly lighted, with only a side aisle of seats occupied by men and women at prayer; votive candles winked in dark recesses, and incense lingered on the air

The streetlights of Woodward Avenue shimmered through jewel-intense windows that seemed to reach up until they melded into the black sky itself - I felt there was no roof, that the Spirit in the night wind blew through above our heads. Though outside the busy noises of city traffic linked this place with the real world, inside what we heard and saw seemed more akin to St. Paul's "third heaven."

At a side altar gleaming with candlelight, a scene was played out like some kind of a tableau come down from above. A tall, white-haired Dean of the Cathedral dressed in surplice and stole bent over supplicants, praying with intensity for healing of physical, mental and emotional ills. His gospel words of faith struck down like cubes of quartz - real, solid, and beautiful, impacting upon us worshippers with something like pain, they were so full of promise. That was the moment, nothing was the same afterward. My Presbyterian minister husband and I drove the sixty-five miles home in a daze. The next week went by as though we sleep-walked through the regular routines, and we found ourselves back on our knees in that same awe-filled place, with the hands of that same Dean placed firmly upon our heads and heard his prayer that we be filled with the Holy Spirit. Dear God! For weeks after I sang softly to myself, "Jesus I want you, Jesus I need you, Jesus I love you."

It wasn't a new prayer language that was the greatest gift, it was new ears, new eyes, and a budding new heart. All the bitter criticisms we held against the senior pastor for whom Bob had worked for ten years became apparent immediately as our lacks, our failures, not his. We were the ones who were spiritually immature, who were deaf, dumb and blind. Railing against authority, we were the ones whose shallowness was only exceeded by our pride. All the disgruntlements that so freely expressed our discontent had been apt descriptions of our own spiritual malaise. Out of the pulpit, Bob had been fond of saying, "Religion is a great game of 'Let's Pretend.' Let's pretend that love is the greatest force in the world. Let's pretend that we love our neighbor. The reality is 'dog eat dog,' 'Do it to them before they do it to you.'"

Ours had been the pretense, we never had known that faith could be this real. We had decided, in fact, that the ministry was such a hypocritical profession that we honest folks could no longer participate in it. My small inheritance would make a downpayment on a cherry orchard-farm in northern Michigan, so we had begun to look for that sincere, dirt-real employment that would escape the charade of religion.

Our marriage suffered the same complaints. I was an emancipated woman from the days I first walked and talked, encouraged in independence and achievement by a doting, Baptist-bred father who was a High School principal. I knew nothing of any second-class position of women. I never saw it in any of my associations in school, church, or community life. I certainly never saw it in my family. The women always had had opportunity for college, professional life, or any other activity they had the talent for - at least that is what I always assumed. I suppose that the struggling, poor, farm women from the Canadian side of my ancestry would have had a different story to tell, though they were strong in physique and in will. My mother running from that environment had made a place for herself in the offices of the Buick Motor Company in Flint before she married, and I saw her secure in herself, holding the upper hand in our household as often as not. I carried this same attitude into my marriage. On the surface it looked ideal - seven little children like stair steps piled out of our station wagon in front of the First Presbyterian Church each Sunday, the boys with shiny shoes and slicked hair, the girls replete with hats, gloves and curls. A young minister-father glowed over them in public and reaped the compliments like ripe grain. But it was an

angry woman who had readied and had brought them there alone. As with all ministers, so with her husband, church always came before family; their marriage was fraught with tension just beneath the surface, a chronic unsolved authority problem that just didn't ease.

The conversion received that December 7th would make its cleansing felt in every aspect of our lives. Gone immediately were the grand plans of cherry farming with the children as our own set of migrant pickers. The young minister now had a real ministry. Jesus was real, Jesus was present, Jesus was waiting to work through his rededicated ministry. The Bible was Truth - not just a collection of somewhat . . . possibly . . . inspired stories. Amazing. The Word of God sprang from its pages as vital, living; when sent out in faith it actually accomplished the thing it stated. With this deeper surrender to God, the authority problem dissolved as though doused with acid. The senior pastor was the one God meant to guide this young assistant in his work, and how it worked! We were both dumbfounded that such spiritual wisdom had been there, waiting patiently, all along. Obedience to Dr. Molyneaux's authority, may he rest in peace, became not a drudgery, but a potent force through which God worked to form a Fellowship of the Concerned for this large, socially upper-class congregation that had rarely taken prayer or the Jesus-centered life all that seriously. A growing group, wholly obedient to the senior pastor's directives, became a core upon whom he could rely for the multitudes of tasks essential to the operation of a large church.

At home it took a while. But Christian logic demanded that sooner or later, and I tried to make it later, we would have to look at the troublesome aspects of our marriage. A friend was the intermediary between myself and those chronically misunderstood apostolic words to wives in I Peter and Ephesians. She was a self-possessed, intelligent woman and when I heard her explain the meaning of the Pauline and Petrine order of husbands and wives, I wished the chair I was sifting on would drop out of sight and me with it. "Wives be submissive," certainly must be the most obnoxious instruction in the Bible. Without a spiritual renewal, I could never have heard or born with those words. In the space of this writing, it is impossible to tell the important steps that led to their final acceptance; the struggle, the violent rejection, with, at last, surrender; but I suspect that most readers still react quite as violently as I did to these words.

It has taken years to straighten out the misconceptions attending "submission" in my own mind. It is not a silent piety that walks with downcast eyes and folded hands, kissing the floor in appreciation for every humiliation. The model is not the proverbial doormat wife. It is not the woman who driven to the wall takes a shotgun to end the degradation of subservience to a tyrant man. Hasn't our Adversary done a job on this "submission" word, though?

In trying to re-present the idea to women of my own independent ilk, I have tried to avoid it with use of synonyms that are more urbane, more intellectual. How does "yieldedness" strike you? Or "heeding?" Later I found that the Holy Father in his Apostolic Letter, *Muller/s Dignatatem*, mentions only "the sincere gift of self" in his interpretation of the famous submission passage in Ephesians 5.

I like this last definition because it makes clear that submission is mutually observed by both the man and the woman. Both must give a sincere gift of self if love is to be a reality. The man's gift of self is in providing for and protecting his wife and family when convenient and inconvenient. The realities of headship are heavy responsibilities, not privileges. The woman's gift of self is, after giving appropriate input to his decision making, to be obedient to her husband's headship. Both must heed the needs of the other in their holy roles. This is what the

Holy Father means by "the mutuality of submission" and it destroys the false image of master male and servant female. Both are willing servants. But the woman's practice of this, suited to her very morphology, is an obedience to the headship her husband provides. All of scripture is clear about that. Even Edith Stein from her Christian, feminist perspective has no trouble with the "preeminence of the man" in this regard.

CS. Lewis has a character say to a rather independent young woman with marriage problems, "You do not fail in obedience through lack of love, but have lost love because you never attempted obedience. It is not your fault- They never warned you- No one has ever told you that obedience - humility - is an erotic necessity. You are putting equality just where it ought not to be."

But nothing any writer has said about obedience or submission had the weight to bring me to the full acceptance of the idea that Philippians 2 had. Here the moving picture is of Jesus, He who has equality with God but does not grasp at equality, but humbles himself and becomes obedient, even to death on a Cross. It is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity who convinces about the value and worth of the role of obedience. Uncounted times in the Gospel of John He calls those who love Him to obey in the manner that He obeys. The very word "sub" "mission" then becomes clearly descriptive of the heart of the gospel, because it describes the name and nature of Jesus. The Latin prefix, sub, means under. The Latin root, mission, means to be sent. To submit is a powerfully active verb disguised in a dress of passivity. To be sent under implies that there is a Sender who has a worthy mission to be accomplished. One, therefore, must be equipped by the Sender for this very special role of submission, and among the equipment is both the understanding of the resultant dynamism as the Christian lays down his will to do the Will of the Father, and the Holy Spirit strength to do it.

The importance of this personal, experienced revelation can't be overstated. It transformed our marriage and our family life from one of a bickering power struggle, to one of peaceful unity - not perfectly peaceful, not perfectly unified, but tending in that direction much more steadily than we could ever have believed. The ins and outs of just how godly authority and obedience in marriage works is not a topic for this essay - it has essential understandings about relationship that must be aligned to the roles of the Persons of the Holy Trinity in whose image man and woman are made. Suffice it to say it is totally unlike any authority! Submission! relationship of this world. That is its greatest obstacle to general understanding, the confusion of a Fallen understanding trying to grasp a Redeemed reality.

A married woman's spirituality is, of course, an intensely personal and individual development between her and God, but it can never be isolated from the "us" of husband and wife. With obedience, even submission rightly understood, now becoming an appreciated ethos of the Way of Christ in our home, and accepted as an essential attitude for any traveler headed for heaven, our Protestant ideology began to jar. I was the first to hear the dissonance. Bob was very happy in his revived, renewed pastorate. Protestantism's protestations however, began to ring false to my ears.

Then I happened into a Catholic bookstore. Roman Catholicism had been equated to slavery, bondage, and hell in the preaching of my Baptist grandfather who referred to the Church as the Whore of Babylon. I got into this store - how? I can't remember what motivated me. But the book that I picked from the shelves was another gift of the Holy Spirit; Eugene Boylan's *This Tremendous Lover*.

Father Boylan opened to me the truth about the Church that Jesus Christ left on this earth to care for His own till He comes again. I still have the tattered copy of that book on the shelf - I can see it from here, and know that the margins are annotated with exclamation marks, and the words like "ohhhh", and "groan." The groan was the hunger and ache that developed within, as my mind began to comprehend the height and depth and breadth of the blessings that were there for me, and for us, in the Roman Catholic Church. Integrated obedience that had become such a blessing in our home, shown out on every page.

About the same time I met the first Roman Catholics I had ever known. There was something about them akin to that spirit that sparked "This Tremendous Lover." Transfixing was a wholly real and comfortable humility, a heart attitude I had never observed in any Protestant no matter how dedicated to Jesus. (I know how shocking this may sound, like hyperbole, but I have considered it over the years, and it is so. It is related integrally to a Catholic's natural obedience to the godly authority of hierarchical order that demands a deep level of trust, a stance unhappily being dumped by many today. And the faces of Catholics now are beginning to look just like Protest-tants).

Led to retreats at the convent of Mary Reparatrix in Detroit, first singly and then together, Bob and I saw this spirit in all its beautiful luminosity. These nuns who dedicated their lives to interceding for the world's sins glowed; age made no difference, young and old were radiant as new brides. When we lay down in our cells at night, we could feel the hum of spiritual power that was being beamed out from the place. We were amazed. Could association with Jesus actually be this close? Sitting as a Protestant at the Mass in that convent, I could only weep. My Presbyterian husband would never, never leave his church and his pastorate, and now my intense longing was to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus as my spiritual nourishment, to become our nourishment. A sympathetic sister could only hug me and say, "Trust God, He will make a way." I could see no way at all.

A move from Michigan to Minnesota was another unfolding of God's plan for us, though we didn't comprehend it at the time. What we did experience was that "where God guides He provides." We had no money, ministers are never wealthy, but were given a sixteen room house like a palace near Lake of the Isles in which to rear this family that with the adoption of four had grown to eleven. I have thought over that verb - given. Of course, we paid for this house over the years, but it was so wonderfully provided that the story remains another often fold God-incident in our lives.

This move, seen in retrospect, was so that my prayer for the True spiritual food might be answered. We began a restless search for a church in Minneapolis. For a year we worshipped with Episcopalians, learning to kneel, genuflect, and, though we never became members, oddly enough invited to receive communion. Then Bob decided we would join a prayer group at the Cenacle Catholic Retreat House in Wayzata. I hated prayer groups; yes, hated. I didn't want to go. Again I swallowed my strong aversion and in unenthusiastic obedience went along. I was a slow learner about the fruits of submission - even using the word, I still swallow hard. The very avenue I would have rejected became the way God would fulfill my fervent longing. Some months later at the Cenacle, at a preparation retreat for the Fourteenth Annotation Ignatian Exercises, Bob was led by the Holy Spirit in meditation on the 55th chapter of Isaiah to make a decision to join the Roman Catholic Church. He knew my strong drawing to Catholicism, but had never expressed interest in the idea, quite the opposite. This dumbfounding decision flashed

out of the blue! I don't forget to thank those praying sisters, even though one of them would have encouraged me to join the Church without Bob, an idea that was contrary to all I had learned about how God worked in a marriage. All of our children, most of them in their teens, the oldest nearly twenty, joined the Church with us of their own choosing. Certainly this was the first confirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit considering their usual independent attitudes. Bob had his name "stricken from the roles of Presbytery" the day after the retreat. It was a somber business that cut all his important educational and professional ties established in twenty years. At the time he was Chief Chemical Dependency Counselor for Hennepin County, so his job was not at stake. Separation from family and friends, now far away in Michigan, also reduced the scandal to our dear ones that would have impeded such a move in our home town. Just as years earlier the Reparatrix sister had promised, God had made the way; there was no doubt.

As even further confirmation, Bob had his ministry returned to him. He had never heard of deacons or the revived diaconate in the Catholic Church when he made his decision, and here was offered the opportunity to be in the first class of deacon formation in the Archdiocese. The day I saw him standing as deacon beside the Papal Legate at the ordination of Bishops Kenney and Dudley in the Basilica of St. Mary is another of those astounding moments of realization of just what God had done and was continuing to do for us.

During the ensuing years as we have moved closer to godly authority, we have met streams of Catholics moving the other way. They are running, they say, from authoritarianism. Perhaps in some cases this is true - authority may have gotten tainted with worldly values and been misused and abused in the Catholic Church. No doubt it has. And submission to authority has suffered even worse distortions. In many cases, however, it is not the case; it is merely the same aversion to authority that lies at the heart of what ails us all - original sin. Feminism is often the underlying philosophy motivating this upheaval. But Catholics released from the do's and don'ts of their religious childhood, are reacting like adolescents - rebellious and contrary. When we meet them, we try to explain that the other end of the spectrum has nothing to offer, that rebelliousness has its own miseries which will never be worth the so-called "freedom" which is, after all, an illusion. And feminism, though sometimes useful to the Holy Spirit as an opening to deeper understanding of the meaning of masculine and feminine, has no answers in itself. It and the inclusive language it has mothered lead women in quite the wrong direction. For this kind of sharing we are most often greeted with blank stares.

Beginning to understand woman, her meaning and role, has been key to our conversion to the Church. If hierarchical order, endorsed and embraced by the woman, works wonders of order and peace in her primary domain - the home; then the other hierarchical order which is instituted on the order of the family, the Church, also is blessed when the woman finds and happily accepts her role in it. The two are intertwined because both reflect the image of the relationships in the Holy Trinity. Think about it: in all three triune unities, Godhead, family, and Church, there is hierarchical order, a First/first and Second/second person, equals, united in a Third Person, the Holy Spirit. In Godhead, the Father is the Initiator Author, the Son is the Responder, Receiver, and the Holy Spirit is their Unity. In the human family, the man is the initiator, authority, the woman is the responder, receiver, and the Holy Spirit is their bond of union, the Gift of Sacramental matrimony. In the Church the male clergy is the presider, authority, the laity (male and female) is the feminine acceptor - Christifidelis, and the Holy Spirit is the Unifier of

the Body. Male and female are created by God (Gn 1:26-27) to be physical manifestations of purely spiritual principles at the heart of the Persons of the Trinity. Upon this trinitarian model, then rests much of the theology that Pope John Paul II is depending upon for the conclusions of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. Inclusive language threatens to make a shambles of this deep Truth.

In working over the years with the meaning of woman, both scripturally and theologically, her identification as second person in the solidarity of mankind has become more apparent. Though it may seem a pure piece of intellectual theory, it surprisingly sheds a light that brings women to a practical and peaceful acceptance of their role in God's plan - I've witnessed this in myself and many others. Is this why the true meaning and nature of woman is under such attack in the Church - because corrupting her meaning has such power to sicken both institutions upon which Gods kingdom depends, the Church and the home? Then wouldn't we judge the origin of these attacks to lie in the demonic?

John Henry Cardinal Newman has been a source of strength as he explains to me the development of true doctrine, and I realize that my personal bit fits the overall revelation of the meaning of sexuality, only addressing it now for the woman who in this day is frantically seeking both freedom and meaning. This bit of mine is nothing new, but it is something old grown up a little. Understanding man and woman's relationship as analogous to the relationship of the Divine Persons is a bit of old knowledge rediscovered to seem new; finding the joys and blessedness of holy hierarchical relationship is only an unlikely find in a hostile time. But this personal comprehension can validly be extrapolated to many women in the wider scene because it is guided by 'first principles' which are those eternal principles laid out in holy Scripture and the Tradition of holy Church - such have rooted my thinking - becoming one woman's illative sense.

2 SCRIPTURAL GUIDELINES FOR FAMILY ORDER: INTELLECTUAL LIMBO?

Last night I dreamt I was being examined by a council of experts and found wanting. Psychologists, Scripture scholars, theologians - their expressions amused, severe, scornful, and mocking haunt me still. Under the interrogation, I had been forced to admit that I, a Twentieth Century woman with a liberal education, was reevaluating the scriptures for direction in family relationships and specifically for my marital role as wife.

When I woke, I realized that from the current point of view I had been sliding down a slippery slope to intellectual limbo. That is, I had begun to contemplate that there really might be a right order that God has revealed for the institution of the family that makes it a reflection of God himself - loving, peaceful, unified and orderly. The Board of Inquiry sitting in the night had brought their judgment on such an idea.

That this is an extreme position will be immediately recognizable to all who read periodicals or listen to the evening news. We are exposed daily sometimes from church sources with the uncontested belief that Scripture and Church values for the family are passé; that roles in the family must become more and more indistinguishable, male or female; that “varying lifestyles” are neither good nor bad, that all such moral judgments are reprehensible; that “old” systems of family ordering are not only unenlightened but have been oppressive to men, women and children.

It is unlikely if you asked the man or woman on the street that they would be able to tell you much about scriptural guidelines for the family. They might say, “Oh, yes, you mean that the father was the boss, the children were whipped if they stepped out of line, and the woman didn’t open her mouth because of fear. Well! anyone with any moral sense at all can tell you that was all wrong,” or, “Psychology has completely discredited Biblical teaching about marriage and family.”

Unfortunately, some recent news stories about blatantly abused families seem to corroborate that. Some fundamentalist sects have demanded a legal right that they be allowed to beat their children, and this has gained the media spotlight; also horrendous stories about women who have killed their religious husbands because of the constant verbal and physical abuse to which was demanded “submit, as to the Lord.”

The Bible then looks like the instrument of oppression and misery which many feminists have declared it to be. Mary J Weaver, main speaker at the Washington Women in the Church Conference in October, declares “the texts, traditions, and canons of Catholicism are relentlessly sexist.” Writes Mary Ann Tolbert “The Bible is permeated with the language, symbols and ideas of female inferiority and subhumanity.” New Testament texts are

“overworked by those who wish to promote the subordination of women on religious grounds,” declares PHEME Perkins, Prof of Theology, Boston College.

What does the Bible have to say about family order? Can we be sure that the Word of God which the Holy Spirit inspired as a communication of love to earth’s inhabitants says none of the negative things falsely blamed on it? The Word of God promises, rather, to be rich fertilizer for good human growth. It says about itself:

For as the rain and the snow come down from
heaven, and return not thither
but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to
the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes forth from my
mouth; it shall not return to empty,
but shall accomplish that which I purpose, and
prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

The Bible begins its whole revelation of God’s will and ways by telling a story about a man and a woman. The working out of their relationship both before they fell away from God, and after that desperate occurrence, has everything to do with the whole rest of the Scripture. Man and woman, their marriage and their family, is to be the basic stuff for the Master Teacher to use to bring his beloved humans into restored relationship to Himself. The People of God, themselves, will be formed into a loving community called Church, which will be a large family and will use family structure as its own structure.

So ‘family’ is very carefully and completely taught beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation where ‘Bridegroom’ is God and ‘Bride’ His Redeemed People. Family is to be a genotype of Church. That is, they both have the same constitution. This redeemed community will be the one that eventually enjoys heaven, so it is no good to say that the Bible’s family principles are repressive or unfair! Rather, they must be the most fair and the most freeing - the absolute best anywhere around - far surpassing all psychological or sociological knowledge which as anyone who brought up their babies with Dr. Spock (whose book on raising children was one of the best sellers of all time) will testify “today is and tomorrow is thrown into the fire.”

It is true, the Bible is not strong on ‘rights.’ Throughout all scripture is the understanding that God loves human beings regardless of some basic things being out of whack. Upon God’s love alone all ‘rights’ in family and society are really based. But the writers of the Bible are not concerned about rights because they see people as a pretty selfish bunch whose problem is not so much gaining their rights as observing their duties and other people’s rights.

God created mankind to love and serve Him and to be happy with him forever. Love and service are the frame of “duties,” if you will, that make a human being a real human being. No other animal has a relationship with God that calls for the response of love and service to Him and to others - duties. Those two requirements lie at the very base of marriage and family in scripture. Love and service! “Duty” doesn’t begin to describe the happiness and freedom God infuses into these.

Relationships like these are not meant for this world alone, but are preparation for an eternal life with God. They are essential to each man and woman, not to be dismissed with ‘what’s O.K. for you may not be O.K. for me.’

Both man and woman love and serve each other. But they do it differently, because they are different. In fact, it is their wonderful difference that brings two great joys to the man and woman. These are like those enjoyed by the Persons of the Holy Trinity among themselves. The first is ecstasy of union - oh yes, for us humans, in sex, but also in experiencing as our own the differences of the other. The second, is creativity and fruitfulness. The polarity of male and female bring new people into the world - a marvelous joy, but it also causes other forms of creative power to flourish - artistic, productive-economic, social, and spiritual. It takes two - wrong, it takes three, the man, the woman and the Holy Spirit, for this happiness.

Scripture, you see, insists that the family begins with a union of three. That's not unusual when we understand that mankind, the man and woman, are created in the image of God who is also a union of three. It is very pointed in the Old Testament that the barren woman conceives the next generation of God's own people through the action of a man, of course, but also, importantly, God. "I have gotten a man through the help of the Lord," says Eve. "The Lord gave her (Ruth) conception and she bore a son." "For this child I prayed; and the Lord has granted my petition which I made to him," exults once-barren Hannah.

For this reason the Church says marriage is not just a man and woman promising before witnesses and God to love and serve a lifetime. It says it is a union of three to make one - a third Person, the Holy Spirit makes this marriage of male to female a Sacrament. "They are no longer two but one flesh." Therefore, it cannot be broken, for God has entered into the union, a Three in One. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder," says Jesus.

If a marriage does flounder and sink, it is to be ascertained the Holy Spirit was ever a part of it. That is why the Church has an annulment process. Tribunals determine just that question. Perhaps a hidden refusal on the part of one to bring that Third Person to the marriage kept a Sacrament from happening, or perhaps a third person was present, though invisible and contrary to the Holy Spirit, in the form of a bottle, or a confused will - alcohol, drugs, or clinging emotional immaturity.

A Sacramental marriage is a wonder. It insures that the man and the woman will work together to help each other grow and mature as Christians, that neither will betray the other or be unfaithful to the other. Such an atmosphere is a heaven of security in which to grow into the stature of Jesus which is the mission of each man and woman, along with bringing a new generation of believers into being.

But assuming that the man and woman are founding their family with the Holy Spirit as a third partner, there are other infallible guides to family life in Scripture which acknowledge that the love and service of the man and woman though equal in worth before God, differ.

Headship is a very unwelcome idea in an egalitarian age. But there is headship in God. The Trinity has a Head, or "a First." It also has a Second and even a Third. They are all equals - one is not better than another. And they all firmly have Role - that is they are not exchangeable though they share totally the same nature.

Holy Scripture puts it this way, "the head of every man is Christ, the head of every woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." The human family then has a head. The head is the man. To be head means to offer temporal and spiritual leadership to the others. This authority has nothing to do with prestige, and everything to do

with lackey-type service to those dependent on it. Jesus made this clear to those whom he left in authority over his community family, the baby Church;

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

When God formed the male he composed him of all the elements that made this headship part of him. Physiologically, he was the one who had the morphology to initiate sexual union. Psychologically he was the one who was oriented more to exteriority than interiority . This meant he used his brain and body in a way to bring orderliness to his surroundings and provision for himself and his family, among other things.

The woman, then, had a very special way to serve and love, for she was the beneficiary of the orderliness and the provision. It rested with her to put aside the natural selfishness and autonomy of the fallen realm and learn a new thing - a thing that is characteristic not of this world, but of heaven - obedience to a godly ordering.

For this particular role she was marvelously made by God. Through her physical submission to her husband the promised fruitfulness would come to be within her body; through submission to his authorizing, peace and order would come into her family. Socially she would be a sign to the whole People of God of an attitude of heart that brings unity and peace to human relationships. Her psychology, more oriented to the interior than the exterior, through this order is given the space and the protection to do its special work - relationship building and nurturing the selfhood of her children. Wonderful!

Two times St. Paul says, “wives submit, husbands love,” calling this a “great mystery” to do with Christ and the Church. St. Peter finalizes this apostolic dictum even for women whose husbands do not obey the word of God. He exhorts them to be like Jesus who suffered as an example to be followed. “Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

There is power in this kind of submission based on trust in God; it is not passive or powerless. Rather it relies on the same power that raised Jesus from the dead - the power of God. It is a power-filled attitude when motivated by love!

The word of God also directs itself to relationships between children and parents. “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.’ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

The Lord disciplines those whom he loves - God’s word affirms it again and again, and father and mother are admonished to do the same for their children, for the same motive – Love! Such discipline in the Lord is never abusive. It does not provoke anger or bitterness. It is in the nature of love when the parents, through their consistent discipline, establish the way to happiness. Willfulness or rebelliousness in an undisciplined child will not achieve that goal as even psychology tells us.

When they refuse this duty, especially the father who is primary authority, the parents have a twofold dubious reward. First the children turn out to dishonor them, and second, the Lord imposes on them the results of their laxity. Such was the fate in Scripture of even a priest of God, Eli, and a prophet of God, Samuel, whose sons were not disciplined, but grew up unruly and rebellious. For that flagrant disregard of His ways, God removed priesthood from the house of Eli, and brought rejection of Samuel and his sons by the people.

These family principles are presented in forthrightness. They are simple, easily grasped, and in accord with the natural form and function of man and woman. In two words, “they fit! “And they are so full of promise they can become a basis for evangelization of society by believing Catholic Christian families. The Catholic Church is the one institution on the face of the earth that adheres in doctrine to these scriptural norms. One might counter that the evangelicals and fundamentalists also believe in the scriptural order of the family. But these denominations have one fatal flaw in their practice which undermines their effectiveness, and which leaves the truth up to the Catholic Church.

They consistently allow the ordination of women, and this runs opposite to the scriptural ordering of the family and the Church. Such ordination places the burden of authority, discipline, and the governance of an institution directly patterned on the family, upon the shoulders of the woman. This is not an honor to her, but rather dishonors her specific feminine role given to her by God and negates the very order God has instituted for well-being in the family. Basic disorder resulting from disregard to ultimate headship in these Christian bodies undoes their witness to scriptural values for the family.

Therefore the Catholic family has the opportunity to be a superb and powerful witness for evangelization - that is the Catholic family founded on a union of man and woman and God in a sacramental marriage, a Catholic family embracing the scriptural admonitions to love and serve each other, a Catholic family that orders itself with headship in obedience to God’s order; a Catholic family that raises children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Jesus, incarnate Word of God, is the basis for this marriage. The Holy Spirit is the unifying one in it who defies explanation along any other lines. This woman and this man together point to a reality beyond anything this world offers - a perfection that is promised in heaven, and whose beginnings on earth are Christ and His Church. Does this seem all too idealistic for simple men and women? Lots of ordinary folks have found it practical. They admit their personal failures in relationships all along the line, but they say that every bit of their positive efforts to live Scriptural tenets have been blessed beyond belief. I am one of those. Intellectual oblivion, indeed! My deep night inquisitors haven’t persuaded me that the Scripture has me taking a wrong turn.

Though written at the end of the 1980's, using the statistics available then, twenty-five years later this account has seen only further decay in the institution founded by God for the happiness of the human community.

3 TIME TO ASSESS: BARRENNESS OR FRUITFULNESS? PART I The Sexual Revolution's Impact on the American Family

As the 1980's roll to their allotted end, we are swimming, if not drowning, in a sea of statistics about the disintegration of the American family in this decade. These statistics when gathered together reveal how the social experiments of the last two decades have failed to deliver promised liberation and the good life, but have brought something quite different to family members, man, woman, and child. As parents and educators it is time to fearlessly assess the cause of this sickness because the Catholic faith has within her natural and supernatural resources all the medicines necessary to stop the hemorrhaging and reestablish her families in health.

Statistics are generally pretty poor reading. But when gathered from many sources, and presented together they provide a realistic look at the effects of the 70's and '80s social experiments. Only when we assess the damage can we have the resolve to put on the brakes and head in a different direction - the content of next week's article.

Problems of sexuality head the statistical list. There is a rising tide of reports about the family that tell of premature sexuality, of aberrant sexuality, and of pan-sexuality - the psychological state wherein family members relate to each other only with sexual language and touching. Disquieting statistics of the sexual abuse of children by parents, other siblings, relatives and friends are reported in numbers quite unbelievable ten years ago.¹

¹ Besharov, Douglas, Director of National Center on Child Abuse 1975-1979, quoted AP, November 1985 "The nation's child protection system is out of control, collapsing under a flood of cases." *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, (hereafter SPPP and D) July 18, '86 "statistics are increasing, more trained people are needed."

The Children's Defense Fund compiles statistics linking teen pregnancy to divorce in families and finds over the last thirty years the two have developed a close relationship.² The House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families says "The prospect of one million teen - age pregnancies, 400,00 abortions, and one-half million births each year, nearly 55 percent of which will be births to unmarried teens, is chilling. The human and fiscal costs to all are unacceptable."³ One baby in five will be born to an unwed mother.⁴

Beyond the confines of the home, Father Bruce Ritter picks up the pieces, "kids on the streets being bought and sold and abused and killed and flushed away in our social sewers because millions of families are breaking apart."⁵

All this sexual mayhem in the disordered home and we have said nothing of the genetic research which now locates the conception of children in labs and test tubes; abortion which has ended the lives of twenty-two million children since 1973 (55,000 in 2014) , and contraception methods which despite their physical and emotional damage, are widely used to thwart the very idea of family.

Children suffer in many ways. Thousands of runaway kids are found in all major American cities⁶, and laws designed to protect their rights end up being obstacles to their return to their families.⁷ A University study in Minnesota reads, "Most Minnesota children from Kindergarten through eighth grade are regularly left on their own from the time they step off the school bus until they sit down to dinner."⁸ And TIME magazine reports "latchkey children" a phenomenon across the nation with hot lines offered in many cities⁹ to ease fears and handle emergencies of these children left alone.¹⁰

² UP January 10, 1986

³ Ladies Home Journal Sept 15, 1986

⁴ AP reporting a government study, National Center for Health Statistics, July 1986

⁵ Father Bruce Ritter's newsletter from Covenant House. National Catholic Register March 23, 1986 "When families break down more kids hit the street with no place to go and a past full of heartaches." gives statistics

⁶ Parade Magazine August 18, 1985, gives the statistics

⁷ Gallagher, Maggie, National Review. October 10, 1986

⁸ Lacey, Carol, SPPP and D Aug 24, 1986 and July 11, 1986

⁹ Time, Dec. 19, 1983 p. 87 Journal of Developmental Psychology estimates 6-7 million nationally To be fair, an early report from a partial study of the University of North Carolina, Greenboro, suggests that latch key children are "at home with the situation," "the concern unwarranted and premature." The Wilder Foundation research finds the numbers are 2 to 10 x higher than other studies.

¹⁰ . St. Paul opened a phone service, Aug 1985, available 24 hours, and finds latchkey experience begins at age 8 or third grade. Carried by AP, March 12, 1986.

Suicide among American's now numbers one every 20 minutes, and the most alarming increase is in the teenage bracket which tripled between 1950 and 1975 and has become epidemic in 1985-88.¹¹ Four hundred U.S. children this past year killed one or both of their parents. There is a new rash of children abusing children, even killing other children; of teens on the streets kicked out with no place to go, of bulimia, anorexia and other eating disorders among teen age girls¹² and of children's generally lowered vitality and physical fitness.¹³

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports 49.4% of married women with children less than one year old now work, up 39% from 5 years earlier,¹⁴ and by 1990 75% of women with children under 18 will have fulltime employment outside the home.¹⁵ A 1986 University of Michigan study says that in divorce 900,000 women have voluntarily given up custody of their children because of expanding social roles and financial deficiencies."¹⁶

Against these facts psychologists are finding "youths are extremely sensitive" to their mothers especially, and need advice, encouragement and support from both parents,¹⁷ also that children may suffer "permanent emotional damage from an exhausted lifestyle when there is no full-time homemaker in the house."¹⁸ A Harvard pre-school study of children determined that a child's future intellectual capacity and emotional security are largely dependent on the quality of mothering when the child is young.¹⁹

Divorce is nearly one in eight marriages (earlier statistics that continually claim one in two are erroneous - one in eight is a high statistic). Household breakup is linked to poverty, and poverty, quite logically, is feminized.²⁰

¹¹ Rosenberg, Dr. Mark, Center for Disease Control, reported AP June 21,85, "fundamental change in the phenomenon of suicide in this country." 50% increase 1970-80 in young men 15-24, 15-34. In 1984 one teen suicide every 90 minutes, 6,000 that year. American Academy of Pediatrics, Feb 1985 "Teen suicide has reached epidemic proportions. Third leading cause of teen death. Study in Oct 1986 indicated a lessening, reported AP.

¹² . AR reports a study in four California high schools by Stamford University. They found 13% of the girls had one or the other of these eating problems. March 21,1986 reported in the Journal of American Medical Association

¹³ . AP reports President's Council on Physical Fitness study.

¹⁴ . March 1985

¹⁵ . Newsday, March 1986

¹⁶ . Heirerias, Dr. Catalina's study, reported by Jim Boede, SPPP and D Jan 27 1986

¹⁷ Youniss, James and Smollar, Jacqueline, psychologists at Catholic University of America's Center for the Study of Youth Development, reported by AR, Sept 14, 1986.

¹⁸ .Dobson, Dr. James, White House advisor on Family Life, psychologist, author of Focus on the Family, reported by Cal Thomas Feb 4, 1986

¹⁹ reported by Cal Thomas, Feb 4., 1986

²⁰ . Congressional Budget Office and Congressional Research Service, 22.2 children per 100 are poor, 3 out of 4 children with unmarried mothers are poor. Poor children, mostly one parent families maintained by mother rose 30% between 1979 and 1984. Census Bureau Jan '86.

Even a feminist columnist recognizes that “choosing between parents is devastating”²¹ and a new study says angry relationships that continue in many divorces hurt children.²² In 1982 a controlled study in Ramsey County, Minnesota, found that children in single parent families “carried a burden, suffering more emotionally and economically than those in nuclear families.”²³

Fifty-three percent of children in homes with single mothers receive no support from fathers.²⁴ The effects of divorce on the standard of living of mothers and children have found to be “devastating” (a familiar word in many of these studies) with a plunge of 73%.²⁵

While one parent household’s have climbed to one in four, and over fifty percent of mother’s are working, day-care is more necessary and harder to find all the time. Day-care abuse of children scandalizes the nation²⁶, to say nothing of the daily problems of sick children left at day-care because the parent cannot miss work to care for them at home.²⁷ Pregnant mothers must risk deadly day-care infections, a Medical College in Richmond Virginia reports.²⁸

In making her decision to give up a career to be at home with her son, Dr. Deborah Fallows investigated even good care where she found “benign neglect.”²⁹

Divorce has brought about the demand for equal pay for equal work.³⁰ Women as heads of families need fair wages to raise their families. However, for the ideal two parent family, instead of being a benefit this has reduced the family income by, in effect, lowering the man’s income, forcing both parents to work even in families who would want the mother in the home. Wages were once set, not for the survival of one individual person or even on the basis of two parents working, but as income for one man to support one family - “a living wage,” with the survival of a whole family in mind. Demands for equal pay for equal work reduce all work to one individual’s sustenance, thus effectively striking a blow at the nuclear family.

²¹ .Scott, Niki, “Divorce leaves scars on kids.” Oct 29’86

²² University of California in LA study reported AP October 24,1 986

²³ Amherst Wilder Foundation, Ramsey County 1982

²⁴ . Census Bureau, reported AR November 14, 1986

²⁵ reported by Dorothy Lewis SPPP and D,Oct 22, 1986

²⁶ AP September 20, 1986, reported in one day-care stun guns delivering 50,000 volts were used on children “Who’s Raising Our Children?” Parade Mao July 14, 1985

²⁷ Greater Minneapolis Child Task Force,SPRP and D Cynthia Boyd reporter, Feb. 17, 1986.

²⁸ Adler, Dr. Stuart, researcher AP Oct 6, ‘87

²⁹ Fallows, Deborah, PhD, A Mother’s Work Houghton Mifflin, 1986, She reports she “was in tears at what she saw.” “It slowly began to seem... I didn’t have the time to be the mother I wanted to be. Tommy was starting not to have the childhood I wanted him to have.”

³⁰ Monica Helwig, America. May 18, ‘85 p.407

The papers are full of domestic violence and arrests³¹, of divorce and custody battles, of high rates of depression,³² of drug and alcohol use and abuse; of parental burnout.³³ Crisis centers for children are forming “to ease parental stress,”³⁴ while other new centers attempt programs to make up for the “serious lacks in social skills”³⁵ in many kids, while reports continue that money and things are replacing time and attention in YUPPY families.³⁶

Wife beating, and child physical abuse seem to be at epidemic proportions - the YWCA in emotion-mild St. Paul has a waiting list for rooms for such battered families,³⁷ a situation reported nationwide for such facilities. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop estimates that as many as 15 million women have been beaten, raped or suffered other forms of physical and sexual assault and that the number rises by a million a year.³⁸

Child correction facilities are crowded. The chaplain at Red Wing, Minnesota’s correction’s facility says, “Some children are difficult, most could be helped by their parents. The effect of broken homes is disastrous.”³⁹ Yet experts say half of all youths will live in broken homes before they are seventeen.⁴⁰

Family disintegration sees isolated grandmothers and grandfathers, father’s who don’t father, and mother’s who don’t mother - against this background Bob Keeshan’s (Captain Kangaroo) observation that “the fun is gone for today’s kids” seems like a very mild statement of the reality.⁴¹

George Gilder has become a writer of the whole compendium of the problems plaguing American husbands and fathers. “Men need women for their survival. If they can’t find a role as a provider, they are in trouble.. . Marriages most apt to break up are those of successful career women and ghetto women. In the first case, the provider role is usurped by the women themselves, and in the second, it is usurped by the state through welfare.”⁴²

³¹ AP reports Crime Control Institute survey of 140 cities showing 14% increase in such statistics, Jan 27, 1986

³² Ubell Earl, Parade Nov 2, 1986, statistics

³³ . Procaccini, Dr. Joseph, Parental Burnout , Signet, 1985

³⁴ Children’s Home Crisis Nurseries, St. Paul, reported in SPPP and D Dec. 16, 1985

³⁵ . Plymouth Youth Center, agency of American Lutheran Church, operates 75 “friendship groups” teaching social skills, SPPP and D Nov 25;86

³⁶ Young Upwardly Mobile Mommies reported by Nancy Livingston, SPPP and D Oct 18, 1986, and success of the Stanton, Superkid Catalog

³⁷ . AP, August 26, 1986, reported unable to accommodate 5, 392 calls.

³⁸ AP, Jan 4, 1988

³⁹ Catholic Bulletin August 17, 1986

⁴⁰ Martin, Ralph Oct 1987

⁴¹ Westminster Town Hall Forum, Oct 25, 1985

⁴² . Gilder, George, Naked Nomads Quadrangle, 1974

His latest article in the October 10, 1986, issue of *National Review* is an analysis of the whole scene of the breakdown of roles of man and woman in the family.⁴³ *The Journal of Marriage and Family* and *Journal of Applied Psychology* also suggest that the stress men are under (some of it from role changes) leads directly to abuse at home.⁴⁴

How does the American woman fare, the one for whom most of this upheaval, pain and anguish has been arranged? Her situation has become nearly intolerable from information gained from the reviews, news articles (Time's issue, Oct 12, 1987 asks Are Women Fed Up? questioning the Hite Report), and commentaries. Even leading feminists, Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch*)⁴⁵ and Betty Friedan (*Feminine Mystique*)⁴⁶ have written new books with second thoughts about sexual liberation. In ways that seem circuitous to a Christian, they re-evaluate motherhood, chastity, and homemaking.⁴⁷

Where's My Happy Ending? asks the cover of the book by Lee Morical.⁴⁸ "Fertility delayed may mean no children," cries *Pastoral Renewal*.⁴⁹ "No babies for many U.S. women," announces *Parade* magazine.⁵⁰ The homemaker is still ignored by a Women's History Week, claims Cal Thomas, as he analyzes the feminist bias.⁵¹ Sex disease is listed as the top fear for women in a poll in *Glamour Magazine*.⁵²

Meanwhile retired, by choice, and relieved "superwomen" are forming groups around the nation for other "cape burners."⁵³ "Female managers are finding the price of upward mobility high."⁵⁴ Women's priorities are

⁴³ . Gilder, George, "The Sexual Revolution at Home," *National Review*, Oct. 10, 1986. "The woman's role is nothing less than the hub of the community . . . self-sacrifice of women finds a perfect complement in the self-sacrifice of men. They achieve (glory) as Scripture dictates and women's experience insists, by self-denial and sacrifice."

⁴⁴ Knight-Ridder News, Sept 29, 1986

⁴⁵ . Greer, Germaine, *Sex and Destiny, the Politics of Human Fertility*. Harper and Row, 1984

⁴⁶ . Friedan quoted in *Time*, Aug 18, 1986, "The time has come to acknowledge that women are different from men."

⁴⁷ New chief justice, William Rehnquist's memo was sharply criticized by feminists when he called the ERA amendment "puzzling" and forecast that it would lead to a "sharp reduction in importance of the family unit." AP, Sept 19, 1986

⁴⁸ . Morical, Lee, *Where's My Happy Ending?: Women and the Myth of having it all* Addison-Wesley 1984.

⁴⁹ September 1985, many statistics given

⁵⁰ June 23, 1985

⁵¹ March 17, 1986

⁵² 4th Annual Women's Views Study, December 1985

⁵³ .New York Times reports formation of Superwomen Anonymous

⁵⁴ Chicago Tribune reports Sand Diego State U study of Prof. Natasha Jasefowitz Book *You're the Boss*

changing, says columnist Joan Beck, they are discovering “it is more satisfying and important to do a personal job of mothering a small child than to make a 2% sales gain at Widget Inc.”⁵⁵

Women cannot in many cases cope with the toll their success has taken in other parts of their lives. They have found the juggling of jobs of wife, mother, social butterfly and executive is more exhausting than exhilarating.”⁵⁶ Psychologists tells us that “corporate America is rife with women . . . experiencing the dark side of their success. Symptoms are bulimia, anorexia, drugs and alcohol, and other manifestations of self-destructive behaviour.”⁵⁷

Other problems? There are many. “Temporary infertility is linked to exercise⁵⁸ “PMS, may be a full-fledged mental illness.”⁵⁹ Even Ellen Goodman, the feminist columnist, decries her tie to commuting and her homesickness for “things that matter in this world.”⁶⁰ And on top of all the stresses, the work and sacrifices of business women, the U. S. Census reveals that firms run by business women reap less than they sow, and marriage delayed for business may mean none at all.⁶¹

The sexual revolution that has reached into the womb has Goodman musing,⁶² “If a mother can legally turn over the rights to her womb, then the ethic of the marketplace has won. Pregnancy becomes a service industry and babies are a product for sale.” TIME also asks “Is the Womb a rentable space?”⁶³ posing all the mindboggling questions that arise about a child’s paternity and maternity.

For not so comic relief, Ralph and Wanda (TIME -June 30,86) wrangle through the crisis in housework. “Ralph apart from your arduous job of watching the TV all the time - presumably so that no one will steal it - you do around 10% to 15% of the work in this house, about average for the American husband, I guess.” Behind this humorous essay, lies the uneasy fact that uncounted households are in constant disruption as role change raises arguments over the simplest of duties.

Through all this as suitable background music to a horror movie, Dr. Ruth Westheimer mouths things like “The Gay community has led the country in promoting good sex and safe sex which would eliminate AIDS.”⁶⁴ MTV

⁵⁵ . SPPP and D Aug. 8, 1986

⁵⁶ New York Times, Sept 12, 1986

⁵⁷ New York Times Sept 12, 1986

⁵⁸ New England Journal of Medicine Aug 2, 1984 also mentions bone loss.

⁵⁹ . hassle in the American Psychiatric Association reported in AP July 3, 1986 - feminist psychologists upset that PMS might be so designated

⁶⁰ . June 25, 1986

⁶¹ AP reports August 7, 1986

⁶² Sept 3, 1986

⁶³ . Sept 22, 1986

⁶⁴ Catholic Eye quotes Dr. Ruth speaking for the Human Rights Campaign Fund in Washington, Nov 12, 1986

impinges “flashes of hell” into living rooms,⁶⁵ violent porn tapes spread poison through numberless families, and AIDS penetrates the family.⁶⁶ Television does its part by assuring everybody that all of this is “normal” and acceptable, part of the sitcom and soap opera life of typical American folks (who live in New York penthouses, Texas mansions and ocean yachts).

How can Christian values solve these horrendous problems? “Time to Assess” will continue in Part II.

⁶⁵ National Catholic Register “Vidiots” Nov 1 0,85

⁶⁶ Washington Post AP Oct 21,86, Aids transmissions. how far will it spread among heterosexuals?” Minneapolis Star and Tribune Sept 14,'86, Dr. Neil P. Schram, MD “What American could be like in 5 yrs.”

TIME TO ASSESS: BARRENNESS OR FRUITFULNESS? - PART II

How Christian Values Answer the Crisis That Social Experiments Have Caused in the American Family.

In Part I we laid out the mountain of problems attested to by statistics, that besets the American family. Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation: ‘Community of the Family’ writes, “At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God’s plan for marriage and the family, *but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one’s own selfish well-being* (emphasis added) ⁶⁷

Basic ignorance of God’s plan for the family, and perversion of freedom cry out that first and foremost, evangelization is the key to the American family’s becoming the haven of peace and security it was created to be. In many exhortations the Holy Father has pointed out that the turn-about required first in the individual man or woman, and then in the family, cannot rest on human resolve, however much that is necessary. It must rest on the power of God in Jesus Christ to change lives from the inside out. Christ and his power to make all things new waits to be presented in preaching, teaching, and Christian journalism as a challenge to each person; man, woman, and child.

Ignorance of the plan of God for the family is for its members a matter of serious concern. In Psychiatrist Menninger’s lament, “Whatever Happened to Sin,’ such disregard of God’s commands is parallel to sin as he notes this is not a popular thing to remind modern Americans about. The popular ideas, however, have left the family bankrupt. Such a reminding, leads the Catholic Christian further. He will remember that Jesus died to cleanse each one of personal sin and his forgiveness is always available in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What better place to start a revision of our collective Catholic family life?

This has always been Catholic belief. From Baptism to First Communion to Confirmation to Eucharist, the rebirth of the person in Jesus is the focal point. Sometimes we Catholics, so accustomed to the centrality of the light of Christ in our faith, tend to overlook this, like one overlooks the source of the light in a room, as long as it is light enough. John Paul goes on to say, “we must all set ourselves in opposition (to the ways of the world) through a conversion of mind and heart, following Christ crucified by denying our own selfishness.”⁶⁸ Family members can overlook Jesus Christ no longer. Each must deliberately put Jesus first in his/her life.

⁶⁷ Community of the Family Pope John Paul II, January 1982 1-6

⁶⁸ . Ibid, 1-9

From that point we are assured by the Holy Father that the principles of family life that the Word of God proclaims are within reach. The individual and the family will have the power of that word,⁶⁹ which creates what it promises, at their disposal.

The result then of feminism's upheaval and the sexual revolution may work for Christians in the way that all threats to Catholic faith eventually work - God, given the opportunity, will turn them to good. Feminism may then be seen to have done a service in bringing to consciousness the realization that mere cultural mores handed on without choice are restrictive, and attitudes of submission unrelated to willingness stunt a personality.

In a number of essays and talks (compiled in the book, *Woman*⁷⁰ by newly beatified Edith Stein before her death at the hands of the Nazis, Blessed Edith says a woman converted to Christ has quite another alternative offered her than to shake off all restrictions and move out to "find herself" according to what have become feministic goals. She can study the scriptures, seeking to understand their underlying ideals for woman, man, and family. She can meditate on what she finds, and then choose to become what God wants her to become.

If already committed by vows, she may chose again to be faithful to a marriage vocation or to heed the call to chastity with its goal of special spiritual fruitfulness. With that choice she may daily begin a life of prayer that will bring her to that maturity as a woman. Though wife and mother is her first vocation, she may, indeed, she must prepare for a further vocation in the world. God's word tells us that spiritual maturity is a lifelong endeavor that is not easy, but brings happiness on this earth and eternal happiness in the world to come⁷¹.

These heart attitudes of hers, so indigenous to her physiology - receptivity, acceptance, nurturing, loving, patience, submission, are at the very center of the Gospel of Christ.⁷² The woman is the key to that gospel in her family and in society. This, says the Bible, is what woman is all about. This is what God had in mind when he created her.

Edith Stein believes that it is the heart condition, so to speak, of woman that is primary to all family ideals. Looking at the failures in the German home in the early part of this century (which eventually led to Hitler's totalitarianism and the extermination of Jews) she wrote, "wherever family ties weakened, it could be attributed usually to woman's failure."⁷³ Feminists are angry about such judgments, saying it is unfair to hang on woman the praise or the blame of all the family's and society's relationship problems. Woman is, they say, neither the harlot nor the saint, but merely *a person* who refuses any longer to bear the opprobrium of failure or the adulation of success.

But woman is a vital key to all human society says the scriptures. "Her assent determines the destiny of humanity as a whole."⁷⁴ What scripture underscores about woman has been presented by Australian Scripture

⁶⁹ . John 8:32

⁷⁰ Stein, Edith, Vol II Collected Works, Woman ICS Publications 1987, Washington D.C.

⁷¹ . Luke 9:23

⁷² Look at the beatitudes, "blessed" means "happy", Matthew 5

⁷³ Stein, Op. Cit, p. 135

⁷⁴ Ibid p. 63

scholar, Francis J. Maloney SDB in his book, *Woman First Among the Faithful*⁷⁵ Woman is presented by Fr. Maloney as first in faith in the New Testament. From Eve to Mary this is the story. She is first to believe, first to confess, first to witness. She conceives by faith, is first to recognize Christ, first to ask him for healing, she and her sisters predominate at his cross, they are first to his empty tomb, and the first to proclaim him risen. Woman is, therefore, to be emulated in her faith and in her stance toward God. It is to be one of openness, trust, fidelity, and courage.

At the end of the continuum of woman's firstness is the fact that all men and women are to be 'bride' to Jesus the "bridegroom;" all men and women are feminine to God who is the archetypal masculine⁷⁶ (not male, but masculine). Towards him all, male and female, are as beloved to lover - open, receptive, accepting, awaiting his Spirit to make them fruitful.⁷⁷

Therefore, the woman, renewed in Christ, is empowered to embody the Gospel as a sign to the entire community of what a life toward God is all about. The apostles are worried when they see her begin to confuse what her freedom means in the early church community. Just listen to St. Paul fret⁷⁸, and St. Peter admonish⁷⁹. If she turns away from her specific role at the center of home and church as the "wholly self-giving" one (rightly understood to mean an attitude toward God, *chosen and sought*) then all will turn away from it because it is not the natural attitude of the fallen human being and is therefore, not easily understood without a model.

We need a real, warm, living, loving model to show us - that one at the center of the home. From there the attitude is catching. Those who have accepted Christ as their authority, man or woman, no longer seek their own ways and wants first of all, but seek the Kingdom of Heaven.

This knowledgeable, chosen obedience is the central attitude of the Christian home. The woman is the primary obedient one, the Bible attests. But the man too must be obedient to the role God has created him for. Pope John Paul II in the apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignatatem, On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* emphasizes "mutual subjection." "This is especially true because the husband is called the 'head' of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church; he is so in order to give 'himself up for her', and giving himself up for her means giving up even his own life."⁸⁰ It is no easier, and has no more prestige (a singularly unChristian value) than the obedience of

⁷⁵ Ave Maria, 1986, I am not thoroughly at ease with this book and its conclusions, see my review in Queen magazine March/April 1987, 10. Isaiah 54:5

⁷⁷ . Lewis, C.S. *That Hideous Strenath* .MacMillian 1965 p.315 "There is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, He would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something far more masculine, higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called Daungier. We call it Pride. You are offended by the masculine itself. 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 .

⁷⁸ . I Corinthians 14:34-40. Note that St. Paul calls upon his full apostolic authority. He would be amazed to learn that today this is considered his "cultural bias" or" misogynism."

⁷⁹ . I Peter 3:1 ff

⁸⁰ . Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignatatem, On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* August 15, 1988, par 24

the woman, because the man is called to serve in no less a total way. Like the First Person of the Trinity, upon whom the man is imaged, he is initiator and provider for his family. Respecting her equality before God with himself, he seeks the input of his wife, weighing her insights carefully in making decisions that affect the family, but his is the role of headship.

John Paul writes, “. . .the mentality which honors women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family must be overcome. This requires that men should truly esteem and love women with total respect for their personal dignity, and that society should create and develop conditions favoring work in the home”⁸¹

Psychologist Willard Harley’s new book, *His Needs. Her Needs*⁸² based on twenty years of marriage counseling, affirms the scriptural task of the man as the one who assumes the burden of financially supporting the family. Even liberated women, says Harley, agree that one of their needs is a man who can support them. George Gilder has underlined this need of men - to be responsible for the provision of wife and children - in all his critiques of the man/woman relationship.⁸³

In an article such as this there is not space to fully develop all the scriptural guidelines to family life. Many books have been written in the past few years (Martin’s *Man, Woman, and Child*)⁸⁴ countering feminism’s negative impact, but recognizing its positive contribution toward more conscious men and women. Such maturity accepts the God-given role with wisdom while avoiding any idea that either role is less than, or more than, the other in the eyes of God. Inequality of worth when penetrated into the Christian concept of family must be rigorously rooted out.

⁸¹ Community of the Family 11

⁸² . Harley, Dr. Willard E., Jr., *His Needs. Her Needs: Building an affair-proof Marriage*

⁸³ . Gilder, George, *Men and Marriage* Pelican, 1986

⁸⁴ Servant Books

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4 PLEASE PASS IT ON! An Older Woman Breaks the Silence.

“How many is this for you, Colleen, “I asked, the attractive young mother.

She stood at the church kitchen door holding her beautiful baby girl with pride, while the grandmom and the rest of us of the work crew crowded around to admire her.

Lisa is number two,” she replied as her other little girl came running up.

“What a wonderful beginning to your family. We started out with three little girls and they set such a calm and even pace for the others to follow.

“Started out? How many children did you have? We’re considering this just about it.”

“We had twelve.”

“Oh, gosh, you have twelve and Mom has ten, and I suppose the rest of you. . . Numbers of “seven” and “five” came from the circle. Colleen was shaking her head.

“Not for me! You guys are a different generation. I’ve got to take care of me, too. All those kids! When did you have time for fun - for thinking even?

We raised a protest. “But it was fun.” “We did have time.” We missed nothing” But it was mild, even mumbled, and hard to put into words at the moment.

But it’s time that Kathy, Marie, Sharon, I, and countless other Catholic mothers of the previous generation, get our thoughts together and stop mumbling, because we consider ourselves among the happiest women on earth.

We all believe that it isn’t necessary or appropriate to talk about our lives of service to our families because we know we have been graced and you can’t brag about grace. However, its evident that our silence about this grace may be contributing to a lot of false notions, because there are those who are not silent at all - those that persuade you, our daughters, to believe that large families are 1) inhumane burden for the mother, 2) an impossibility in terms of modern day finances 3) a drain on the world food supply, and 4) a cheat in opportunity and love for each of the children. Only so that you will believe it is grace, I want to recount to you some things about the four of us who stood there with you at the kitchen door.

Let’s start, Colleen, with your mother. Your father has had a job among the most demanding. Until I met him I thought I was married to the busiest man on earth. But your mother had not only the care of you ten, the large

house, all the caring, shopping, and running, but also supported your Dad in his work, notably by supplying his transportation needs when he was in too much pain to drive himself. Sometimes it took most of a day or days. One time when your Dad was away, she went to the hospital to nurse her sick baby four times a day, taking you little ones along with her each trip. Practically single-handed, more than once, she moved your large family from one city across country to another.

Sharon shares the same kind of story of service made possible because of faith and love. She has seen an epileptic child through to adulthood and to a future when the skeptical world would have seen that result impossible. If you ask Sharon she'll tell you how this personal sorrow has turned to joy, and Who it is that makes "all things work together for good."

Our other friend, Kathy, has farmed alongside of her husband all their married life. She has raised six children, one has died, (yes, we have all experienced the reality of death - an experience that stretches the soul into a greater capacity to love). In the days before they could afford the mechanical helps, she worked hard in the barn; milking, feeding, shoveling manure. That, besides the usual chores of homemaking and the gardening, canning, freezing - doing the things that countless mothers have done for generations without any fanfare. A day during her child-rearing days would appear not to have enough hours to allow for all she accomplished.

Marvelously, taking a prayer-time meant we always had time for ourselves. Prayer ordered our day, seeming to expand the hours. From this time came the quilts and fancy hand work, the perennial flower gardens, the poetry, the piano or instrumental music, the paintings - impressionist style, the journals of spiritual insight, the books read, the time spent meditating, pondering, thinking, and the hours given to church, school and community service.

I suppose that it is just facts like those that scare you younger mothers, but you must understand how it was done, and why. I've already mentioned prayer which is the number one answer to *both how and why*.

We were also fortunate to grow up when gospel values were spoken about, not just in the good scripture based sermons from our pastors, but in the community, and we saw them lived out by people who cared about us. We were taught that spiritual, as well as biological fruitfulness for God would fulfill us. "Bearing of fruit" was how we cooperated with Our Father showing the world we were His children. Jesus spoke directly about being fruitful in Matthew 7:16, and John 15; the fruits of the spirit are recorded in Galatians 5:22.

That happiness isn't to be found in the world; it comes in doing God's will - was part of our instruction. God's will wasn't intangible at all. It was found in being open to what God brought into our lives each day, when it was hard and when it was easy. We have failed in this often, but He has answered faith even when it has been smaller than the mustard seed, and heard our repentance even when it was a wobbly, "please, help me."

Through wonderful stories of the Bible, and through real life experiences of our predecessors in faith, we learned that where "God guides, He provides." This is one of my favorite sayings and one that has been born out in countless ways. On a modest income we have never wanted. I have never worked outside the home, but God has showed me the way to *make* money. As Lord of all material things, He teaches how to make the most of everything; how to pray about necessities and watch for His provision; how to give so that He gives more in return. God's word promises this, but unfortunately few know about these promises today. We want you to know so that you will be happy. This is at least part of what Jesus means when he says, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses

his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt 10:39) Jesus is not confusing or ambiguous about how material well-being comes to us, just read his words again in Matthew, chapters five, six and seven.

Colleen, it is untrue that the financial times today are more difficult for big families than previously. As Christians we must be practical, but that practicality must not limit what God can do. The immense sums the media proclaims are needed for education, clothing, and the amenities for a child are only as real as people make them. God has ways, and we the older generation are here to witness to them. He has made a way for us - surprising and sufficient; and He waits to do it for you. I’ve always said “we are paupers who live like kings.”

Another thing, more personal. I find implied by you young mothers that you have taken your fertility into your own hands. Be prayerful about this. It is well to heed the Church. By that I mean, not the occasional priest who teaches social sciences rather than faith, but the Teaching Authority. God has given us this sure Guide alongside of Scripture. Of course, it is not to make us burdened. It is to make *us free*. Looking back, we believe this with all our hearts, though we admit we sometimes doubted when babies number seven and eight were on the way. We, who did not have the latest advances of natural family planning, can say from experience that accepting children as God brought them to us has made us grow up spiritually. Each child expanded our love and expanded the personal resources we had to care for it. That multiplication of personal potential that God effects is a mystery that those outside of faith cannot comprehend. Don’t expect to find anything about it in the women’s magazines, or on the talk shows. We have come to love God more with that increased capacity and, Colleen, that is where all freedom lies.

The same is true about the world food supply. Can God’s economy that provides for the world be wrecked when people obey His will and trust him? The world’s need for food will be met when His will is put first, supplanting that which is too often first - the selfish concerns of unbelieving people. That world needs Christian ministry, the yeast is what the Bible calls those who are faithful to the Gospel. We Christian families cannot supply too many vital cells of this yeast to help leaven the un-reached lump of humanity. What an opportunity you young women have to be part of such a venture! What else could you do with your life that would have such an impact?

And how can you test our words? Well, this is scary, because sometimes we are cross, impatient women, God forgive. But the next time you see us all together, perhaps working in the kitchen at a funeral luncheon, look carefully, and listen. Look in Kathy’s eyes. See those smite lines around them. Doesn’t she have a beautiful face? Listen to your mother’s laugh. It has always lifted our hearts no matter what the pressure of the day. And Sharon - you will never hear her say an unkind word about anyone. I know my face is wrinkled and aging, but I hope it shows how happy and grateful I am.

Then imagine yourself at our age; first, if you limit God’s free hand with you, and secondly, if you allow him to have his way. You won’t walk his way alone, God will walk with you - it is truly amazing, this grace. I remember a saying of C.S. Lewis’, “In the end there are only two kinds of people; those to whom God says, ‘Your will be done,’ and those who say to God, ‘Your will be done.’” How will you be at sixty? We hope you’ll be happy because of a life swelled by God to a size unimaginable by you right now. When we control our own life; it turns out skimp and flat. You may test the truth of this by just looking at the lives around you.

He came to give Life and give it abundantly. That’s what we hope for you and for all our daughters. Please, pass on this faith!

5 MAN, STEP FORWARD!

Hardenbrook, Weldon M., *Missing From Action* Thomas Nelson, 1987, 191 pages, \$14.95

In 1983 Time magazine ran a piece, “Real men don’t need to attend maleness seminars,” which featured the newest thing in empowerment - group therapy for men who had been emasculated by buying into feminist theory. Hardenbrook, an Orthodox pastor, finds there are hardly any “real men” left anymore, and that the plight of men can’t be blamed on the rise of feminism, that is, not quite; but rather, men have abandoned their God-given roles and thus caused women to fill the vacuum.

This upheaval in sexual relationships with role reversal the chief manifestation has adversely affected not only religion, education and the home, but is directly related to the increase of crime in this country. Hardenbrook, with an historic analysis that begins in colonial times, is in agreement with George Gilder - manhood is in a state of crisis which affects not only individuals struggling with their identity, but to a critical degree, society overall. In fact “ antipatriarchal propaganda is part of the Victorian myth that disgraces not only the pre-revolutionary colonial family (which Hardenbrook documents as nearly ideal), but the entire Judeo-Christian tradition, whose influence provided family order for the entire world. ‘Alternative’ families are not adequate replacements for traditional families. They are Band-Aids on cancer. Patriarchy is the only workable blueprint for the family. The American home has no chance for survival without it.”

The war for independence from Britain revolutionized not only the political situation in American but led “to the birth of a spirit that ultimately would be the undoing of the American male: the spirit of independence.” As independence fervor took hold, a vision of “a rising empire, extended over an immense continent, without bishops, without nobles, and without kings,” was preached in the political writings of people like Dr. Richard Price, a friend of Ben Franklin and John Adams. Anti- authoritarianism grabbed Americans by sounding quite liberating, but in fact, it reduced the idea of accountability and responsibility to ashes. “It sounded the death knell for American fatherhood.”

In church the same spirit spurred independent preachers who developed “independent churches (full of) independent members who came up with independent interpretations of the Scriptures.” In the long run these Protestant churches became domains of mostly women who filleted religion into a “feminine and sentimental Jesus” which repelled men. Ministers then mobilized women as the guardians of the home against the moral bankruptcy of

men, and “men became spiritually dependent upon women.” Such was the legacy of the Victorian era which had only the trappings of patriarchy but was really dominated by women.

Among the sketchy ideas of what can be done to reintroduce men to real manhood, the appeal to government for help, massively influenced as it is by feminism and gay-rights, is the weakest proposal. The author also looks to educators, hardly less politicized, and the church which is, he says, “anemic, and in some instances, downright impotent as a force for moral guidance in our culture.”

That means “the commitment to authentic fatherhood”, a “spiritual matter”, can be addressed only by individual men who, through the insights of a man like Weldon Hardenbrook, are re-endowed with a vision of what manhood can and should mean.

6 FAMILY HEALING

Through the Prayer of Faith

I laugh when I read Erma Bombeck's description of family life. She hilariously mirrors it as it so often is these days - complete chaos. Family members pose a lot of laughable contrasts its true, but often these upheavals really aren't so very funny. In fact, the Church in 1994's "The Year of the Family" found the family in crisis, and has come to the aid of this sorely tried foundation of civilization before it collapses taking everything vital to the good-life with it. The experience of the family in this last decade of the Twentieth Century points out daily the need for Christ's healing. Realizing the critical need of our children and grandchildren for this healing, we often stand by helplessly as Christian parents - we who are supposed to know best how to minister to our children in His name.

The Holy Father in his 1994 "Letter to Families" speaks *to every particular family in every part of the world*, reminding them that "prayer makes the Son of God present among us." prayer by the family, prayer for the family, and prayer with the family. . . Prayer increases the strength and spiritual unity of the family, helping the family to partake of God's own strength."⁽⁴⁾ (numbers refer to sections from "Letter to Families").

"The Son of God present among us . . . partaking of Gods own strength." How needy have Christian families become for faith in just such a Presence among them! Christian parents daily face overwhelming kinds of problems in their children from chronic fears to drug dependency to severe emotional distress. When the baffled parent comes to the end of the rope, professional help in the form of psychological counseling, or personal adjustment groups is often sought. Thankfully there are these kinds of helps readily available.

Yet, what about the powerful source of healing "present among us?" What is it Christ offers through our Christian faith that is very near at hand and often makes other aid unnecessary? With our family of eleven children we have found that reversing the usual order of seeking help brings remarkable and lasting results. That is, active faith intercession comes first and professional help second.

Through necessity we reached out and discovered that the Son of God was present among us! In a sense, viewed against the cynicism that has invaded the family atmosphere, such an idea is startling; anything that draws us closer to a life of prayer these days may seem strange. Yet, the prayer suggestions made here come from common sources - our own family's personal experience, some popular spiritual/ psychological authors, and the normative Christian faith in Christ. The desperate need of family members is to have prayer become real and comfortable.

The Holy Father in the above letter speaks of a process of exchange in which parents are educated by their children. “While they are teachers of humanity for their own children, they learn humanity from them.” (16) Humanity has the potential for pain, parents learn that early with a family of children. And what kind of practical help does a prayer of faith hold out to families in painful situations? That was a question we didn’t ask at onetime, believing that there was nothing really concrete at all in the faith we professed. But with problems of drug and alcohol abuse, and the frightening psychological aberrations that come and go during those developmental years, our children forced us to find out differently. We have come to see these worrisome things as not unusual, but rather the typical kind of misery that has always threatened happiness and peace in families. And we have come to believe that, at least for most of them, the cure is often at hand in the exercise of our normal Christian faith. Several modern psychiatrists have written books that have assured us that therapeutic prayer used to free our children isn’t going overboard religiously.

Some of the troubles that cropped up could be traced back like a blight on the family, passed from one generation to the next. In our case, these problems and this inheritance came not just through one genetic confluence, my husband’s and my own, but through a second bank, those of our four adopted children who came to us as babes from one family. The result was an awakening that family patterns of problems can and do afflict generations one after another.

Progress toward a cure began with the acceptance of a very unpopular, but thoroughly Christian idea – sin! Worried about the negative impact of guilt on our children by even speaking the word, we never used it. Then we found that psychiatrists today are no longer so loath to call much of the cause of human misery by that name.

At first shunning the idea of sin because of its heaviness, we eventually found that of all possible diagnoses of a problem, it may be that calling it ‘sin’ is the most hopeful. Sin is something that can be confessed and forgiven, an iron collar that is only temporary and can only remain if we will it. Because we have the key for it handy, it can be unlocked, taken off, and thrown away for good.

John Paul II encourages holiness in the family so that “humanity will not yield to the temptation of the ‘father of lies’ (Jn 8:44), who constantly seeks to draw people to broad and easy ways, ways apparently smooth and pleasant, but in reality full of snares and dangers.” He reminds us of the Bridegroom of love who is present to the family in the sacraments. “Do not be afraid of the risks! God’s strength is always more powerful than your difficulties! Immeasurably greater than the evil at work in the world is the power of the *sacrament of reconciliation* (18)

If we need reassurance from the world of psychiatry, the following words are not those of a cleric, they are the words of the famous psychiatrist, Karl Menninger. “The very word ‘sin’, which seems to have disappeared, was a proud word. It was once a strong word, an ominous and serious word. It described a central point in every civilized human being’s life plan and life style. But the word went away. It has almost disappeared - the word, along with the notion. Why? Doesn’t anyone sin anymore? Doesn’t anyone believe in sin?”

Is the concept of sin or the idea of repentance too heavy and oppressive for the modern sufferer and especially for the loved child in the family? Or can naming our problems “sin” in the attitude of prayer be a short cut to the restoration of wholeness? If that is so, we too modern folks, often caught in denying Godly solutions, can have

an effective Christian tool restored. To answer these questions we took a fresh look at guilt and sin through psychological insights.

Among others, one Catholic psychologist, John Quesnell, has wrestled with these questions. In The message of *Christ and the Counselor* he acknowledges that some devout people have been plagued by guilt because of sin consciousness. Yet, overall, he believes this is not the modern problem. He would agree with Dr. Menninger, there is too little real guilt in people today because knowledge of the commands of God is missing, and because in our time there is concentrated effort to wipe out those commands. It is because of transgression of God's ways that uncounted numbers of people suffer, among them children and parents in Christian families.

Against this background Jesus' words, "You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, "fit our age. But they need not be interpreted as condemning us. The Holy Father reminds families strongly that Jesus did not come to condemn but to save. (22.) Rather they point us to where health lies. Without the knowledge of what God has prescribed in Scripture for a good life, we are bound to wander into confusion and into relationships, actions, and thoughts that hurt us seriously. Even with a knowledge of scriptural guidelines and precepts, we may make mistakes, but the guilt that results thrusts us forward to resolution of the problem. And here the love of God to forgive dynamically changes our lives. The guilt, therefore, that makes the sufferer admit wrong living and wrong doing is a positive and hopeful thing.

As Dr. Quesnell says, "Persons with a healthy sense of sin can honestly acknowledge their failures, forgive themselves, accept God's and their neighbors' forgiveness, then move on to a better life. Guilt, in these cases, brings personal growth."

In our family problems we find that sometimes the sin is obvious: sexual thoughts and acts brought on by direct and indirect influences at school, through media and among friends; misuse and abuse of alcohol and mind-altering drugs; obsessions with material goods leading to envy and covetousness or theft; refusal to forgive past wrongs; rebelliousness against authority - the list is long. And the effects these have had on our children's lives make an even longer list. They are the kinds of things that usually send families seeking outside help; depression, poor school grades, headaches, lassitude, irritability, boredom, restlessness, nervousness, escape to fantasy, chronic health problems, unreasonable fears.

Sometimes the sin is not so obvious; it may have been pressed upon the child from outside of himself. It may not be of his own volition. Or it may be an inherited thing. However, in some way the affected person is a participant. Gentle understanding of that participation has been a beginning point for healing in our family. It may be that the child actually has been a victim, then working through prayer to real forgiveness heads off a life of psychological problems.

God's love in Christ must always be the total context for prayer. The home itself exudes that context when it has devotional objects, pictures of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart, rosaries, and small statues of the Blessed Mother. Family prayers of all kinds are enhanced by an open Bible and lighted candle. For a troubled child there is no better comfort than a relationship with his heavenly Mother often gained just by holding a rosary and stumbling through a decade with his parents. Mary's motherhood may always be called upon when a parent seeks wisdom in dealing with problems. John Paul II assures us that God's love is poured forth "not only in the hearts of

Mary and Joseph but also in the hearts of all married couples who are open to hearing the word of God and keeping it (cf. Lk 8:15). The future of each family unit depends upon this “fairest love”; Love is the true source of the unity and strength of the family.” (20)

Trusting in this embracing love, and begging Mother Mary’s intercession from the first, here are a few further suggestions for families who wish to try the shortcut our Christian faith provides for the relief of common ills. They are scriptural; they are tried and true; they are part of the normal Christian expectation of prayer.

The first is most important - there is nothing that the parents of the family need fear. There is nothing that the sacrifice of Jesus has not covered and for which forgiveness is not forthcoming. There is nothing so horrible that it must be kept hidden. If the healing process is avoided for reasons of fear, it is normal. The Holy Father realizes our normal hesitation when he encourages us, “Do not be afraid of the risks!” Fear and its root of pride were often the first obstacle we had to be willing to tackle. Overcoming that hurdle, just bringing something long hidden to the light of reason and forthright confrontation, is often enough to diminish its power in a child’s life.

Second, *the affected child is put as a primary concern in the prayer of the father and mother*. Hopefully the mother and father are praying together every day. Sometimes it is crises such as a troubled child in the family that brings this prayer into being. And it is not a prayer of hopelessness. Quite the opposite, it is one of confident expectation that God, who promises healing to his People (just listen to the scripture readings on any Sunday morning) will show those parents all the steps necessary to free the child from the problem. Neither is this prayer an escape from willingness to seek outside help for the child in other words, only a ruse to keep the problem tidily hidden within the family. Prayer is willingness to follow wherever God guides, to psychological help if necessary, always trusting in him.

Third, the parents, especially the mother who is specially gifted by God with intuition for her child, *listen carefully to that child and to God for clues as to the cause of the problem* - sometimes the child or a parent will have a revealing dream. This is part of prayer. As the mother ponders in her heart, events and words sometimes come together resulting in a clear insight. Always, the atmosphere of this stage is love and concern, never suspicion or blame. Sometimes the cause is not in the child, but in the parent. Again, there must be openness to all kinds of disclosures wherever they lead.

Fourth, with utmost gentleness and thoughtful love for the child, and with no punishing motive, *the parents seek to talk to the child, waiting for God to provide the right timing*. At this time the parent tells what he sees as the problem, why he or she has been led to believe it is the problem, how that problem is seen in God’s eyes - that is, that when God’s word says it is sin, sin is the cause; but always in the context that God loves this child, and has provided a way out. God’s love can’t be stated too often, and that love must be present in the parent as well. Sometimes a little diagram - the circle of God’s love and the child standing in it perhaps with Mother Mary’s hand upon her, helps her visualize his situation and aids this conversation making the problem seem more objective. Somehow drawing stick figures, smiley faces and all, on a piece of paper can take away the tension of a situation.

Then, *the way out is clearly stated*. It is important that the child know that nothing has befallen her that is not common to mankind. There is even a scripture verse to share with her: I Corinthians 10:13. She is not unusual or different. And the child can be helped to see how this very attitude or behavior affects the world and the people all

around her - a diagram can help here, too, sad faces and darting arrows. Then she is shown how the opposite Godly behavior is the answer for herself and for God's world. At this point it is usually easy and non-threatening to help the child to be sorry for being part of something less than God wills for her. If she resists, it is wise to let this effort go at this point and *not proceed*. It doesn't mean that a parent gives up - he continues to pray for an openness, but he does not press the child into further rebelliousness. If, however, responsive love is present, the child is told that the parents will pray over her, and how wonderful life free from this burden will be.

Finally, the father (preferably) *leads the prayer over the child with the mother's assistance* - sincerely, lightly, hopefully, and briefly. Each of these attributes of prayer are essential. The prayer itself may take several forms; one may well be a quiet command that all dark spiritual influences in the child's life depart in the name of Jesus. As Dr. Scoff Peck, another psychiatrist with Christian insights, has pointed out, we Christians, though we rarely exercise it, have this authority over evil influences.

Some fathers may feel they just can't pray over their children ("over", not "with", because in these cases the father is taking an authority position in prayer). It is hard, especially when it hasn't been done before and the children are growing older. We found that suggesting that we try it as a kind of family experiment like any other scientific experiment (stimulating plant growth with music, for instance), to see if we might discover something about the power of prayer, effectively broke the ice. We also told our children about some of our reading, the ideas of other people and how they had dealt with such problems. Breaking this barrier takes moral muscle, but it is surprising to find how readily the resistance gives way after a simple resolve to try. Each experience makes it easier, especially in light of the marvelous effects of these "experiments." We have then encouraged and helped our children to seek the further sacramental deliverance and healing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Everyday a family's ups and downs provide the comic stuff for years of retelling with good laughs together, but occasionally there comes along a problem in which there is little humor, yet it too can be a rich opportunity for spiritual bonding. The good times are gathered up in family prayers of thanksgiving, but the bad times call for stronger medicine, a family who will pray together for healing. "Be not afraid of the risks!" At this writing, we are privileged to watch our children bring another generation into the awareness of the healing power of Jesus Christ.

THE END

7 THE EVER PRESENT HEALING OF JESUS - IN THE SACRAMENTS

The healing ministry in the Catholic Church, a spinoff from the Charismatic renewal, has undoubtedly touched more people in the last ten years than the renewal itself. It has touched them in the way Jesus affected the most people, through physical healing - healings of mind, of emotions, and of body. And countless others, friends, relatives, and co workers, of persons seeking healing are being awakened to God's healing power.

In a secularized and sceptical society, these demonstrations of God's love and power, reported in magazines and papers (*Covenant* and *National Catholic Register*) are reviving and strengthening faith. Father Francis Martin of Mother of God Community in Washington who preached and healed in India in the 70's relieving problems ranging from a severed nerve to ordinary asthma, has called healing, "a dimension of preaching the Gospel..." that "gives the Good News credibility".

The apostolic Church as it spread out into the world never doubted that its first mission was to continue healing in the name of Jesus. Jesus' own words as he commissioned the seventy were "Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" As the book of Acts tells us, the early Church practiced healing in Jesus name as a normal, every day part of its existence.

Part of the mission of the Church in the world is to heal because Jesus healed and to demonstrate to the world who God is, that His name is Love. For that reason each of the sacraments instituted by Jesus have the effect of compassionate love - healing, as their basic and first effect upon the believer. While the healing ministries revive faith in the personal love and presence of God, that revived faith sees Him healing through His sacraments.

Baptism, our initiation of the person into the Body of Christ, is the first and most important healing sacrament because it takes care of the deepest dimension of sickness - separation from God. All sickness is related somehow to the original sin. As fallen creatures, who are made to be spiritual, we have a potential in us, our human spirit, where the Spirit of God is meant to live.

Dennis Bennett, an Episcopal priest, and his wife, Rita, a team who specializes in 'inner' healing, explain this in their book, *The Trinity of Man*. With the Fall, we lost that indwelling Spirit of God. But the place for Him remains empty and waiting in the center of our being. Without the return of the indwelling Spirit of God into the spirit of man there can be no final forgiveness and healing. Paul tells us "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of

Christ does not belong to him.” (Rom.8:9) But anyone who belongs to him has the promise that “He who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also through his Spirit dwelling in you.” (Rom 8:11)

To prepare for reentry of the Holy Spirit to His place within the spirit of the person, prayers of exorcism are said over the baptismal candidate. Infant or adult, the soul is thus freed from the domain of Satan. This deliverance is the first of the Church’s acts of healing in the name of her Lord. Then the Spirit is invited to empower the candidate to become child of God, “born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Jn 1:12 Many young people in our day have wandered away from their baptismal inheritance. My friend Terry is such a one. As a result he suffers physically and mentally. But Terry is baptized, therefore whatever excursion he has made away from God through his own will can be reversed by his own will. The Spirit bears down on Terry’s conscience, making him miserable, it’s true, but only in order to regain Terry to his inheritance with God.

Looking at all that he could have walked into in his young life, Terry himself is the first to say that he sees the steady protection of God around him. “My family has had it good compared to some of my friends who never went to Church. I can see something is different there. And it must be God who has kept me from some pretty awful things despite myself.” Someday Terry will act on this steady prompting in his conscience and find his way home. That is the faith of his family and the Church.

In Confirmation, our reception of the Holy Spirit and all His powers, we open ourselves to the rule of God’s spirit. Where God lives and rules there is light and truth. Where there is light and truth, there is a growing wholeness of the person. At confirmation the Holy Spirit is given full access to his temple claimed at baptism. From the center of our being, the doors are opened and the Spirit is invited to be Master of our intellect, emotions and will. Those things in our soul which are damaged, or immature, or out of alignment with the will of God, the Spirit now reveals and a new round of healing is possible as these things are gently lifted to the surface.

Monica, a teen ager in our parish, wrote for me her experience of Confirmation, “It wasn’t as soon as I got the holy oil put on me that I felt a change. I just started noticing little changes in myself. I started reading the Bible for the fun of it. . .I seemed basically, closer to God. God was more a part of my life. It made me feel good or like I wanted to become even closer and get even more involved in church ...all of these wonderful things evolved from receiving the Holy Spirit. It’s as simple as that and I didn’t even try. God came to me. He changed my life for the better. I’m glad that I can share that with you.”

“Basically closer to God” that is the great healing offered in Confirmation. Any change such as Monica describes is the deepest healing of all.

Susan is confirmed and in her prayer group experience she claimed the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were given to her in her confirmation. During her young adult years she has tried to live contrarily to that Spirit, to close His access to her mind and emotions and will. She found that what other people could seem to do without repercussions, she could not do without fearful inner upheavals. The Holy Spirit within her would not allow her to be dominated by sin. His claim on her called her to repentance and healing even when she was intent on rebelling. He willed her to be whole and holy even when she didn’t seem to care. Recognizing her rebelliousness has been painful, and healing slow, but Susan acknowledges that it is the power of God that has brought her to a new level of peace with herself and others.

Confession or the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a healing sacrament. Repentance is the primary attitude for restoration to mental and physical health . The Thirty.second psalm speaks of the relationship of forgiveness or lack of it to physical illness:

When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.
For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried upon as by the
heat of summer.
I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my
iniquity; and I said, "I will confess my transgressions to
the Lord". then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation Jesus has left us a cure for all that ails us if we have the faith to accept it. In it He reaches out and puts His hand on us saying, "I forgive you." And with that forgiveness we are healed. But many times that reconciliation must go one more step. Fr. Michael Scanlan, President of Steubenville University, who has a healing ministry recognizes the importance of forgiveness in healing. "One of the main obstacles to healing " he writes, "is often the sick person's inability to forgive someone else." Sometimes the person that must be forgiven is oneself.

Many times Sara has experienced the amazing grace of what sacramental confession, penance and release from sin can do. The only impediment to her total freedom from past sin is the inability to believe how good God is and her refusal to forgive herself. She admits that guilty accusations resurface. At forty she suffers from arthritis. Could self-forgiveness help her to accept the healing of God? Those who have gifted healing ministries have many reasons to think so. Unworthiness keeps people from asking. Redemptorist Father Ed McDonough who has a healing ministry to large audiences throughout the country says, "God said, 'Ask and you shall receive.' If you pray, God gives you an answer. It may not be the answer you want, but if you're sincere in your prayer, God will answer according to his wisdom."

Every person who engages this sacrament has a story to tell of the healing and freedom experienced through it. But like Sara, there are times when we have not accepted that forgiveness and love deeply enough. Sometimes that inability reflects a need for the ministries of inner healing available in the Church today. With such ministries as Fr. Scanlan's, blocks are removed from the unconscious mind so that sacramental confession bears the fruits it is meant to bear.

The Body and Blood of Jesus are salvation. And salvation means healing. The Eucharist is thanksgiving for God's healing. Jesus' own wholeness is given to a person each time he or she takes communion. Just before receiving him the congregation says, "I am not worthy to receive you, only say the word and I shall be healed." Then each partakes of this wondrous food believing that the nourishment of our body, soul and spirit is God himself. Inviting Him to live in us we hope to achieve that time when we say., "It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me. That Christ is Jesus the whole person, the complete person, the person undamaged by sin, by sickness or death. He offers himself to us. The faith we bring is the measure of the healing we receive.

This is the traditional faith in the Eucharist. St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "I know a person who suffered from serious sicknesses and was often in the greatest pain, but whose pain was lifted from her. . .when she received the Eucharist, so that she felt completely well. This happened very often."

Fr. George Kosicki, who conducts renewal retreats for priests, reports that a nun who suffered from pain in her leg and foot, distributed communion to wheelchair patients, then sat down and put her foot on the kneeler. Touching her leg she prayed, "Lord, this hand just touched you in the Eucharist, now heal my leg." The pain left and did not return. Such experiences should be common, and as belief deepens that God gave the sacraments for just this purpose they will be. "The Eucharist," says Fr. Kosicki, "is a healing sacrament and should be approached as such." The faith we bring is the measure of the healing we receive.

Ann is a weekly communicant at mass. As her faith grows so her desire to be in communion with the Lord grows. She believes that He alone can overcome all that she still faces in her life, including the cancer which threatens her so immediately. When she is too ill to go to mass, communion is brought to her by a relative, a minister of extraordinary communion, or by her priest. All are hands of God extended to her.

In the recapture of the intent of the Lord to heal, the Church has revised a most important sacrament of healing. As faith in the healing power of Jesus in his Church diminished and fell into disuse through the centuries, the sacrament of healing became Extreme Unction. It was not instituted to be a last rites sacrament, it was meant to be a prayer for healing. And so it has been realigned by Vatican II to the original healing intent of its Author. Ann has been anointed by her parish priest two times since the diagnosis of cancer. The first time was during the early days of panic and fear as the intense involvement of the disease became more and more apparent with each doctor's test and report.

Ann will never forget the evening of her first anointing. She and her husband invited both of their parents to their home. One grandmother held the baby daughter whose serious eyes never left the priest's face. The beautiful scripture was read, and the reassuring words of Jesus' presence, then all received communion, and the prayers for healing and anointing with oil followed. All of the eyes so filled with tears and terror whenever they looked at their beloved Ann turned to look at Jesus who made such sure promises. Ann experienced immediate peace. Faith in all the participants was revived to stand them in good stead as they went through the anxieties of the weeks and months that followed. Where do such things happen outside of the sacraments of the Church?

Six months later shortly after a new diagnosis, the parish priest again anointed Ann with her mother and husband present. A change in her outlook and physical symptoms was noticeable the next day. Pain was lessened and a steady improvement continued over the next weeks. At each anointing a process of healing was begun which those close to Ann believed would continue until she was completely well.

That belief, that faith, that trust in God, is an aspect to each sacrament that is brought by the people whom they grace. Where there is little faith, not necessarily dependent on the sick person but those surrounding him, the effects of the sacrament are diminished accordingly. Said Jesus, "Your faith has made you whole."

In their own profound ways the Sacraments of Holy orders and Matrimony are also God's gifts of healing to a hurting world. Through people's special commitment to him, both bring God's love and healing for the world's most basic needs. Ann's story again is a good illustration. Ann received the Sacrament of Matrimony with Albert and regards that event as the most marvelous proof of his love. When she despaired in her illness that God does love her, she thinks about Albert and is reassured. Albert is a man of faith. As a boy he wanted to be a saint, and Ann

says with a smile that with a sick wife and a small baby, all in his first year of marriage, God is giving him the opportunity.

Ann wanted an understanding, gentle, forgiving man of God. When she met Albert she had almost ceased to believe there were men who could fill such a tall order. Not recognizing the gift he was at first, her uncertainties rode along side of her growing love. She witnesses that it was the commitment they both undertook before God, before the Church, before family and friends on that certain day, a commitment of an indissoluble bond, that broke through the doubts and fears. From that time on she saw Albert more and more clearly as the one man whom God had prepared to be her husband. His support and love continuing under the near impossible stresses of their first year of marriage have more than earned him the title "rock", for he is the Peter of his own family which is a mini-church. With the formation of such homes God means to show the world what all such marriages are meant to be - distributors of the germ of faith whose fruitfulness in children and in humanitarian works is another avenue for the salvation offered by Jesus Christ.

Needless to say, Ann believes the priest is a special agent of that salvation or healing. Sitting at mass one Sunday she realized that the most sane, most real thing that ever happens in this insane and twisted world was what was going on at that altar with that man and those elements and God. Priests, the special recipients of the powers of Holy Orders, have been the hand of God's healing to her in all the sacraments and she is thankful.

It cannot be debated that God wants to heal his People. His Church was founded for just that purpose. As Father Martin says we have been "baptized unbelievers," but our lives "are not different from those of pagans." Thank God He is patient and his Church is learning that He wants to heal his people not only for eternity, but He wants that healing to begin now. Then people will understand that his nature is Love. That Love wills that they be whole and holy in body, soul and spirit. He has said so in his Word, the Bible, in His Word made flesh, Jesus, and in His Word that is active in his Sacraments.

8 THE ‘FEMINISM’ OF BLESSED EDITH STEIN

A recent reviewer (*America*, 1/23/88) wrote concerning the collection of lectures and essays by Blessed Edith Stein, *Woman* (ICS 1987), “reading all of the essays one is able to get a clear and nuanced grasp of Stein’s very radical feminist stance.” (Italics added) Such a statement begs for an exegesis of Stein’s so-called “feminism.” Even with emphasis on the word “nuanced”, i.e. subtle variation,” the statement cannot go unchallenged, because Steins “feminism” is a totally different creation from the feminism of the 1980’s.

That is not to say that Edith Stein was not as enlightened to the unfolding dimensions of women’s rights as those combating sexism in the latter half of the century. In all regards, her comprehension of the problems and opportunities facing women are as perceptive as any of the current spokeswomen. Rosemary Radford Ruether (outspoken American “Catholic” feminist theologian) or Gloria Steinem (editor of *Ms.* magazine and radical feminist promoter) add nothing to what Edith comprehended about women in these writings spanning 1928-1932. One is sometimes startled by this clarity, “An evolution which was sensed in advance by some, wanted and worked for by few, and one which surprised most people entirely, has torn women out of the well-enclosed realm of the home and out of a matter-of-course kind of life and has suddenly plunged them into the most manifold alien situations and undreamt of problems. We have been thrown into the river and we must swim.”(p.86)

But recognition of the basic unconscious impetus that has thrust women into the process of achieving clarity about their meaning and role, is about where the likeness of Edith Stein’s feminism and the current thinkers begins and ends. Because she thought in a distinctly Catholic Christian way, it is doubtful if Edith Stein would even allow her careful analysis of women’s ethos, call, and role in Salvation History to be called “feminism” with the current radicalism of the term. Increasingly, American women writing in the Catholic field disallow the word because of the connotations encrusted upon it in the last twenty-five years.

Helen Hull Hitchcock writer and founder of Women for Faith and Family , says,” I think “Christian feminism” is an oxymoron. Anne Roche Muggeridge, author of the *Desolate City: Revolution in the Catholic Church* (Harper and Row, 1986) writes, “What is true Christian feminism? I don’t think there is such a thing. I disagree with every feminist assumption about human nature and human society.” Janet E. Smith , an assistant professor of liberal studies at Notre Dame who has done much writing for pro-life (*Zero People*) agrees,” ... to speak of ‘Christian feminism’ is much like speaking of ‘Christian Marxism’; it can’t really be done without

completely violating the accepted meaning of each term. The more benign forms of feminism place too much emphasis on the equality of men and women to the detriment of considering their inequality or complementarity, and the more radical forms of feminism are closely allied with witchcraft and satanism.”

Stein would have had nothing to do with either of these alternatives. As evidenced from all her work, she would have found very little to agree with in the first draft of the American Bishop’s pastoral on women’s concerns, “Partners in Redemption.” She would have blushed at the complaints of feminists and would have been disappointed at the shallowness of response of the successors to the apostles. However, Pope John Paul II’s apostolic letter of August 15, 1988, “Mulieris Dignatatem” (“On the Dignity and Vocation of Women”) would have matched her own personal criteria.

Her writing and the Holy Father’s work have some striking similarities which set them apart from the typical feminist documents of the 80’s of which “Partners” surely is one. That is not to be wondered at. Both Pope John Paul II and Edith Stein are philosophers of the phenomenology school, and the Pope was surely cognizant of her written work on women before beatifying her in Cologne in the spring of 1967.

The chief difference between the work of Edith Stein and contemporary feminists lies in the depth of her Catholic spirituality. She believes with the Church that Salvation History is the process by which God is restoring an original order lost in the Fall. The results of the Fall are perverted relationships, first of all with God, and secondarily with the opposite sex. To right what has been lost begins with a “personal union with the Redeemer.” (p.100). In this the destinies of man and woman are the same.

“Only by the power of grace can nature be liberated from its dross, restored to its purity, and made free to receive divine life. And this divine life itself is the inner driving power from which acts of love come forth. Whoever wants to preserve this life continually within herself must nourish it from the holy sacraments, above all from the sacrament of love. To have divine love as its inner form, a woman’s life must be a Eucharistic life. Only in daily, confidential relationship with the Lord in the tabernacle can one forget self, become free of all one’s own wishes and pretensions, and have a heart open to all the needs and wants of others.”(p.55)

The complaints of women in “Partners” and the following response makes a glaring contrast: “It is an unfortunate reality that the Eucharistic celebration, the supreme source of unity, has become for some an occasion of divisiveness, pain, and frustration. Some women refuse to participate in the liturgy because it is presided over by men only. Concelebrated masses at times highlight this difficulty. Some have left the Church to participate in worship led by women.” (par 201)

To Stein the modern enmity between the sexes and the emphasis on rights is simply a manifestation of fallen human nature. “Everywhere about us, we see in the interaction of the sexes the direct fruits of original sin in most terrifying forms: an unleashed sexual life in which every trace of their high calling seems to be lost; a struggle between the sexes, one pitted against the other, as they fight for their rights and, in doing so, no longer appear to hear the voices of nature and of God.”(p76)

The cure for Stein comes through the Catholic Church. . . “Like her whole origin, her claim here is supernatural and rests on two canonical titles: that of *the universal teacher*, a title bestowed upon her by her divine founder, that she may teach mankind the divine faith, keeping pure and intact for them the store of faith entrusted to

her, guiding and forming mankind with its alliances and actions to moral integrity and purity of life in accordance with revealed teachings; then supernatural maternity by which as the bride of Christ, 'with her sacraments and her teachings, she gives birth to souls, nourishes and educates them to the divine life of grace.'"(p.203-quotes within from the German text of Pius XI Rappresentanti, Herder 1930,p.8,9.)

Such reliance on the Catholic Church permeates Edith's writing while modern feminism continually accuses the Church of the injustices of patriarchy and hierarchical organization, and speaks suspiciously of all dogma and doctrine as culturally conditioned by a pervasive sexism. This is evident in the pastoral letter, "Partners in Redemption", which repeatedly and exaggeratedly apologizes to the "exploited," "marginalized," "victimized," and "abused" for the sins of sexism in the Church. The document's methodology of extensive quotes from "listening sessions" effects a whining tone overall that would have put off a woman like Edith who insisted it was "typical perversion" of "original sin" in women that found the "personal outlook to be exaggerated unwholesomely; in the first place, her inclination to center both her activities and those of others about her own person . . . expressed by vanity, desire for praise and recognition. . . ." (p.45)

In analyzing this perversion of the personal attitude, Edith seems to describe the current feminist insistence on "woman's experience" as the final criteria for "woman's truth." "It is the whole person about whom we are speaking: that human being in whom God's image is developed most purely, in whom the gifts which the Creator has bestowed do not wither but bloom, and in whom the faculties are balanced in conformity to God's image and God's will . . . the drive for this. . . particularly strong in woman is well related to her particular destiny of companion and mother. . . One can become suitable for this double duty if one has the *correct personal attitude*. . . woman does not possess this by nature. . . rather the initial form. . . is a debasement and blockage of this true attitude. On the one hand, it is a bias to secure her own personal importance by which she may busy herself and others; also, it is an inability to endure criticism which is experienced as an attack on her person. These yearnings for importance, yearnings towards unlimited recognition, are extended to everything unique to the person. (p.249-250)

Personal union with the Redeemer brings the grace that reverses this self concern and bring about that which fulfills a woman - a fulfillment of that "deepest longing of a woman's heart to give herself lovingly, to belong to another, and to possess this other being completely." (p.52) In the majority of cases this woman is meant to be the helpmate of a man, to stand by his side and to be his other self. " 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." Therefore, Edith's insight concurs with Pope John Paul II that the religious life of virginity is superior over marriage (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women para 82; Stein p. 84, 174) Yet for both the dedicated virgin and the wife/mother "total surrender(to God) . . . is the only adequate fulfillment possible for woman's yearning.

Under the influence of feminism the American Bishop's are less sure. They see the chaste single life as "undoubtedly contribut(ing) to the liberation of women. . ." and marriage and consecrated virginity equal in value. Obviously, on the one hand this puts wifeness and motherhood in a category of oppression, while on the other, lacks the spiritual undergirding so essential to Edith Stein's approach to woman.

Blessed Edith's approach to understanding woman's ethos is also firmly based on Scripture, though not always uncritically so, while late Twentieth Century feminism has difficulty taking Scripture seriously in regard to women. The most used texts are obviously the first three chapters of Genesis which have undergone many different critiques with modern feminists, and Ephesians 5 which is generally rejected for cultural reasons.

From Genesis, Edith gains the base for understanding man and woman as called specifically by God to different though equal ways. Their threefold destiny is the same; 1) to grow into the likeness of God, 2) to procreate 3) to hold dominion over the earth. But they follow their destiny in different ways. "There is a difference, not only in body structure and in particular physiological functions, but also in the entire corporeal life. The relationship of soul and body is different in man and woman; the relationship of soul to body differs in their psychic life as well as that of the spiritual faculties to each other. The feminine species expresses a unity and wholeness of the total psychosomatic personality and a harmonious development of faculties. The masculine species strive to enhance individual abilities in order that they may attain their highest achievements."(p. 177)

The Scriptural priority or pre-eminence of the male is accepted by Edith without resistance. Yet this pre-eminence is understood not as sovereignty over. "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. This signifies that we are to consider the life of the initial human pair as the most intimate community of love, that their faculties were in perfect harmony as within one single being (p.60)

Of course, the original plan was lost in the disobedience of Eve and Adam through a temptation that Edith believes was of a sexual order - an act forbidden. However that may be, it is not that woman was "more easily induced to evil, . . . but because the nature of the temptation was in itself of greater significance to her." (p.62) In God's plan the woman was to be the epitome of acceptance, a stance like that of the Second Person in the Trinity, and the Tempter had to succeed first with her.

It is the result of the loss of the original image of God, and the loss of equality, that concupiscence, domination, and servitude became descriptive of male and female roles. The Holy Father points out that Scripture in itself confirms the existence of "injurious and unjust situations which contain and express the inheritance of the sin which all human beings bear within themselves."(para. 10) Edith Stein presents a detailed picture of the ails of marriage with its perverted relationships: "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."

Despite this ringing indictment of the fallen male, rebellion against male headship brings some of Stein's harshest criticism. She will have none of the over-reaction which marks latter-day feminism. "Then we have the type of the rebellious slave in the emancipated woman: she denies not only her servitude to man but also the God-willed subordination to him; she is set against men by her hostile attitude, but even this attitude of hostility betrays the tie existing between them." (p.181)

As to the question of priesthood for women, Edith states, "The whole tradition speaks against it from the beginning. But in my opinion, even more significant is the mysterious fact emphasized earlier - that 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 To be the Spouse of Christ is the most sublime vocation which has been given, and whoever sees this way open before her will yearn for no other way.”(p.84)

The Holy Father does his most specific exegesis on the text of Ephesians 5 - drawing out the mutuality of the subjection required there. This has the effect of toning down the words describing subjection of women to their mates, while playing up the subjection required of the man to his wife - an emphasis calculated to correct the common misunderstanding that the male role is one of domination or rule-over. He underlines here the profound teaching of his letter that it is a perfect spousal love that underlies all God-mankind; man-woman; Church-the redeemed relationships.

Blessed Edith, too, addresses Ephesians 5. “This passage explains what the Christian concept of marriage should be. Although the Lord Himself has emphasized the indissolubility of marriage and the unity of the couple in one flesh, this unity is more closely defined here.” (p.66)

The American Bishops try to be positive about St. Paul’s teaching about male, female, and marriage , but cast the usual feministic doubt on Scripture as a guide to understanding these relationships with the information that the “details” of Ephesians 5 are “conditioned by cultural patterns.”(para 86).

To concretely address all the problems and opportunities that the rise of consciousness about woman’s meaning and role has raised, Edith places her confident hope in, first of all, God’s grace where no limits exist. To have hope in any human solution is simply piling up problems. But secondly, with utter trust in God, her solution rests in the education of girls and women; an education quite different from that of boys and men and though thoroughly intellectual, nevertheless primarily aware of the unique quality of feminine spirituality that is deeply concerned with life. The ethos of the woman’s soul, that is the inner form of woman created by God, can only be ideally developed to perfect gestalt (p.200) through a careful, thorough, religious education in the hands of “authentic women.” It “does not come about as a matter of course” for original sin impedes, if not opposes such development and leads instead to perversion. (p.45) The largest part of Edith’s writing addresses the principles and problems of women’s education. It is a highly idealistic approach.

Yet, perhaps the lopsidedness of current feminist thinking is meant to convince us that bringing women into full activation of their faculties - first, their authentic humanity; second, heir full womanhood; and third, their unspoiled individuality - is essential for the Church to undertake in a “Catholic system” such as Edith Stein outlines.

Her breadth of vision of God inspires a goal for woman’s soul - the handmaid of the Lord, not found in any current feminist writer, far beyond the insights of the American Bishops, but a close kin to the Holy Father’s “meditation” (as he calls the document, *Mulieris Dignatatem*). She writes,“The soul of woman must therefore be expansive and open to all human beings; it must be quiet, so that no small weak flame will be extinguished by stormy winds; warm so as not to benumb fragile buds; clear, so that no vermin will settle in dark corners and recesses; self-contained, so that no invasions from without can peril the inner life; empty of itself, in order that

extraneous life may have room in it; finally mistress of itself and also of its body, so that the entire person is readily at the disposal of every call.”

9 EDITH STEINS PRESCRIPTION FOR FEMALE EDUCATION

A recent poll reported in *America* (Feb 11,1989) by Andrew Greeley finds that those who went to Catholic schools for more than eight years scored systematically higher on measures of “equality for women” than those who did not attend Catholic schools or attended for less than two years. This seems a fortuitous statistic; after all, that women be accorded equal dignity and worth with men is exactly what Pope John Paul II lines out for us in his latest Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignatatem* “On the Dignity and Vocation of Women,” and equality is the essence of the American Bishop’s draft of the pastoral on women.

But the “equality for women” Greeley reports in the National Opinion Research (NORC)Centers (University of Chicago) social survey has only superficial correlation to what the Pope asks be considered as “equality for women.” In fact, an examination of the questions asked in the survey and their positive answers in support of women’s equality show a basic disagreement with what the Holy Father says “equality” for women entails.

The report considers it a positive indication that Catholic students 1) reject the notions that women should limit themselves to taking care of the home, 2) strongly support women working, 3) reject the notion that wives should support their husbands careers, 4) believe that working mothers do not harm their children by working outside of the home, and 5) agree that it is not necessarily better that the man work and the woman take care of the home.

All of this weight on the side of the emancipated woman whose concerns are more in the world than the home are quite opposite to the call of the Holy Father to the meaning of woman which he sees lying within the heart of the home with marriage and mothering a ‘Vocation of love’ which begs for the total “gift of self.” In “*Familiaris Consortio*” the Pope lent weight to woman’s essential place in the home by stating that “society should be structured in such a way that wives and mothers are not compelled to work outside the home.”

From this survey and information from many sources, evidence is that Catholic schools are forming women whose early intellectual and emotional formation may not support a continued growth in Catholicity, and whose future homes may not foster the orthodox faith. It is precisely these two outgrowths of their Catholic school education that runs counter to the guidance of the Holy Father, and which calls educators to reassess the direction

they have chosen. The final chapters have not been written in the feminist upheaval in the Church, and it will be wisdom not to assume too much.

The survey of NORC is a but a fairly respectable tip of the proverbial iceberg which in this case needs careful circumspection of what lies below the surface. The professed goals of the most militant feminist bodies , Woman-Church, WOC, and WATER among them, is to penetrate Catholic education with the an agenda that many good Catholic teachers and parents simply can't take seriously - the overthrow of Catholic Church governance of clerical hierarchy, the recognition of all sexual "life-styles", the disenfranchisement of the "nuclear family," the moral superiority of abortion, alternative worship forms including witchcraft and paganism, broadening of the understanding of sacrament till the seven sacraments dissolve in indifferentiation, and goddess images for God in total disregard of Trinitarian theology,

Unfortunately, the intent to promote these goals in Catholic schools is serious, and though most teachers are sympathetic with emancipation of persons male and female, it is necessary to guard against false ideas inimical to our tradition that may parade as liberation. Mary Hunt, founder of WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual) and professed lesbian, at the final session of the Woman-Church Convergence summarized," We are committed agents for social change. The future of Women-Church rests with our children. The education of our children is now a serious and important priority for us. When the Pope was here recently, the most frightening part of his otherwise stock-in-trade message was that Catholic schools should be kept pure of the likes of us... It signals to me the need to create centers, schools, think-tanks, retreat centers, theological centers, where feminist approaches would be normative. I believe it is the students of those schools . . .who will be at our conference in 2037."

The reality of our times, intense ideological pressure on education, is noted by many experts including author Allan Bloom and former Secretary for Education, William Bennett. But under particular siege are young women and girls whose particular essential vocation "represents all humans" as "virgin, mother and spouse" (*Mulieris Dignatatem*) is the object of an intense attack which Sandra Schneiders I.H.M., Jesuit School of Theology, Berkely sees as, "as a power struggle perhaps more serious in nature and far-reaching in consequences than any in the history of the Church."

Pope John Paul II has begun to warn about the effects of militant feminism. Young women and girls are daily exposed to teaching in Catholic Schools that may actually pervert their feminine nature. They may need protection, and beyond that, a specialized Catholic education that will prepare them for the kind of equality and vocation that Pope John Paul elevates as alone worthy of their God-given ethos.

There is an emerging consciousness in woman arising in response to the Holy Spirit; that is undeniable. Somehow the time is ripe for a *Christian feminine*, if not a Christian feminism; this blossoming self-consciousness must be treated with respect and guided into its full flowering by a "religious" education such as there has never been before. This education has been idealistically sketched out for us by a prophetic Blessed Edith Stein. Edith Stein, whose multi-faceted work in philosophy and theology is gaining recognition since the publication of her collected works in recent years, and her beatification by Pope John Paul two years ago, has much to say about the education of women. Her profound insights about women and their special educational needs are providentially available at this critical time in American Catholic education. Because these insights are cognizant of the changes

that have occurred in woman's self understanding and attempt to meet the deeper needs of woman's ethos, they bridge the gap that is continually opening between the feministic pressures on the one hand and the reactions the pressures cause on the other.

To appreciate her diagnosis of the needs of woman and her prescription for her educational therapies, we do well to become acquainted with Edith Stein's basic motivations. She is first of all a Catholic convert who wholeheartedly holds to orthodoxy. Some of her most beautiful and meaningful writing exposes a heart filled with love for Jesus, the Eucharist, the Tradition she has embraced, and the Holy Mother of God. The scriptures are basic to her understanding of the vocation of man and woman; she has no trouble with a "certain preeminence" of the man, and the role of woman as his companion and helpmate when this is understood in the freeing context of Jesus Christ.

But strongly second to her Catholicity is her feminism. In this later half of the twentieth century, that orientation needs careful explanation. Edith understood very well the impetus that has called forth feminism - *the sin of having misunderstood authority in the family and the Church as bestowing power and prestige upon its bearer* - not necessarily called "sexism," but generally known as "pride." She sees this as the result of the Fall, its root is the perverted relationship to God which is really the Authority Problem that the advent of the Second Person of the Trinity and the mission of the Third Person will solve for all those who accept and receive both Divine Persons. The evidence of this sin is seen in concupiscence awakened, the subjugation of woman to man, and domination replacing Godly authority.

Somehow, as part of this realization in this Century, Christians are belatedly coming to terms with the full implications of the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in restoring equality between those who bear authority for God and those who are the beneficiaries of that authority. In the Church it is the equality of the hierarchical clergy and the laity; in the home it is the equality of the husband and the wife. It is this very equality that *Mulieris Dignitatem* addresses in strong terms with an expanded understanding of the setting for the Ephesians 5 Pauline teaching on submission. The larger emphasis is mutuality. Headship is not denied by the Holy Father, but he insists that the attitude of its exercise must be as totally subjected to the woman's needs as the woman has traditionally been thought to be subject to the man.

Blessed Edith Stein is most interested in the development of the feminine soul. And in our age, she says, we are "obliged to consider the significance of woman and her existence as a problem." Is this soul somehow different from the masculine soul? Yes, she believes it is. Basically, of course, men and women's completion in the same - to become the likeness of Jesus Christ is everyone's goal. "But the basic material is diverse. God created humanity as man and woman, and He gave to each his and her particular duty in the organism of humanity. . . all natural work has to proceed from the natural foundation."

For Blessed Edith this difference in ethos requires a separate education of boys and girls because "pure development of feminine nature does not come about as a matter of course." There are a great many forces opposed to this development, never more so than in our time, and always "original sin impedes this development." Such education depends on the Holy Spirit, "for only the power of grace can uproot sin and form fallen nature anew." Yet, a qualified education would reduce the "shifting quicksand" that is the plight of most young women's lives. Outside

influences are decisive in the decline of morals and the breakdown of the family - the school as a most powerful outside influence must do its best develop the intellect, emotion and will for the whole spiritual development of woman.

Blessed Edith finds “a strong natural desire for spiritually nourishing values liv(ing) within the soul of woman. She is predisposed to love the beautiful, inspired by the morally exalted, but above all, she is open to the highest earthly values, the inexpressible ones which remain in the essence of the souls themselves. “Therefore, foremost in a girl’s education should be emotionally formative subjects - literature, art, history. But such material must be assimilated in the right way - there is a law which rules this formation, the law of reason. “In order that the soul be rightly formed and not malformed, it must be able to compare and discriminate, weight and measure. It may not be impregnated with an equivocal enthusiasm; it may not be filled with fanaticism; it must attain fine perception and sharp judgment.”

It is not enough any longer for a woman to live and not to ask ‘what’ and “to what purpose?” The development of intellect is important, however, Edith Stein believes it has been overplayed for women in modern education which has a strong masculine bias - i.e. an orientation to the abstract, with a resultant loss of the feminine which is more oriented to the concrete.

Several basic points of reference for an educational plan are developed by Blessed Edith. First, freedom from the notion that schooling should give “a compendium of all the areas of knowledge of our time.” Rather, the formation of a woman should be to give her intelligence capability to familiarize herself with any area of knowledge which will become important for her. This would limit the amount of time given to exact sciences and foreign languages. Secondly girls should be taught “to know and understand the world and people, and learn how to associate with them.” And it is always uppermost in Stein’s mind that that is possible only “within the framework of a right relation to the Creator.” Therefore, religious education “is the most important component of education. This means an “urgent duty to open the child’s path to God.”

“The core curriculum in girl’s schools should be the sort of general education dictated by woman’s nature and vocation: a basic religious education suitable for each age level; at the same time, training in household skills, drawing up a budget, care of children and adolescents, and political-social issues. All this should be not purely theoretical but theoretical and practical at the same timeAffiliated to this would be the purely intellectual fields; here division would enter according to individual aptitude and inclination, and the transfer into the vocational school would be prepared.”

For Stein knows well that the modern woman may well have to earn her own living, and beyond that possibility, she believes that every woman has a contribution to make to the larger society after the demands of child-rearing and family are lessened. “The vocation is the place where the individual is incorporated into the community, or into the function which he has to fulfill in the organism of the community. The singular mission of the working woman is to fuse her feminine calling with her vocational calling, and by means of that fusion, to give a feminine quality to her vocational calling.” Pope John Paul underlines this when he warns about “the threat of masculinization” as woman finds her place in the world of work.

It is, of course, impossible to relate the depth and breadth of Blessed Edith's education for girls in a short article. But basic to all of it is her idea of that "feminine quality" that must be given educational support - even if her separate education for the sexes is no longer feasible. "The feminine" here also lies concurrent with the Pope's insights on woman. Blessed Edith writes, "I tried to draw the picture of woman's soul as it would correspond to the eternal vocation of woman, and I term its attributes as expansive, quiet, empty of self, warm and clear. We are not able to attain this condition by willing it, it must be effected through grace" - a grace prayerfully mediated through education.

The final goal for woman's education is threefold; 1) for each woman to be developed in "authentic humanity," 2) for her womanhood to be whole and holy, and 3) for "an unspoiled individuality" to be apparent as God leads her.

Our age demands that Christian women "pave the way to heaven" by a "knowledge of life, prudence, and practical ability." That means "women who are morally steadfast," and whose lives are 'imperturbably rooted in God.' Such should be the goals of every Catholic school in regard to girls, for these schools are engaged in forming first souls, and then the families of the future and with them the strength or weakness of those families in the faith of Jesus Christ.

In confirmation of Blessed Edith's insights, Pope John Paul II advises us that "the woman is at the center, she represents all humans, and "all humans are entrusted to her", therefore she must be helped to become the "perfect woman," imaging Mary who is "as woman was intended to be in creation."

10 THREE STEPS TO DEEPER FAITH

The worst fears about cynicism in America is confirmed by recent research, “ employees don’t trust their bosses, store clerks have contempt for customers, voters are too disillusioned to vote, college students determine to get theirs however they can, entrepreneurs do others before they can do them, ordinary people despise ordinary people.” So writes Don Oldenburg of the *Washington Post* in a review of a recent book, (*The Cynical Americans: Living and Working in an Age of Discontent and Disillusion*).

The statistics quoted from the survey upon which these conclusions are drawn find one in three who believe most people have little control over their lives, cannot think for themselves, or reach their goals. It is immediately apparent to the Christian that such attitudes reflect total ignorance of, or complete loss of the deeper dimensions of faith - faith in the promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a bleak picture that, however, beckons to those who are called to Catholic evangelism. “The fields are white unto harvest.”

Doubt can be a good thing. It can and often does stimulate people to find faith. But if active seeking is delayed, it has detrimental effects. It leaves people disillusioned and in near despair of ever finding meaning to their lives, with the side effect of a chronic state of distrust and dislike of others. It works to the evangelist’s favor that most people today recognize that these embedded negative attitudes are bad for them emotionally, mentally and physically. The appeal for faith can begin with an appeal for enlightened self-interest. More and more research points to the necessity of a positive outlook on life for good health. Dr. O. Carl Simonton, among others, has determined that depression and despair are factors in numbers of illnesses including cancer.

A recent news article reported on the effects of religious practice on health. A professor of family and community medicine in West Virginia looking at studies that asked respondents for information about a number of variables in their lives concluded that religion makes a difference. “Not attending church or synagogue on a regular basis actually appeared to a risk factor. It seemed that most of the time the practice or experience of religion or religious belief was a salutary factor.”

Victor Frankl, the psychiatrist who had his theories tested in the most exacting of all conceivable laboratories - the Nazi concentration camps, has this to say:

It is self-evident that belief in a super-meaning - whether as a metaphysical concept or in the religious sense of Providence - is of the foremost psycho-therapeutic and psycho-hygienic importance. A genuine faith springing from inner strength, such a belief adds

immeasurably to human vitality. To such a faith there is, ultimately, nothing that is meaningless.⁸⁵

Having meaning in life is what all people covet. Those who desire to bring people to Christ can use this common need in order to show that it can be met by cultivating a deep faith. We have all met people who in the face of the utmost difficulties bear up with grit, grace and a kind of joy. They commonly tell us that it is because of God - that all that has happened is somehow part of His loving Providential care and that they expect everything "to work together for good." Like Joseph of the Old Testament they say, "Man meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." This is enviable faith. If we have it by God's grace, He can help us to share such Good News with others.

But doesn't the Church teach that faith is a gift? If a person has not been selected as a receiver of that gift how can he or she be responsible for ill-boding spirits of doubt and skepticism?

Many of those to whom we seek to bring the Good News may have received baptism and the other sacraments of the Church, yet they may be suffering from what they themselves perceive to be a lack of faith in God. They believe active, real faith to be a priceless thing - they can tell the difference of the lives of faith-filled persons and their own wilted day-to-day existence. How can they receive a gift of faith and get free of bleakness? How can they work toward a day when they see life through new lenses - not rose-colored with false hopes, but clear lenses focused on God with belief in ultimate goodness, beauty and truth that is not just "out there," but here present?

We can't tell them that the way to secure faith is easy, but we can assure them that the steps are simple. The seeker may not even be sure he believes in God; even this is not an impossible obstacle to the efficacy of the steps to faith proposed here. The problem in presenting them is that though the opportunity has been given to the evangelist to listen up to this point, the seeker is probably still under the influence of his negative, blue outlook. He will then reject these steps with the same cynicism that sours his life in other dimensions. He may have trained himself to ridicule these very proposals time and again. Here is where the evangelist falls back on his own faith life - total trust in the work of the Holy Spirit and fervent prayer. Then he can continue to suggest that the debilitating enemy of despair in his friend, that drains every aspect of life of its joy, can be overcome if unbelief can be shaken off just enough to take three steps.

The first of these steps is the scariest but the most important - it is the Sacrament of Penance. Before we throw up our hands in defeat at the thought of selling this idea, consider the reasoning that can be lovingly presented by the concerned evangelist.

There can be many causes of faith loss or lack, and no faith foundation can be built until they are faced. If we can stimulate a desire for a multi-roomed, substantial house of faith, we can show how it is impossible to build it on sand, even as Jesus told us. If the very footing of personhood is wrongly placed, we can't expect to hold onto the gift of faith even if it is given. If a genuine faith that will give personal meaning to life is truly desired, the searcher is forced to consider the state of his own life in relationship to God. He may generally feel that he is not to blame for, and he is powerless to do anything about nagging disbelief. But Adrienne vonSpeyr analyzed that conclusion of innocence:

yet, at the very moment he concludes that he is not to be

⁸⁵ Frank!, Victor M.D. *The Doctor and the Soul*, Knopf 1965 p. 33

blamed, he often finds himself in a deep disquiet and the suspicion of some hidden guilt.⁸⁶

She devotes the rest of her book to encouraging each of us to use the Sacrament of Confession as the first rung of a ladder that leads to steadfast faith. As Catholics we can present this sacrament as one that eliminates the guesswork of a thousand paths that claim to bring us closer to God, but are, if not deadends, merely circuitous routes that multiply the steps beyond our endurance to persevere. This step can be convincingly presented as the shortcut to belief.

If the person standing bent over with the burden of doubt and disbelief balks at the shortcut, the goal of a firm personal faith needs to be set before his nose like the proverbial carrot to the donkey's. That may mean that he needs to be persistent in plodding along behind the dangling carrot for the miles God has allotted - perhaps that means many visits with his Confessor. (Here a prayer is offered that that Confessor will not be one who lauds doubt and unbelief. The penitent himself needs to pray even an unbelieving prayer that God will provide a good confessor.) When those miles are accomplished, each one of them essential to getting him to the 'right place', the string will be cut, and the carrot will drop into his hungry mouth. And not only this one carrot, which is only the downpayment of many more.

It does take persistence for the Sacrament of Penance to do its super-natural work. We don't expect the hide of a heart toughened through years of sarcasm to melt away, or the scarred, blurred way of looking at life to be cleared in an instant, though it has been known to happen. Jesus healed many blind people; who knows when he will pick out another unlikely candidate and do it all in an instant. In truth, he does heal completely at each sacramental penance, but it takes the hardened heart time to soften and believe it. Unbelief is, after all, what we are working against. Adrienne vonSpeyr further writes:

Perhaps we have confessed properly, but paid little attention to what the confessor said, convinced that we really know better and have no need of advice. What the confessor says is the same as he has been saying for weeks and years, and, if it has served no purpose all that time, neither will it now. We fail to hear the words as what it truly is, the constantly repeated admonition of the Holy Spirit; we know already the lesson and its uselessness for us. It is high time, then, for us to admit that up to now, we have never heard the words properly. We consider we have done enough in speaking to God about our sins, and never once realize that, in this dialogue, what God says to us is far more important and effectual.⁸⁷

As evangelists we are not unaware of our own deafness in the confessional, so it is not impossible to allow time for those we are temporarily encouraging. As von Speyr tells us, "The act of confession implies a movement toward God and submission to his will." That is why we are guiding our doubting friend to making this first step. The very act of going to this sacrament, regardless of the possibility of a deaf response at first, is a request for faith.

The second step is to present to our doubter an idea of begging - yes, begging for the gift of faith. Beg. The very idea is distasteful to Americans who have been raised to proudly prize self-sufficiency and independence. A beggar is a pitiful, even loathsome person, one we swear that we will never be. But there is a necessary urgency

⁸⁶ Von Speyr, Adrienne, *Confession, the Encounter with Christ in Penance*, Herder and Herder 1964 p.11

⁸⁷ *Ibid* p. 174

about the idea of begging. The word itself means “to make an urgent and humble plea.” Emphasize the word “urgent.” How badly does our friend want the transformed outlook on life that faith grants, how important does he think it is for happiness in this life and the next? How sick and tired is he of being sick and tired? He may have taken pride in the wittiness of sheer derision, or of being the intellectual nihilist, but through confession he has approached self-honesty and begins to see pride turn to dust and ashes. He is ready to understand what Jesus meant when he said:

And I tell you, ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?⁸⁸

Ask, seek, knock. I have it on good authority that the Greek here implies “ask and keep on asking,” seek and keep on seeking,” “knock and keep on knocking.” Jesus tells a story about this. A widow is so persistent in demands upon a judge who really couldn’t care less, he finally hears her case and vindicates her against her enemy.⁸⁹

How difficult is it to beg? Does the seeker doubt his heart is really in it because he doesn’t yet believe? But he wants, he really wants the abundant life of faith? We with him desire it be given as that heavenly gift, and soon we believe he will realize with us that faith is really Jesus himself. He is the gift. We all begin by saying, “Jesus, I need you,” “Jesus I want you,” before we can say, “Jesus, I love you.”

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In gravel-voiced Gert Behenna’s famous talk that convinced so many people to follow her to sobriety, she relates the incident that changed her life. After friends told her about the reality of God and faith, she sank to her knees in the privacy of her room and said, “Sir, if you are anywhere around, please help me.” He was there! That was the beginning of her new life.

While we wait with our friend for the answer, we can together exercise reason. St. Paul realized fully that Christian faith rests on the acceptance of just one fact - the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Here reason comes to our aid as we beg for faith. Consider: is it really possible that eleven men went out into the world proclaiming the fact of the resurrection and that for that proclamation ten of them experienced death in the most painful and dreadful ways - all this for a lie? Could the apostles really have left their safe homes and happy families to preach the resurrection of Jesus when they knew all along that he had not come forth from the tomb, and that they

⁸⁸ Luke 12:9-13

⁸⁹ Luke 12:9-13

lied when they said they had seen him alive on many occasions. When belief in the resurrection takes hold of our souls, faith is a foregone conclusion; the rest of the negative habits are condemned to obliteration.

Every spiritual writer agrees that the clincher to receiving faith is to begin to thank God for sending this precious gift. This is the third step. If we think of this faith-gift in terms of an air-drop, we know that we must be in the place where the plane will drop the life-giving bundle. It will do no good to be miles away. Like the right place for an air-drop, there is, after all, an attitude necessary to receive. It is an attitude of expectancy and gratitude. The humble soul's conditions have been cultivated by the first two steps. Now is the time to practice saying out-loud and hearing it said even without feeling, "Thank you, Lord, for the gift of faith; I do believe, help Thou my unbelief." St Paul writes:

The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.⁹⁰

In the end, this faith is salvation. We want ourselves and our friends to be saved from the bitter world of cynicism and begin to experience everyday the joys of faith which we are assured lead to eternal life.

⁹⁰ Romans 10:8-9

11 POPE JOHN PAUL II'S THREE LITTLE WORDS

“Does your spouse get your love or leftovers?” asks Erma Bombeck in one of her own favorite columns. “Do you give your wife the attention you give Abdul-Jabbar? Do you pamper her as you do your golf clubs?” “Wives, do have the same pride in your husbands achievements that you felt when you got the mold off the grouting in the shower?”

It is something like that that Pope John Paul II is talking about in his Apostolic Letter, “Mulieris Dignatatem,” “On the Dignity and Vocation of Women.”

“This is not a good year for infidelity,” writes Lisa Velders of Knight-Ridder News Service in 1988. “In the springtime, when love was supposed to be in bloom, a leading presidential candidate was caught keeping company with a bosomy blonde. It was his undoing. In late summer, the movie, ‘Fatal Attraction’ was released. The story line” Happily married man has an affair, then discovers that it wasn’t the lady he chose, but the tiger.”

It is something like that that Pope John Paul II is talking about in his Apostolic Letter.

“The marriage may have been in heaven, but increasingly these days the financial arrangements have been made in a lawyer’s office before the wedding ceremony.” Written by a staff writer in my local paper, the article is captioned, “When the party of the first part, marries the party of the second part, IT’S NO PARTY.”

It is something like that that Pope John Paul II is talking about, too. He boils down all his insight into marriage into three little words.

You think you know them? Maybe, “I love you”?

The Pope’s three words are the deeper meaning of “I love you.”

He asserts these words at least fourteen times in his letter. It is clear that “gift of self is a concept that lies at the heart of his understanding of Christian marriage. Sometimes he expands this to four words “total gift of self,” or “sincere gift of self.”

Not only a key to the happy marriage, these same words tell each married person how to “fully find himself.” How much time and effort Americans are spending on a search for themselves, and how often does that personal search disrupt family tranquility! The meaning and fulfillment of self lies in the opposite direction, says the Holy Father. “To say that man (“man” in the papal letter addresses man and woman in the classic sense) is created in the image and likeness of God means that man is called to exist ‘for others

What this mutual self-giving means in the nitty-gritty of everyday life, and the solutions it brings to many of the problems of marriage are gleaned St. Paul's famous passage in Ephesians 5. Addressing it the Holy Father emphasizes the words "mutual subjection." In these words "gift of self" comes into its own for both the husband and the wife.

Because the woman's self-giving has received the most attention in this passage, John Paul puts weight on the husband's need for a like self-giving. Husbands are to love their wives. "Love them because of that special and unique bond whereby in marriage a man and a woman become 'one flesh.' In this love there is a fundamental affirmation of the woman as a person. This affirmation makes it possible for the female personality to develop fully and be enriched."

A woman beatified by John Paul can help us with his meaning. Possibly because of an affinity between them as philosophers, and in the Christian feminism they both champion, Blessed Edith Stein (*The Collected Works of Edith Stein Part II, Woman*, ICS 1987) often seems to anticipate the Pope's message. She explains how the husband gives a "gift of self".

"In Christian marriage, the husband as head of the family community is concerned with its health: not only does he strive according to his powers to procure its livelihood and worldly 'success,' but also, he must contribute his share to its spiritual well-being. . . This means that sometimes he will guide and lend a helping hand . . . He will aid in the development of the talents and energies of his wife and children whenever he can and whenever need be. If he has to deal with weaker natures and limited abilities, if he observes a lack of courage and self-confidence, he will try to draw out the hidden talents. . . His duties as head of the family (are) to make sure of the order and harmony of family life, to see to it that every member is made not only to care for his own individual development but also to consider the others and practice the self-denial required in the performance of his household duties. And finally, through concern for the well-ordered natural life of each individual and the entire house, he must not neglect the family's spiritual life. In his own small community, the husband should imitate Christ as head of the Church; he should consider his greatest mission to lead the entire family in the imitation of Christ and, according to his powers, to further all seeds of grace which are stirring in them. The more intimate his own union with the Lord, so much the more will be succeed."

A tall order of self-denial for any man! This is the fruit of the Pope's three little words, a true description of what "gift of self" means for the man in marriage.

If self-giving on the part of the husband is called for in mutual subjection, what does the same "total gift of self" mean for the woman? The same Ephesians passage calls for "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife." The Pope writes, "A woman's dignity is closely connected with the love which she receives by the very reason of her femininity; it is likewise connected the love which she gives in return. . . Woman can only find herself by giving love to others." The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way. The mutual gift of the person in marriage opens to the gift of a new life, a new human being, who is also a person in the likeness of his parents. In this openness, in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman discovers herself through a sincere gift of self." Blessed Edith makes clear how the woman responds to "total self-giving."

“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.”

The Pope reminds all that in the Kingdom “to serve means to reign.” “A gift of self” man to woman and woman to man results in “unity of the two” whose model in the Holy Trinity’s “unity of three.” In a marriage exemplifying such total self-giving, Erma Bombeck would find few of the flaws that read so hilariously, but live out so painfully; there would not even be a thought of infidelity; all material goods of the one would belong to the other - no need for legal protections; and personal defects of character so often destructive to marriage would gradually but surely be transformed by the grace of Christ.

12 A RESPONSE TO THE OFFICE OF FAMILY MINISTRY OF MY ARCHDIOCESE

As Catholic wife, mother, grandmother, and continuing student of Scripture and theology, I have a few comments on your letter to pastors of December in regard to the scripture readings for Holy Family Sunday. The first sentence in your suggestions assumes that today's culture is better (holier?) than the culture of the First Century. Today's culture is not the norm by which cultures are judged. A Christian judges culture by laying it next to the law of love which governs the Redeemed Order. This love is defined by Jesus and St. Paul as obedience and submission ("if you love me obey," John 14,15,16; I Corinthians 13). Christians by the power of the Spirit build the Redeemed Order in accord with God's Original Order (Genesis 1-3). For further explication of the three orders, Original, Fallen and Redeemed, as they relate to the role of man and woman, please refer to Blessed Edith Stein's "Woman." Blessed Edith makes clear the importance of judging cultural things according to their conformity to either the Fallen or the Redeemed Orders. The Redeemed Order esteems and prizes attitudes that the Fallen Order despises. It is the old, and dangerous problem of naming the good "evil," and the evil, "good" when these orders are ignored and judged by the same standards.

The Romans neither wrote the letters of St. Paul, nor were his letters and the theology he developed in them influenced by Roman culture. The theology of St. Paul's letters concerning the role of man and woman is thoroughly in accord with both the Original Order and the Redeemed Order laid out in the New Testament, and is wholly, word for word inspired by the Holy Spirit, says Vatican II in *Dei Verbum*. However, if St. Paul's words are seen only through the consciousness of the Fallen Order, there is no comprehension of his use of words like "authority," "submission" etc. These words can only be comprehended by those who have accepted Jesus as Lord, and have determined to follow him in obedience and submission of their will to the Will of God. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the exemplar of this submission - which means "sent under" and implies a mission. It is a mission of strength and spiritual vision which separates Christians making them different from all others.

Woman in the Redeemed Order exemplifies this wholly equal and honorable role and becomes the heart of this different community which practices obedience to God's will by obedience to those who are given godly authority and exercise it. Here is a Redeemed Order's culture whose very heart is submission. It has been understood and accepted as such by the saints ever since the death and resurrection of Christ. They without exception extol and

hope to be imitators of the submission of Christ by submission to those God has set in authority. In this, as with all secular culture, our own culture is a-Christian, if not anti-Christian.

Even had Roman culture influenced St. Paul, as you assure priests it did, women were not held as chattel by Roman society, which held slaves as chattel, but not women. Even by classical times (long before Christ) *manus* was rare in Roman marriage. Instead, women were citizens, held property entirely distinct from their husbands, and could put an end to marriage at will. A woman could recover her dowry if her husband divorced her or died. To write, therefore, that Jesus' love is not to hold oneself in submission or to be held in submission is to use words as they are commonly used in the Fallen Order, and obviously not to comprehend their true meaning, or even to understand love as Christians must understand it. Love has the very nature of sacrifice. It is not husbands who demand submission; love demands submission. Love is submission. God himself shows us that love on the cross. It cannot be demanded by another, it can only be freely given. That is why, "wives submit" is said to the woman, not to the man. Women in their free gift of self to their husbands in the Redeemed Order are signs of this love. Without submission there is no sign that points to what Love really is.

Women are not the only sex to be asked to submit. The Redeemed Order requires that the role of authority submit itself to those served by that authority. The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve - and he is the Author; the authority. He left the apostles as authorities in his place, but they were to serve as he served. Men have been given this authority both in the Original Order and in the Redeemed Order, and there is no suggestion that this makes them more honorable, more important or any such thing than those they serve. To think so is not to grasp the Lord's intent in establishing the Redeemed Order, but to fall back on definitions of the Fallen Order where authority is domination, and obedience is subservience. The role of authority and the role of obedience are equal in value and honor in the Kingdom of God; the ultimate model is that of the Father and the Son. The Father is not more God because he has authority, the Son is not less God because he obeys.

The last paragraph of your suggestions is not translatable into Christian ideas. Christian submission does not imply any of the negatives written here. If you want to help pastors preach on these scriptures, perhaps Philippians 2:5-13 could help.

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in 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. 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 and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

May I suggest the scriptures noted above? There are countless others, because the Bible consistently presents disobedience (or the independent spirit) as sin, and obedience (submission of self-will) as the way to salvation.

Because it is the Feast of the Holy Family, another year I would hope that you would help bring forth the truth and beauty of obedience as seen in the persons of St. Joseph, the Blessed Mother, and in Jesus, the Second

Person of the Trinity, who became man for our sake. You might then relate this ineffable beauty of obedience to the role of woman, and it will be seen in all its Christian glory and strength. Then what power will be there to transform the vision that men and women have of their place in the Redeemed Order as they are empowered to replicate it in their families!

13 THEY MUST BE CAREFULLY TAUGHT

When the teacher Anna sings the song of our title in *The King and I*, she is sadly realizing that prejudice in the mind of little Siamese children results only from the careful instilling of those prejudices by their teachers and parents. Prejudices transmitted to youth seem practically indelible. Therefore, those who have powerful prejudices to transmit and who are directly involved, or wish to be involved in teaching our children, had better not go unchallenged. In a struggle to gain control of the Church, those who would change her into an unrecognizable form are patient enough to wait for the propagandizing of a generation still in intellectual and emotional formation. Our children are being “carefully taught” a set of prejudices that will not be easily corrected.

Many of us have considered that the outrageous goals of Woman-Church, WATER (Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual), WOC (Woman’s Ordination Conference) and the like, place their proponents outside of the serious consideration as Christians intent on carrying on the traditions of Christ. Instead they appear to be highly motivated people who belong to the “lunatic fringe,” and who are frenetically building some kind of new religion - a cult or sect, but not related to Catholic Christianity.

Statements of these people like:

. . .we subvert, turn around from below - those foundations on which the patriarchy have set their great ladders on our backs.. . and leave them to collapse into the void.

. . .the right wing and the pope have organized against lesbian and gay rights and against reproductive rights. . .the limitations [thus] placed on your sexuality are central to the limitation that patriarchy wants to place on your self-definition.

. . . claiming our power is not knowing our place anywhere and driving them all nuts.

. . . monotheism is but imperialism in religion.

. . .changing rituals is very important ‘lest in times of trial’ women revert to ‘old forms of prayer’ . . .

. . . Woman-Church rejects as fundamentalistic the belief that truth could have been revealed 'once and for all' to be preserved by the Church as the deposit of faith.

seem so far removed from Catholic belief and practice as to present no threat to the Church, the mere ravings of an antinomianism which the Church has stolidly withstood for centuries.

But a new element has entered into the ancient hostility against the Church - the antagonists are within and plan to work from within, chiefly by "consciousness-raising" until their goals are reached. In an article in U.S. Catholic, John Deedy quotes Sr. Joan Chittister, prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Eire, Pennsylvania, and feminist columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter*, "Where will Catholic schools be fifteen and twenty years from now? Catholic schools will be exactly where the vision of the church is," She then asks for more planning, "Tell me you want the church to an effective party in this society - in which case we've got to plan, and we've got to deliver that effectiveness to people who are themselves in flux and without the resources to do it."

And what kinds of plans does Chittister herself have in mind? From her keynote address of the Woman in the Church conference in Washington D.C. in 1986, we can reach some conclusions. "The women's movement," she said, "is a growing, swelling, ongoing, cultural current of social change." She praised the strength, endurance, intelligence and feminism of women, and castigated patriarchy wherever it is found, especially in the governance of the Church. Later talking to reporter Donna Steichen, she admitted that the women at the conference, most of them nuns over 50 from dying religious orders, reflect the constituency of Catholic feminism. How will this feminist movement she represents really change the Church then? No doubt through the "careful planning" of Catholic school education by Chittister and those like her.

In October of 1987, Mary Hunt, theologian, co-founder of WATER and professed lesbian declared, "We are committed agents for social change. The future of Woman-Church rests with our children. The education of our children is now a serious and important priority for us. When the pope was here recently, the most frightening part of his otherwise stock-in-trade message was that Catholic schools should be kept pure of the likes of us. It signals to me the need to create centers, schools, think-tanks, retreat centers, theological centers where feminist approaches would be normative. I believe it is the students of those schools . . . who will be in our conference in 2037."

Donna Steichen who also reports on this conference for Fidelity (December '87), says these women are

. . . childless lesbians - it is other people's children they seek. Many of the women at this conference are teaching in Catholic schools, working in diocesan offices, chancery offices, parishes, retreat centers and youth programs where feminism is often the dominant force. If feminists lost their official position within the Church they will lose access to the young and most of their destructive power.

A generation of children and many of their parents, too, have been left ignorant of their faith, and confused if not converted by the ceaseless exposure to the catechism of secular radicalism and bad theology in parochial schools, Catholic colleges, religious education programs and pastoral ministries of all kinds.

Anger against the Church does communicate itself into the emotions of the young, even if the actual intellectual content is vague and an inaccurate representation of what the dissenters have taught. In a leadership kit used to discover young people with leadership capabilities issued by the Vocation Office of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis, St. Paul, the question is asked, "How would you like to change the Church?"

A teenage girl educated in a Catholic high school whose taped interview is used as an example in this kit, has been carefully taught - well, at least emotionally. Her answer:

I'd like to have female priests and get rid of the patriarchal system [sic], it's just a bunch of poop. But anyways, I won't go on. If you'd like to know why, I could tell you though. Because you know there's, what was it,? I don't remember where it was, but there's a song about it and it says . . . Oh! It just make me so mad, I'm going to use up all your tape. But I was sitting at the Mass one day at Nativity and this priest said, "There are no females in the priesthood because Christ wanted it that way!" And just went, "hooh, hooh, wait a minute!" Because here we've learned from church history that in the beginning there were females who were practicing the religion and leading the religion. And in the Scripture it says, "Gentile or Jew, woman or man, servant or free no more." I just kind of figure, hey, he must mean it it he's gonna put it in the Bible. But it's a lot harder for humans to understand it, I think. It makes me mad."

Her taped witness in such a "tool" to educate other young leaders remains a continuing proponent for view counter to the Church. It expresses a form of prejudice and emotional valuing that is being "carefully taught." The result is an angry, though woefully ignorant, young woman, so prejudiced that she may never be open to the truth.

And who is responsible for communicating this anger? A radiant, smiling face of a lively-looking, middle-aged woman catches the eye on the January 1989 newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. Mary Connelly, CSJ, teacher of religion at Cretin-Derham Hall high school in St. Paul, writes a reflection on the role and life of church women, which she teaches our young female leader.

I struggle with the young women with whom I work, teach and play,. As a faculty we work hard, and are successful at teaching leadership skills, assertiveness, a strong sense of dignity and respect for self and others, intellectual confidence, and pride. Yet, when it comes to leadership in the church, what can we promise?

How can a young woman of seventeen maintain hope for the possibility of church leadership? She notes that the declining number of priests will have to change things. Guys her age aren't running to seminary so, she believes, change will happen by virtue of numbers. She will be priest, but it might not be until she is in her mid-30's. In the meantime, she will challenge and question every priest in town if he doesn't speak with respect and dignity of women and their leadership potential in the church.

Here a nun-teacher actively promotes a perverse role-change agenda wholly against explicit Church teaching. In what sense is what she is doing religious education? Archbishop Cardinal John O'Connor commenting on this nationwide problem says,

The most critical weakness of the Church in the United States today is not lack of attention to the social gospel, but lack of education in the faith.

How we parents who have experienced the often perverse influence of Catholic schools on our children during the last twenty years can substantiate that criticism!

Andrew Greeley (America, February 11, '89) concluded that those who went to Catholic schools for more than eight years score higher on measures of "support for the equality of women" which by his definition in the report means: support for the working women, rejection of woman's support for her husband's career, rejection of belief in harm done to children when the woman works outside the home. etc. These attitudes are the respectable tip of the iceberg; they should make us realize that our Catholic schools are being used as a propagandist training ground for future feminists.

In their attempted deconstruction of the Church through education, women who are interested in forming the next generation according to their views have found a powerful way of subverting the church by indoctrinating the girls who will be the center of the Catholic homes of the future. The emotional energy of the home will be used to subvert apostolic faith, the Scriptures, and the Magisterium. A disobedient spirit is deliberately fostered.

How can this concerted drive to undermine the apostolic faith be thwarted? First, we must become fully informed about what is being taught by religion teachers, sociology teachers, history teachers, in short, all the teachers in our Catholic schools. Mother Angelica, in her forthright manner, says it is important that parents become suspicious about what is going on in the schools they really want to trust. "We must stand up and be counted. It seems that the minority rules, and this is because we won't stand up for the truth . . . Don't be afraid: defend your faith! There is a spirit of deception and false teachers are everywhere."

Msg. Eugene Clark of St. John's University, on the same television program adds, "We promised Catholic parents that we would provide a real Catholic education for our children. Those who are not delivering should be in a lot of trouble. Many teachers are just making it up as they go along. A teacher teaching falsely is displaying great disobedience to Godly authority. We must stand up and be very explicit, "that is not the teaching of the Catholic Church!" Then we must remove our child if they continue teaching these things. We've been too polite . . . We can't trust the schools; they are not that reliable. We must return to doing formal teaching at home."

At Holy Angels High School, where tuition payments for four teenagers at one time kept our family's financial belt tight, a male teacher had ridiculed two girls in his class who believed that the Church taught rightly concerning birth control. My son came home ashamed that he lacked the courage, and had failed to come to their defense, when actually he shared their beliefs. I decided to confront the teacher myself. When asked if he was a practicing, believing Catholic, he told me it was none of my business.

At the same time this "religion" teacher was forming classrooms of youngsters into doubting questioners of the faith, a woman who later "came out" was teaching in an adjoining classroom that homosexuality and lesbianism were as meritorious as heterosexual marriages. Of course, neither of my examples are especially extreme; they are happening everywhere.

We cannot allow the continued propagation of alien ideas in our schools. If feminists have recognized how important instilling their values in young women are for the radical changes they require in the Church, we

must come to understand the critical need of a reform of the education of Catholic girls for the preservation of Catholic faith. We can find a basis for such an education in the ideals of Blessed Edith Stein, recently published in the second book of her collected works, titled *Woman*. No one knew better how the formation of girls by women was a key to the way people will come to live with God and humanity than she.

Both the Woman-Church advocates and Blessed Edith know especially that the education of the girls is important to the future of the Church, the education of girls and women; they must be “carefully taught.” Let us be sure that it is someone of Edith Stein’s persuasion and not a feminist who controls that education.

14 THERE'S MORE TO WOMAN THAN MEETS THE EYE:

Notes of a Kitchen Theologian

As a wife, mother, and grandmother, I have been caught up in the feminist controversy despite myself. Without theological credentials, along with thousands of women, I've been forced by the vehemence of the discussion outside of myself, and by my own inner search as a woman, to become a theologian - a student of theology. That is, I find myself in the Vatican II document on Revelation where the Fathers write:

This tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. . . This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf Luke 2:19, 51) through the intimate understanding of the spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. (Dei Verbum II 8)

I understand that John Henry Cardinal Newman's theology stands behind those words; and he has described me, housewife that I am, as one who contributes to the development of doctrine by contemplation, the hearing of authentic preaching, and the study of the word of God. Of course, there are guidelines to follow in order to qualify as one of the "sensus fidelium." These require one to be educated by the Church and the Scriptures so that "spiritual and intellectual growth (take) place at the same time and place." Then Newman encourages me to share this heart-knowledge by stating that it is my "privilege to speak out and the Church's duty to speak back . . . equally warmly and equally definitely."

We, whom I call "kitchen-theologians" are not the only women interested in contributing to the developing doctrine - shall we call it, The Doctrine of Mankind? Rosemary Radford Ruether (*America*, March 1 '86) and other feminist theologians (*National Catholic Reporter* "Women Doing Theology") are making able use of the press for input to that doctrine. But as fully half of women are still at home with their families, they too need to find a voice to bring their insights to this development which will effect the lives of every Catholic man, woman and child. The Doctrine of Mankind which is in the process of coming to birth (the gestation period may be very long) is about the role and meaning of male and female from the point of view of the Creator - the Truth about man and woman. Only the

Doctrine of the Holy Trinity will have more importance in defining relationships among the People of God.

The home-half of women are not the only American women who find few of the “feminist theologians” speaking for them. If the signatures being added daily to the 44,000 already gathered by Women for Faith and Family have anything to say about it, there are many among the working women who don't care for the agendas mapped out for them by Ruether and company.

What is the ultimate meaning of man and woman? We don't know. The Church has not defined them. Yet there always has been a deep sense among the People of God about what male and female are all about, a sense well rooted in Scripture. It is obvious from their physical bodies and the function of those bodies, and also from the roles in which the Holy Spirit has engaged man and woman through Salvation History. With few exceptions (which when examined prove the rule) these roles have been consistent. It is our modern age that has begun to doubt both the bodily function - the rules of fruitfulness, and the historic role as being the last word. That doubt mixed with, in some cases, justified resentment, has boiled into the upheaval known as “feminism.”

It has both a negative and a positive aspect. Though at first glance, Dr. Ruethers contribution is negative - by her own admission she would undermine the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church by introducing distortions that are divisive, a-holy, non-universal, and non- apostolic, (see last paragraphs of her *America* article) she and others of like mind are forcing a sorting out; that much is positive. False values, even sinful values, have attached themselves to both the function of male and female and the roles they have lived in the Church and in the home.

It is sadly true that these values have worked to reduce the woman's worth as a human being, and have elevated the masculine as the more valuable, worthy gender. This falsity needs to be wrested from mankind's consciousness because it is alien to God's expressed intent, but it must be done without irreparable damage to the truth about man and woman. Devaluing woman is part of the world's flawed way that has been demonstrated anthropologically time and again. Understanding woman as less than man has made the male egocentric, power hungry and domineering; while at the same time it has tended to cause the female to become manipulative, whining, and duplicit. In these negative ways, the weak react against the strong in order to keep their identity from being swallowed up.

The Church has not been immune from catching a good dose of the world's diseased values. These distressing assumptions have been all mixed up with the revealed truth about man and woman, and have formed an undifferentiated mass which is a seed bed of confusion and anger. In the Church the picture is more complicated than the home, which is its genotype, because males have authority in both, but response to that authority, clearly female in the home, is both male and female (laity) in the church, and the feminine stance of response is expected then from the total laity.

Along with just about every Catholic woman I know, I've been confused about the Church and the way it perceives woman, or the feminine role (laity). I feel acutely the battles centering around the feminine in the Church; about sexist language in Scripture and liturgy, women priests, girl altar

servers, and all the questions about women's status in the Church. My feelings are mixed; I sometimes feel loyalty to the way things are, and other times I side with those who say things must be changed.

Feelings, though important, are not clarifying. When we talk about the need for sorting out, we know that we don't do that by feeling, we do that by differentiating - by using our thinking skills, by studying, especially God's Word, and by allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us in our experience what is true - that is, what moves our lives toward sanctity.

This knowledge, based on God's revelation, will eventually effect our emotions. The truth will set us free. It will bring peace, first intellectually, and then emotionally. Righteousness, or the right relationship to God, always blesses - and that word in the gospels means happy.

This clarifying process was thrust forward two years ago by Pope John Paul II. In an important statement to the U.S. Bishops visiting his summer residence he told them that they must not aid in any way those who are promoting priesthood for woman. Echoing the Declaration issued in 1977, he said priesthood for women is out because it does not conform to what he called "the design of Christ for the priesthood." He called for the bishops to begin to teach "cogently" this "design of Christ," and to clarify the "legitimate freedoms of woman."

There have been two responses to this declaration by the Pope, or perhaps three. At the grassroots there are two groups; to the one this was further proof of the intransigence of the patriarchal hold on the Church, and the response was more anger. In a second group, it was welcome confirmation of what a growing number of women have been discovering in their study and meditation of Scripture; that there is a great deal more about woman than meets the eye, more than we have presented in the Catholic press, as a rule; and much more than feminism's best definitions. They believe the Pope when he says that this design is not based on discrimination, even though it may come across that way at times.

A third response, indifference, is that of those who don't heed the teaching magisterium, and who form their subjective beliefs quite independently.

The Pope encourages the bishops to make the non-discriminatory nature of masculine priesthood understood clearly and cogently. "Cogently" means "forcibly and convincingly." It will have to be a good argument, indeed, to achieve these goals with many women. There is such a deep feeling among them that the all male hierarchy of the Church is blind, deaf, and dumb to the real world of women, and is completely unable to respond as Christ did to the true worth of women. Their objections have received steady attention from the media, and we are all well acquainted with it. Even the ultra-feminist receives all the attention she demands - witness Dr. Ruether, no matter how strident or peculiar the emphasis.

The teaching by the Bishops (the Pastoral on Women?) can't come too soon. Polarization has reached the zenith. Even as man and woman cry for a truthful definition of themselves that strengthens their Christian witness, the Body of Christ cries for unity. Jacques Maritain wrote, "there is a great need for distinguishing in order to unite." This magisterium teaching will help us distinguish between

concepts which are now a tangled conglomeration of sociological goals and religious ideals, which are seldom compatible. With this cogent teaching, order and direction can be restored to the Christian body. Those unsure now because of the confusion, unable to sort out all the conflicting claims, will find the teaching to be reasonable and reassuring. Those who have held an erroneous concept will have that error exposed with the option, then, of reappraisal and adjustment. Those who prefer their own constructions and interpretations will find communities compatible to their views outside of the Roman Church - many other denominations ordain women in their traditions and regard male and female as interchangeable. After this sorting, the Christian body's energies will be directed concordantly to more positive works of evangelization and charity.

What will "the design of Christ" for the sexes presented by the teaching magisterium be like?

There are three aspects of this design as a kitchen theologian I'm sure about. First, the design of Christ for man and woman will shed light on all the misinterpretations of Scripture and Tradition that have led to the degradation of women. It will also clarify all the gender questions, not just the priesthood's exclusively masculine nature, but also other ramifications of sexuality, like the gender references to God.

Also, we can be assured that the emerging teaching will not be bad news. It will be good news, personally helpful, making our female or male identity more meaningful, and our respective roles in the Christian body more significant than we can now imagine. Viktor Frank tells us something tried and true - the right why makes life meaningful despite any contingency. And in the Church, the faithful development of a Christian idea can not lead to sterile conservatism, but to vitality and fruitfulness.

The design of Christ for man and woman can do no less than bring them both to the height of their God-given potential. This is not just the enhancement of human nature, but the dimension beyond that, the restoration to the likeness of God, Himself, that is promised in baptism and confirmation by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A third aspect of the bishop's teaching we need not guess about is the source of that teaching. The ways of men are grass, "the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." The Holy Scriptures provide the rich lode from which this valuable ore is mined. Much of that truth about man and woman has been brought to the surface. Interpreting it, forming it into a body of truth, is more akin to fashioning a beautiful and useful object, a monolith of truth against which we can measure our own understanding about our sexuality, and to which we can then prayerfully conform our lives as male and female.

It is a process to which, as believers, we may contribute our "intimate understandings" gleaned by our contemplation and study. With Newman's distant cheering in the ears of my imagination, I exercise that privilege in what follows.

The question raised by the Pope's statement, "What is the design of Christ for the priesthood?" implies that God has a plan, a goal in creating the sexes, male and female; or that in their

sexuality He has made some kind of statement, not to be contradicted. To discover that statement or plan where else can we go but to the inspired account of the origins of mankind?

A scriptural meditation begins in Genesis 1:26. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion. . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him (or them); male and female he created them (or him)."

The ancient inspired Hebrew who composed those words didn't know many things that as Catholic Christians we accept as Truth. He didn't know that the God who spoke in the plural, "we" and "us". was indeed a Triune Unity, three Persons, distinct and not exchangeable, in One nature. That truth has been hammered out for us over the centuries by the Spirit's guiding and teaching through the Church. Man and woman are, then, a copy of this three in one reality. Where are the three in one? The priest often reminds a couple at the altar on their wedding day that if it is just the two of them that are pledging to hang together, the marriage is doomed from the beginning. He reminds them that they are being met there by A Third, the One who will make the two of them one. So, among the People of God, it takes three to be one, just as it takes Three to be One in the Holy Trinity.

Are there parallels between the Divine Persons who have one nature, and the human persons who have one nature?

Many possibilities come to mind. The Divine Persons have order, that is they have roles. They are individual and non-exchangeable, but share totally all attributes; they are equal; they are free. Definitions of all the dimensions of whole human relationship of the sexes must be found in the Trinity because it is the Triune Unity they image. Doesn't that give food for thought?

The order of the Trinity, that of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is of First, Second, and Third Persons. First, second and third do not designate degree of worth. The Persons are fully equal. Yet the First Person sends, and the Second and Third Persons are sent. What light might that shed on man and woman's relationship?

The First Person creates through the Second Person; the Second Person responds to this creative initiative. As initiative and response are opposite poles, the Holy Spirit is the Unifier. As St. Bernard says, "The Holy Spirit is the kiss exchanged between the Father and the Son." It is their opposition at two poles that allows the ecstasy and creativity of the union of the First and Second Persons in the Third Person. Are there parallels to that with the human persons who image them?

It seems God shared His ecstasy and creativity with mankind by ordering His creature in His own likeness - two polar persons, male and female, united in a Third, the Unifier, the Holy Spirit. The first initiates new life through the second. Though of one substance (differentiated by one chromosome out of forty-four) these persons are non-exchangeable, fully individual; though they have different and definite roles, they are equals. The freedom of these persons cannot therefore extend to an exchange of position. Just as the freedom of the Persons of the Trinity is limited by their self imposed order, so there is a legitimate freedom, but also an illegitimate freedom for the persons of mankind.

From Genesis' first chapter through the Old Testament the roles of man and woman are clearly defined. The male, true to imaging the First Person of the Trinity authors and authorizes - he is the authority. With him, a particular chosen man, God makes covenants, gives promises, and institutes laws. Through a woman, a particular chosen woman, God creates the miracle that brings to pass the promise given to the man. Chosen man and chosen woman (significantly barren) must be met by the Third Person for fruitfulness. The pattern is repeated for emphasis. It will be woman's seed who will crush Satan and fulfill all the promises, and the Old Testament woman left no stone unturned to be that woman chosen by God for miraculous fruitfulness.

The New Testament sees all that foreshadowing fulfilled in the Blessed Virgin. (Ruether has stated she prefers honoring pagan goddesses rather than Mary the Mother of God). The feminine becomes the key to understanding the Kingdom. Sexual imagery so predominant in the Old Testament comes into reality as the Bridegroom comes to claim His Bride. He teaches that Bride to be obedient, responsive, a servant - the stance most characteristic of the holy woman. Her submission to Him makes her fruitful. The roles and meaning of sexuality are not exchangeable, and must not be confused. The Bible finishes this story in Revelation, the twelfth chapter. Here in a dream image, the woman, the Blessed Virgin, the Church, and woman (you and I) is harassed by Satan who would destroy her if God did not protect her in the wilderness. Certainly this hatred of the Adversary against the woman (The Church, and you and I) has been intense through history and it is more vehemently active than ever today.

Jesus' last prophesy on the Via Dolorosa warned about the outcome of the attack. He was heard by the good Hebrew women who wholeheartedly mourned him but probably could not comprehend his words. They, after all, valued fruitfulness for God.

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us:’ and to the hills ‘cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Jesus with his last strength says to these women, “you think this is bad and you are crying for me. But the twig of rebellion is still green; it will get so bad when the twig dries out, that rebellion will reach down into the last bastion of submission. You women will find it hard to believe, but women then will rebel against the functioning of their bodies. They will say, “We are happier when we are barren, when we never bear or nourish life.” This fire is now beginning among the green wood, when it reaches the dry, you will wish you could hide under mountains and hills. Yes, today people are acting out their disobedience to the rule of God, their hatred of His attempt to establish His Kingdom by killing me, and yet what will it be like when disobedience comes into its own? Women, those who naturally yearn for fruitfulness and fulfillment, will rebel against their natural bodies and their functions, refusing God even in the most primary and biological level of their being. Daughters, don't weep for me, weep for yourselves and the daughters who will come after you, for your children.”

Those daughters, sign of the heart of the gospel, have set their hearts on the masculine sign. They want initiation while they scorn conception. Philosophic? Perhaps, but it works itself out practically, painfully in the vital heart of persons and communities, family and church. Equal now means "I'm the same as you." which carries the same petulance that Screwtape promotes among his colleagues at a banquet in hell by telling them to teach "as good as you" among earthlings. (CS. Lewis' postscript to the Screwtape Letters, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," an essay in *The World's Last Night*)

No man who says "I'm as good as you" believes it. He would not say it if he did. . . The claim to equality outside the strictly political field is made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior m as good as you (is) a state of mind which, necessarily excluding humility, charity, contentment, and all the pleasures of gratitude or admiration, turns a human being away from almost every road which might finally lead him to Heaven.

Within the Church where the male has been given authority and the role of Christ, it is imperative that he sees himself as an equal before God to those who do not have this role. And those who have the opposite signness must see themselves as equals before God to this priest who exercises governance which is not a matter of honor, but of responsibility. His role is not to be envied as powerful or prestigious, which it may not be at Christ's command. It is a role of complete and utter service, morning and evening, and in between; when convenient and inconvenient - no plush comfort, because of a worldly system of values may be thought of as deserved. "Nothing is too good for Father," must be a cry of the past. The more authority, the "higher in the hierarchy", the more is the abject, self-denying, lackey service that this person gives to all the others. That authority does all the dirty jobs that keep "the responders" protected, nourished and cared for. There is nothing prestigious to be found about it. We have a pope who represents this truth very well, for whom we all thank God. But we, his flock haven't got the right idea. Especially in America we threaten to destroy the twth of the polarity of thesexes and their signness because of confusion about the value of obedience and authority in God's overall scheme.

I've exhausted these notes written on paper napkins, Bible margins, and brown paper bags. The sink is full of dishes. What all this means in the life of a wife, mother, and grandmother is the story I am called to live today.

15 MUTUAL SUBMISSION A NEW LOOK AT A DISAGREEABLE IDEA

There is no word in religion or outside of it more shunned than the word “submission.” For many good reasons, and just as many bad ones, the word is judged, found guilty of grievous faults, and condemned to the lot of those concepts that have meant bondage for men and women.

Secular usage long ago discarded the word as undemocratic, but religious ill-favor is a recent phenomena furthered, no doubt, by the Woman’s Movement. Whether right or not, in the thinking of most Christians the submissive role has been first and foremost assigned to women. Yet, at the very moment when the anti-submission proponents, which includes most of us, thought the concept safely dead, the casket nailed and buried six feet deep, and the word cleared out of the Christian consciousness forever, a new vision is found developing in the community which calls for mutual submission.

A word of caution here. A hasty glance at mutuality makes us think we understand it easily and will tolerate its modification of submission without problem. We think it means that each Christian subjects himself to every other equally and that all hierarchy is thus eliminated. However, the new insights into submission change none of the old beliefs about this most basic of Christian attitudes even to its primary exemplar being the woman. But in the way of true development of Christian ideas, this is fresh growth out of an enduring root and stem that has not died at all.

As John Henry Newman demonstrated, the proof of authentic development of Christian ideas is an expanded, revitalized concept of an established truth that promises great hope to the Christian community. And this new insight into the meaning of submission does that, especially for the Catholic community because it negates none of the previous authority- obedience relationships in the Church and home but authenticates them while opening wide avenues to freedom for both those who order and those who respond to orderance.

The word” submission” obviously has many dark associations. Under constant attack, all concepts close to the heart of the Gospel of Christ, like “love”, and “suffering”, are unwittingly abused by those who profess them and wittingly maligned by those who resist them. We can pass by the malignant criticisms of the Freud’s and the Nietzsche’s because we learn to expect Christianity’s gut-level realities to stimulate revulsion in those who purposefully stand outside of them; but the use and abuse, both by those who promote submission and those who avoid it within the faith, calls for careful thought.

What is it that threatens to pervert our best? The temptation is strong not to reform our understanding in these cases, but to eliminate the troublesome concept by embracing its opposite. Luther's sharp observation that in such regards we act like drunken horse riders, first falling off on one side, remounting, and then falling off on the other, paints an accurate picture.

It would be as impossible to strike "submission" from the vocabulary of Christianity as it would be to strike the word "love." Yet in the past twenty years this has hardly seemed true. It is not an isolated instance that in a church I know the "wives submit" Ephesian's reading has been deleted from the lectionary with black marker, presumably never to be read again. The homilies in that same church became sticky with a sentiment called "love"; and the two developments were not unrelated. Lacking submission, love is not Christian, whatever else it is. Without submission, love is like a fish without a skeleton, jelly fishy at one end of the scale, and shark-like at the other. (I'm told that sharks have no bones, only cartilage.) This lax love thus ranges from the sentimental to the rapacious, and at neither extreme is it Christian. St. Paul, in that most excellent ode, I Corinthians 13, exposes the inner frame of love and reveals submission as its bare bones:

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 right.

Love bears all things,
 believes all things,
 hopes all things,
 endures all things.
 Love never ends.

The word's two parts, "sub" and "mission", St. Paul describes in every phrase as he extols the relationship of Christian love. A person relates to another in these specific selfless ways because he is "sent" to do just that. It is his mission to go "under". Submission then describes not only a way a Christian responds to others - the relationship between two Christian persons, but it also implies a third party. This third Being is the Sender, the One who sends the subject on his mission. If this third party, the Sender, is not recognized, "submission" is minus its life-transforming power because it is the Sender who equips for the mission.

Imagine a momentous mission undertaken without the equipment demanded by the work to be done - an undersea's diver without the oxygen lines linked to the support crew on the ship, or a mountain climber without his base camps and Sherpas. Such is the one who "submits" without a vital relationship to and trust in God. We see a fruitless subservience devastating to all involved. For Christians, the Sender, God, makes real submission possible and gives it a power to accomplish marvelous things in the life situations of the world. Imitating God's Son who was also "sent under", his follower must learn to differentiate between the real thing and all the numerous facsimiles. He does this by begging for the gift of the mind of Christ. St. Paul waxes warm on this subject, too.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours 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.

Godly submission is death to self and life toward God; it is not always death by violent acts and imposed crosses, but it is death to the ego-centric self with all its inclination to grandiosity and aggrandizement. We might abbreviate both words and just use “grand.” The grand self must go under. So Godly submission has two goals; it brings the soul into obedience to God’s will, and it establishes peace and love between brothers and sisters in the Christian family - one may not presume *grandness* over another. Love of God and love of mankind - submission, what a vocation!

How hard it is to deny the domination/control thrust of our human nature is evident everyday. Only this three-pronged love with voltage flowing from God to us, back to God and to our neighbor can we successfully lay this beastly urge to rest. Obviously then, submission is meant to describe the heart of all God’s children, male and female, so how did it become identified only with the woman in her marriage relationship to a man who seemed not to need to submit but only to rule. Or how did it become identified only with the laity who submitted to an ordering, governing hierarchy in the Church, which sometimes behaved high-handedly?

In both cases, submission hardened into legalism and began to gain a bad name for itself as it seemed to promote domination and arrogance on the one hand, and servility and childishness on the other. The vital life-line to God withered and submission became sterile and life-denying. The “mission” had been lost and only the “under” was left, and a heavy, oppressive *under* it was.

In marriage, a whining caricature of submission manipulated her way with a man who thought headship meant prestige, even while many prelates in the Church paraded around in pretentious displays of pomp and power. The old beast in human nature, overlordliness, grandness, the “old-man” as Scripture has it, had surfaced again under a hideous pseudo-Christian veneer. Submission had not been grasped and accepted in the deep mind and heart as a spiritual principle belonging to the love of Christ.

Somewhere a vicious alien had penetrated that shallowness and worked against the faith life like an odorless gas. It took the shrill cries of feminism to awaken many of us to the silent, and not always silent violence, caused by this alien who falsely had assumed the name “submission.” For that alarm we can thank the feminists, even when we think they have fallen off the other side of the horse. Their zealous attempt to obliterate all submission and to pull down all hierarchy in the family and the Church refuses to recognize submission’s righteous parentage.

The righteous parentage, Jesus and Mary, answers why submission does indeed begin with woman, and is imaged particularly and clearly by the feminine. The love mission to “go under” is most particularly hers because her being is most purely reflective of Jesus’ own Second Person place among the persons of the Holy Trinity. Paradoxical and mysterious? Yes, it nearly turns the human mind inside out, but it is the understanding that will set to rest the gender questions. The woman was created biologically, in the flesh, to represent or image the Son in the Trinity. And though at first it seems difficult, it is worth the effort to understand.

God the Father and God the Son though sharing the same nature are opposites. That is, the One is Father, Originator, Author, and Sender and the Other is Son, Responder, Matrix, and Sent. Both of these poles, the Father in

his role, and the Son in his role are, however, totally equal. Equality in the Trinity does not mean that the Persons can change roles, and although all the Persons share all the same attributes, some of these attributes are more to be said of one of the Persons than the others. All of this was set down carefully by the Holy Spirit in the Church centuries ago.

By the Father, but through the Son, all things were made. Man and woman were made to reflect these two; the principles at the heart of the Trinity God now extended to human flesh. By the male and through the female new beings arise. The Triune Persons shared their image with mankind so that man and woman could share the supreme joy of their ecstasy of union and their creativity. Every sentence that describes it should end with an exclamation mark.

And it is *Triune* Persons. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person who is the great secret sought by the ancient alchemists and their modern counterparts, the philosophers and psychologists. "How to unify the opposites?" they ponder. It has been the unsolvable puzzle. Carl Jung described male and female as the irreconcilable opposites who symbolize every conceivable pair of opposites that may occur. There is no union for irreconcilable opposites - that is unless one stands before the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity. Here all true relationship is unveiled because all true relationship has its origins in this relationship. And the mystery Unifier stands before us - *the Holy Spirit*.

Are man and woman irreconcilable opposites? Yes, because they no longer (since the disobedience in Eden) have the Unifier as their "third person." But he can rejoin them, and he wills to do so. That is the mystery of Christian marriage - the union of three to make one. It also explains the improbability of secular marriage, faith-less marriage, enduring. The implications of this can scarcely be touched in an essay such as this. But one fact is necessary for this thesis: the woman is the second person of a human trinity which is the perfect plan of God, and just as all the Fathers have taught, it is she, Mary, the new Eve, who will bring the restoration of that plan by accepting once again her polar, equal, responsive role - by being willing to be "sent under." She, the woman, is primary to the Plan, because her body is made fruitful by a total physical, mental, emotional act of submission.

So that old truth we thought we could bury is essential and life-originating in the Christian scheme. Upon this truth of triune relationship, St. Paul and St. Peter teach women to be submissive, not because these saints could not get past their cultural hang-ups and misogynistic notions. The story does not end there, even though for centuries it seemingly has.

Yes, the primary, pure stance of woman to man is sub-mission. It is the woman, who as Erma Bombeck says, always gives the maraschino cherry in the can of fruit cocktail to her husband because he likes them. She is the responder to him. But the man is not God. Together they image the dynamic love and creativity of the Holy Trinity, but both of them are dependent. The man himself must respond to God, even as the woman responds to him. Again, Scripture tells it true, both the man and woman together as God's People in the Church are feminine to Him. They together are his spouse. The man, too, must be submissive.

Here the fine lines are drawn which must not be erased or confused. When we reach this conceptional crossroads, the correct fork must be chosen. Here is a new step in our understanding of submission to be taken by man and woman alike, or we go back to repeat all the mistakes of the past. Pope John Paul II, in an address at a general audience in August, 1982, gave a detailed analysis of Ephesians 6:21 -23 in which he emphasized the *mutual*

submission of husband and wife. The Holy Father stressed that the mystery of Christ leads both of them to be subject to each other.

Does that wipe out the wife's basic submission to her husband? Not at all. The Pope says, "The wife can should find in her relationship with Christ ,who is the Lord of both spouses, *the motivation of that relationship with her husband which flows from the very essence of marriage and family*, such a relationship, however, is not one of one-sided domination." (italics mine)

How does the husband submit to his wife? Here is the fine-lined distinction. He does not submit to her by giving up to her his ordering, providing role, appropriate to him both by physical morphology and by metaphysical imaging of the divine First Person. He does not submit to her by abdicating his headship or authorizing position, or even by alternating the responsibility of action and decision making with her. That would mean a reversal of roles which among the Holy Persons is never seen; in fact, it is contrary to all revealed knowledge of the irrevocable personhood of each of the Triune Persons. Though of one nature, sharing all attributes, the divine Persons are non-exchangeable. These same eternal principles God shares with the beloved creature, meant to be His spouse, mankind. (It is an incredible idea that on this highest plane God should submit his authoring to that spouse.)

If the husband does not submit headship to the woman, how does he submit to her? He submits to her by exercising his headship over her as Christ does for the Church. He submits to her needs for provision and order, love and care, when it is convenient and inconvenient, in season and out of season, morning, noon and night. He becomes a servant, a lackey in keeping her and her children fed, sheltered, protected, well-ordered, and spiritually led. Thus he provides justice with all that implies for her and for those he has fathered. This is not a prestigious role. There is no room in his total submission for domination. This is a "mission" to be "under." God gives the strength and clarity of vision to carry it out, otherwise, for fallen human nature, it is impossible.

John Paul continues, "Love excludes every kind of subjection whereby the wife might become a servant or slave of the husband, an object of unilateral domination. Love makes the husband simultaneously subject to the wife and thereby subject to the Lord himself, just as the wife to the husband."

One reflection of the richly faceted wedding feast of Cana story reveals submission of holy man and holy woman. Jesus, reluctantly perhaps, that's real enough, submits to Mary - yet there is no reversal of roles. His authority is never challenged by a Mary who attempts to exercise decision making power or initiating action. Rather, in her proper role, Mary tells Jesus the problem and asks him to exercise his role, to submit to this need. Though he makes it clear that he is not manipulated, thus drawing the lines clearly between her role and his, he submits to her request and continues on into a submission that takes him to the cross whereby all mankind's need for water turned wine, and wine turned blood are met. Mary, in submission to her Lord, receives His submission to her, as she knows the need for those individuals present at that particular feast and for all mankind everywhere, in all time to come. The primary role of woman as the submissive one is essential if the man is to experience first hand what the mission at its core is all about. She radiates submission by her very physical form and its function. All spiritual understandings are to be found on this continuum. The woman continues to be the key to their holy submitted relationship, even as Eve and Mary are perceived to be keys - one to obedience, the other away from it.

A summer ago the Pope spoke to representatives of Religious orders about a crisis in maternity” in the western world. He drew attention to the intimate link of “physical and spiritual maternity” to woman’s identity. Isn’t Jesus saying this in his final prophetic words?

The scene is the Via Dolorosa. Bruised, bloody and wobbling, Our Lord makes his way between haranguers and mourners followed by sturdy Simon carrying His cross. A group of weeping women trail along behind. Their wailing reaches deep within his consciousness, past the throbbing pain and stunning shock to a deep, clear perception. He turns to them, prophesying with his last strength;

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!’ then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Did those present Hebrew women who exulted in fruitfulness for the Lord, or Luke, for that matter, incorporating their remembrance of his words into this gospel, understand these words? They don’t find their focus until the Twentieth Century - our own time. Rebellious, grandiose humankind refused to submit to its Lord and Creator and was intent on that day to kill him. But in the First Century the wood of rebelliousness was green. It burned slowly. The fires of rebelliousness would heighten as the wood dried out, and its intensity would finally be unbelievable to those women standing weeping before him. They totally accepted the rules of fecundation, believing fruitfulness to be the evidence of God’s blessing.

On that continuum Jesus himself had taught, “you will know them by their fruits.” Woman, the monad of obedience, said Jesus, would rebel against her own biological function. Then, beware! Cataclysmic times had arrived. One is left shaken to wonder at the confluence of feminism and atomic power so apt to Jesus’ descriptive warning. It may be feminist women who are protesting at the gates of nuclear physics, but that in itself is incongruous; what is happening in their homes with their children and even more importantly, where are their husbands? How can peace come when the basic unit of all Christendom is out of order, lacking justice?

Reaffirming the traditional roles of authority and response for hierarchy and laity, of headship and submission for husband and wife, the new vision of overall mutual submission brings these roles vitally alive and sees them as they are to be, the vehicle of Christendom’s return to oneness with God as Bride to Bridegroom.

The facts of this revelation cannot be contained in words, but are to be lived out in the real life world of men and women, and blessedly, children. Submission is such a practical thing. Its nitty-gritty virtues work on the human soul to remove the beastly pride and grandness in much the same way as sand polishes a precious stone in a grinder. The ugly ego-centricities are ground away with time and what emerges is beautifully unlike what was subjected to the process. Submission’s value is not only to the married but to male and female whether married or not. The same mission is given to all, the mission to go under, to serve all others with whatever role is given by nature and divine ordination. Thus mutual submission brings hope for the future of the family and the Church. The imagination needn’t be too flamboyant to visualize the fruits in both these godly institutions which were created to image a submitted authority and a submitted response.

16 THREE SOUND REASONS TO USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE WITH CARE

Many products purchased these days contain warning labels which prescribe the way to use the product without detriment to health and safety. It is more apparent with the stalling by the American bishops of the various inclusive language projects of the ICEL (International Commission on English in the Liturgy), and Rome's disapproval of inclusive language changes in the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) and NAB (New American Bible), that in order to protect the spiritual health and safety of the Catholic Christian, there will soon be labels attached to the changing of sexual language in the Bible and in the liturgy.

There are at least three reasons why inclusive language must be used carefully in the Church; each is linked to the foundational meaning of sexuality. The first is "solidarity", a popular 1990's word, especially with the Holy Father. The second is "singularity," a word espoused by a branch of feminism. And the third, "marital imagery," requires two words to bring sexual union in marriage to mind. Each of these reasons, rooted in sexuality, is also a basic building block in the revelation of Holy Scripture.

From the beginning in Genesis, when God creates man and woman in His image and likeness, to the end in Revelation, when the Bride meets the Eternal Bridegroom, sex is the crucial concept for grasping what God is doing in Salvation History. Tampering with it, therefore, threatens to send a generation or more of Catholics, cut loose from all moorings, off to ...where?

Solidarity is easy to grasp. When God created us humans He gave us one mother and one father. Even the scientists, much to their surprise, have found that DNA leads them to one mother of all the inhabitants of earth whom they have, of course, named Eve (lately an Adam, too, has been in scientific surmising). In the Bible our solidarity goes back beyond Eve to Adam's loins. Therefore, says God's word, we were all in Adam at the beginning, so this Hebrew word, Adam, in its first sense doesn't mean a male, but mankind.

John Paul II teaches us in "Original Unity of Man and Woman" that Adam stands for all mankind until Eve emerges from that unity. Only after Eve was formed, does Adam become the name of the male. Adam then stands as head of the whole human race's total unity in one body - for from him, says the sacred story, the human race is generated. So when God must place responsibility for sin, that responsibility falls on Adam's head. Henceforth, and until the end of time, every man and woman comes into a fallen world with a grave lack - the integrity and wholeness of the Holy Spirit, lost in Adam's sin. Therefore, to preserve solidarity in addressing the human person, there is one pronoun not two, and never a plural, but only "he" or "him."

It is a wonderful doctrine. Believers who long for unity with Everyman submit to the beauties of its simplicity. Here everything is explained that is wrong with the world. Adam's sin with Satan's complicity explains it. We look into each others eyes and cannot condemn because we recognize the other fellow and he is us - Adam's child. Ahh! solidarity! Not he/she, not they/ we, certainly not "it", but merely "he" - all of us together, one in Adam. In solidarity we are all one in essential makeup - one! Therefore, we all, male and female, need the same thing to alleviate the sad state of Adam. In the perfection of God's simplicity, the medicine also is one man - Jesus, the Second Adam. To be made whole from sin we are baptized into Christ Jesus. Our solidarity with him is total. In him we are restored to the holiness of our original creation. We are restored into one body with Christ as our head. The Second Person of the Trinity is sent by the Father in the body of the male, Jesus; it can be no other way for the parallel with Adam to be complete, but also to image in truth the Holy Trinity who in all His Persons is masculine to creation's femininity. Male and female are just pale, created images of the Act and Potency principles of Father and Son.

You see, we do need to think before changing the language. For solidarity, so essential to the broad base of our faith, we must maintain the unity in the pronouns reflecting the unity of the one man Adam and the one man Jesus Christ. Isaiah speaks for God throughout his prophecy, and Jesus speaks as God in John's gospel; both complete the great cycle of YHWH, I AM with the proclamation, "I AM HE."

Solidarity, primary and essential, is not the only truth of mankind. First viewed as one in Adam and Christ Jesus, mankind is secondarily then viewed as two - male and female. It is of crucial importance to remember that wherever the two sexes are rightly united as one it is through the work of the Holy Spirit. So it is not two - but two united in and by a Third. But these two are singular. Man is not woman and cannot take her place; woman is not man and cannot take his place. The two in their very morphology have a role lined out for them by their Creator - a destiny to complete for their own happiness and the happiness of the other. To confuse the two as though they were not singular is to damage irreparably their inner essence and meaning.

This is the real reason why there was a sincere belief among thinking, prayerful people that girls should not be altar servers in the Catholic Church. It seemed to ignore a girl's inner essence and meaning, implying that unless she has access to the same positions as a man, she is somehow short-changed. Not so! A male who thinks a female, in order to be valuable, must do what he does, is benighted - likewise, a woman who thinks so. Neither of them respects the woman's own meaning and call by God; they are misled in the belief that his role is superior. It is not! All this was thrashed out in the 4th century with the Arian heresy - just because he is obedient to the Father, Jesus is not some lesser demigod. A servant, yet he is fully God! A woman's role to be servant and obedient to her head, does not imply lesser worth. HELP! Will we never get this central idea of Christian faith into our heads?

Though the Church has opened its former discipline regarding altar servers to girls, the same reasoning will help the faithful understand that the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter, "On Reserving Priestly Ordination for Men Alone" is not based on a consideration of women as inferior.

Male and female singularity means that each is called to equal but opposite roles in their overall work in creation. This singularity must be apparent in the symbols and realities of the central place of faith - the altar of sacrifice. The Bride-in-the-making, the Church, can never take the place of the Bridegroom God - now can she?

That was the grave error of Eden. The two, though meant to become One, are forever singular and non-exchangeable. It is that reality that is expressed through sexuality.

Already our ideas of solidarity and singularity have bled into the final image of marital unity. As important as solidarity and singularity are in understanding sexuality, they exist for the final consummation of union. Throughout history guided by the Holy Spirit and throughout the Bible revelation, His guidance is toward one end, to reunite mankind with God in the great wedding in heaven. And from then on, the story will be “they lived happily ever after.”

That transcendent end is foreshadowed at the Eucharistic table where the marital image becomes reality. Jesus comes to sacrificially give Himself to His Bride, and she comes in a sacrifice of Praise, to give herself to Him. Destroy sexual meaning by ignoring the solidarity in union brought about by the Holy Spirit between the two singular persons and the reality of the self-giving of Jesus and His Church is obscured, and the happy ending of the final consummation is no longer the spiritual goal of each soul. Satan knows that. That’s precisely the reasoning behind the envy that motivates he/she, Father/Mother, son/ daughter - the removal of all masculine personal pronouns in regard to God - the coupling of the opposites whenever the male sex is named.

We need caution labels on inclusive language. Better yet throw out the unused portion, send the inclusive language Bible back to the publisher, and toss out the lectionary guide. Go back to the basics wherein lies not only sanity, but salvation.

17 DEFERRING TO DIFFERENCE

A Laywoman Ponders Altar Servers - Girls and Boys

A recent book review of a post-feminist book points out that the two wings of feminist ideology are mutually destructive, crippling the creature Feminism and making it unable to fly. On the one wing are the egalitarians who demand that women are equal to men in every way and must be treated the same as they in every way. And from the other, comes the shout that women and men are totally dissimilar and that women are better. The latter opinion now dominates the academy and calls for freedom from all masculine held virtue (but with a proclivity to masculine vice) as well as the abandonment of society's entrenched preference of heterosexuality.

Though curious and sometimes repulsive to Christians, all this wrangling about what women are or are not and their relationship to men, it is not as though we in the Church have solved the meaning of male and female and can stand back secure, even as much as we know that the Gospel must hold the answer. And it does. Slowly - the Church is always on a slow march forward, assimilating in her understanding the humanity and divinity of the redeemed man and woman in Christ - slowly, that image of whole woman and man is emerging through the work of the Holy Spirit both through the Body's hierarchical right-hand and its lay left-hand.

From the hierarchical side, John Paul II has recently requested all priests to read and ponder *Mulieris Dignatatem* in which he presents a scriptural study of the honorable meaning and role of woman. The Holy Father has spent much effort in bringing forward the essential meaning of God's creation of male and female in both the above mentioned Apostolic Letter, and in his earlier "Original Unity of Man and Woman." This comprehensive work lies behind *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. While continuing to hold fast to the irrefutable rule of priesthood for men only, he has, however, surprised and injured many orthodox sensibilities by allowing altar girls to slide into the local sanctuary, if not with his blessing, at least by his concession.

Some of the laity and the religious have written in these pages about an emerging and prayerful sense that the relationship of Persons of the Trinity holds the key to understanding the meaning and relationship of male and female in the family and the Church. Such a meditative apprehension of the original creation of mankind to be a union of two in a third (the Holy Spirit) begins in the opening chapter of Genesis, is carried through by Jesus, recorded in Matthew 19, "In the beginning. . . what God has joined...", and is amplified by both St. Paul in Ephesians

5 and St. Peter in I Peter 3. It is tempting to analyze and draw out these references, but it has been done in other places and would take us away from a concrete application which is the thrust of this article.

If this Trinitarian model for man and woman has validity and is a true development of doctrine it must be tested by the reasonable and self-evident rules of the unfolding of truth delineated by John Henry Cardinal Newman. While theologians attempt to work out the Church's understanding of woman, her being and role, these guides to true development of Christian doctrine must be taken seriously. Briefly paraphrased they are: 1). In the growth of understanding of the Truth, the outward form of the Christian idea is preserved. 2). There is a continuity of guiding principles of the Christian idea. 3). There is the ability to assimilate earlier stages into the growing understanding of the Christian idea. 4). These earlier stages of understanding have continued existence in the new comprehensive whole. 5). In the earlier stage, more mature discernment now recognizes the embryo of the later stage. 6). There is a logical interconnection in this development. 7). The Christian idea's development has a lasting life which gives revitalization to the Christian person and community and does not fall into sterile conservatism.

Perhaps one more idea could be added: that the development of doctrine will bring together elements that seem on the surface to be mutually canceling only to make a delightful unity of what is otherwise discerned as hostile. This certainly could be the result in the concrete problem faced by the Church in allowing girl altar servers while denying the altar to female priests. To the mind of the most conservative Catholic, such a development would be a vindication of obedience to the Holy Father's allowance of girls on the altar. At the same time it would become an immediately available and powerful teaching reality in the midst of the congregation of God's people which would serve to unite them. Jacques Maritain's wonderful words come to mind, (there is a) "great need of distinguishing in order to unite."

An example is soon to be given from one parish's experience, but before it is described some principles gained from the above beg to be drawn. Granted that these reflections are by a lay woman unschooled in theology and in liturgy; she simply asks those adepts in these disciplines to indulge her for a few moments, and reply via Letters to the Editors or by an article of their own.

First, man and woman are indeed equals before God, even as the Church has always held; "in Christ there is no male or female", that is, baptism confers the same salvation with its "weight of glory" on all regardless of any natural condition. Yet, baptism does not wash away the differentiation of sex which in itself demands a different psychology, a different approach to life, and a totally different function in the furtherance of humanity. Perhaps Blessed Edith Stein is the best Catholic advocate for the equal but different woman from a psychological, philosophical, and religious understanding. (Interestingly, she and Pope John Paul II have a close cultural and educational formation and come near to seeing woman similarly). Within Christ the two opposing principles of 1) equal, but 2) opposite, are unified. The woman is both an equal but an opposite to the man. This demands a definition of "equal" that allows polarity and therefore difference. It is the same equality that we contemplate in the Blessed Trinity: Father and Son are equals in one "substance"; they are not the same in role; and this ob-position is unified in the wholly mysterious and inscrutable Holy Spirit of Love.

Now we have the present image of the girls garbed the same as boys and doing the same function at the altar. The Church in this seems to be saying, boys and girls are equal. So far so good. But the critical differentiation

is not apparent; a differentiation that is as important to the girl's and the boy's meaning and role as the fact that they are equals before God.

One of the heartaches of this grandmother is the message emphatically given to her seventeen granddaughters that to be worthy they must do what men do. Therefore, the Church has opened the doors for their service at the altar. If they are not able to do what men do, are they perceived to be not as honorable as men? Motivated, no doubt, out of concern for equality and justice, the Church has unintentionally questioned the truth of woman which is to be different, which is to be key to a whole other activity of the development of humanity in Christ, and which is to be respected in that difference. Edith Stein even suggests that within the species Mankind, woman is a distinct sub-species, so different is she in her interior being and her call by God. I want my granddaughters to love the interior call of their being, to cherish it, and to glory in giving to God its full fruitfulness, physical and spiritual.

Can we say that the first principle of relationship of man and woman has been acknowledged in granting altar server status to girls? That principle is one of equality. But the second principle is trampled - the equally important one of their radical difference of being, role and call of God. This second principle is fully acknowledged in maintaining priesthood for males alone; where the first principle of equality is demonstrated also, in the dichotomy of priest and laity; *Christifideles* all, but distinguished by two roles, *Christifideles laici*, and *Christifideles clerici* (This polarity which bespeaks the marital covenant of Eucharist, has been fully presented by Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter in a 1983 Pastoral Letter, "Do This in Memory of Me")

By some unconscious process, hopefully inspired by the Holy Spirit, a small church in the midst of the corn and bean fields of the plains has perhaps stumbled toward a solution. Bishop Robert Carlson of Sioux Falls has no problem accepting the Vatican directive that opens the role of altar server to girls; therefore, St. Peters of Colman, South Dakota, found a role for girls when it was reluctant to fully comply. With an appreciation for the work of Senior High School boys who were regularly serving at the altar with their strong and dedicated masculine presence, there was some unspoken anxiety that having boys and girls do the same thing would discourage these young men from continuing. There does seem to be a documented reluctance in the male psyche to do what might be shown to be "woman's work" and this is especially strong among adolescents. Perhaps this, too, is part of God's original gift - the inner knowledge of difference, and a determination not to have this innate difference stolen away.

Therefore, it developed in Colman that two young girls at each mass are seated near the front of the sanctuary on the side opposite to where the boy servers traditionally sit. Their function is to leave the sanctuary during the singing of a hymn after the prayers, and solemnly process together to the back of the church where they gather the gifts, preceding the family carrying them to the altar. They meet the deacon and boy servers at the steps to the sanctuary where they ceremonially accept the gifts from the family and hand them on. At the Sign of Peace they again travel the main aisle extending the peace to the first person of each pew.

Let us consider the appropriateness theologically of this liturgical function for girls and see how it might be enhanced to a true representation of the equal but different feminine role among the People of God. Here we may also call upon the Blessed Mother Mary to be the model of the true Woman through whom all girls and women gain their inspiration.

First, these young girls do not do what the boys do even though they have been called to an equal role in serving the Mass. Secondly, the function they serve is wholly appropriate to their inner meaning of the feminine in differentiation from the masculine. Our Blessed Mother is the first Bearer of the Gift of God. She takes what is given to her from her participation in the human family and offers it to God who transforms her gift - the Son of God is conceived. How appropriate that innocent young girls, coming from the congregational family, receive the gifts given by the whole people, accompanying them to the altar of God for the one Transformation.

Then Our Blessed Mother, in turn, comes from her Encounter with God, and bears to her sons and daughters the blessings of the sanctuary, the solemn greeting of the love and peace of God. Entirely in this spirit these young girls bring that Godly peace to the assembled People of God.

Their intermediary role in both actions is wholly indicative of their meaning and role as Godly women among His family. The beauty of the Mediatrix is exemplified in them. This role of intermediary is inherent to the sex that receives the seeming immaterial and from whom, as matrix, makes it appear materially among us - the role of fruitful mother. This fruitfulness is inherently physical, but may well be expressed in a higher way in the self-gift of the consecrated virgin. Women stand in the middle of this mysterious and awesome reality - "the Word became flesh." The women present at mass are then enhanced in their womanhood and its meaning; their womanhood is honored in both its equality to manhood and in its differentiation. The priestly role belonging to the called male alone, standing at the altar, persona Christ!, may then be balanced in the pew by women who recognize that they are the important sign of the whole feminine laity who are even now becoming the Bride of Christ in another eternal differentiation. These girls whose role, though essential, is hidden - the bringing of gifts imaging the mediatrix may well be scorned by the power hungry mindset of the world - exemplify that hiddenness is of the essence of true femininity. From Biblical times, a poetic image has been of the walled garden whose beauty, far from all eyes, is nourished by the flowing fountain.

In the case of St. Peter's in Colman there are steps which could be taken to encompass the depth of meaning of the role of female altar server. First, the garb of the young girls should be appropriate to the equal but different truth of their being. They should have a ritual garb, but different from the males. A suggestion is made that a small, short cape around their shoulders would be graceful and feminine; blue would be immediately reminiscent of the Blessed Mother. Capes have a traditional liturgical role. Such a garment clasping at the neck extending only the mid-upper arm would fit all sizes of girls. If an alb, it should be distinguished as for girls in some way. But garb is not the most important change.

Clearly, instruction of these girl altar servers in the meaning of their acts in the liturgy and their presence in the sanctuary would be very important, important for the liturgy of the Mass, but vastly important for their self-understanding and acceptance of self as women. Also, continuing education of the whole parish, especially of those mothers who are anxious to have their girls participate, and always with the emphasis on the feminine uniqueness which is of inestimable value to the People of God - a role incapable of fulfillment by men. Impressed by this instruction would be the dignity of this aspect of the liturgical gathering which would be made apparent by the weight given these actions, both in bearing the gifts and in extending the Peace. When those proficient in liturgy ponder this, it is entirely possible new aspects will make appear. Bearing the Word of God in the opening

procession, ceremonially placing the book upon the ambo, and opening it, also express the feminine role in the God/man covenant that soon takes place upon the altar.

While the secular feminist thrashes around between two hostile, irreconcilable poles, the Church will again demonstrate that in the Holy Spirit, “he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. . . (that he) might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end.” Evidence to all men of goodwill that there is a power in the Church that which is found nowhere else, the Holy Spirit who undeniably unifies irreconcilable opposites.

18 FEELINGS WOMEN RARELY SHARE

A book review of Feelings Women Rarely Share

By Judy Reamer with Donna Arthur

Published by Whitaker House, 580 Pittsburg St.,

Springdale, Pa 15144 201 pages

“Having an affair will depend more on your beliefs than on your feelings.’ This simple, Scripturally based little book amplifies this statement in an entertaining style easily accessible to all women.

Judy Reamer’s background as a convert to Christianity from Judaism, her experience with women as a Bible teacher makes her perspective firmly centered in a faith approach to an everlasting problem - the sexual temptation that leads to unfaithfulness.

Often full blown infidelity could have been nipped in the bud had the woman realized that what seemed like innocent fantasies were the dangerous beginnings of a poisonous growth. When society and the media have joined in the hot pursuit of sexual pleasures, when strong doses of adultery are handed out like candy pills, the time has come to strengthen our commitment to Scriptural values even in the small ways we like to think don’t matter.

Mrs. Reamer is not a prude. She appreciates the God-giveness of sexual pleasure as a sharing of ecstasy of the Godhead Himself. Tracing the goodness of sexuality in the Bible, she also finds there examples for all the ways women and men can stray from that goodness, and the solution to these temptations as well. Women are in search of intimacy. They marry mistakenly believing that “marriage is the cure-all for loneliness, boredom, or lack of self-fulfillment.” When their belief comes to a dead-end they are especially vulnerable to an affair.

What to do? First of all, a woman must seek the awareness of the spiritual life, she cannot live merely in the body and soul realm. Here Reamer defines soul in a different sense than Catholic theology. By soul she means unredeemed intellect, emotions and will - not committed to Jesus Christ. Secondly, she must not in the zeal of reform misunderstand chastity to mean celibacy, and in a false piety deny her husband his conjugal rights. Thirdly, she must become knowledgeable about the deceits of Satan and take appropriate steps to combat the errors he will present to her. She is not to harbor guilt over thoughts, thoughts are not sin as long as they are not nourished or acted upon.

The bulk of the book then brings a woman to know herself. She must not think herself above severe temptation and she must know how to spiritually battle against it. She is to realize her manipulating tendencies, she

then come to control her dreams and fantasies. By conscious effort she must guard against flirtatiousness and perfectionism - both part of femaleness, and both positive if used in their rightful place, but dangerous if not controlled by her spirit, which in turn is yielded and obedient to the Holy Spirit.

The result of efforts for clear thinking and commitment to virtue do not lead to heaviness, Mrs. Reamer constantly points to the power of God to overcome all weaknesses which lead to impurity, and to forgive when the "feet did not flee" All married and single women, and men too, can benefit by the wise scriptural values she shares.

19 CHORD AND DISCORD:

Married couples exchanging a kiss at the sign of peace is appropriate.

The world is a different place than a generation or two ago; no one argues that. It is hard to find a single area of life unaffected by dissension. From all sides one gets the impression that nothing is secure, that unity and peace are only poetic ideals. It is parent against child, old against young, teacher against student, union against management, taxpayer against government, special interest groups against everybody outside of their circle; the antagonisms are endless.

Against such a very real backdrop we come to our liturgical worship each Sunday. Here are gathered families with the same faith in God, families trying earnestly to live in peace with each other according to God's command - granted, with varying success.

At the kiss of peace, however, there is evidence of more success than even they are aware of. There is Ted and Sarah, there Duane and Char, over there Ed and Alice, in front Joe and Sally. Some are older now, perhaps they have a grandchild in tow, and others take up the whole pew with little ones on the laps of older ones. Here, at church they are looking to God for support and sustenance in their daily walk. Each couple is a sign., a sign that not only points beyond themselves to Christ and the Church, but carries God's love in itself.

God's Holy Word consistently tells us that he looks upon this whole human family seeking his will as his spouse. That is why Jesus calls himself Bridegroom and the Church sees herself as Bride. (This relationship is just one of the reasons that the inclusive language issue must be dealt with very carefully). It is as a sign of unity that the kiss of peace was instituted early in church worship. St. Paul mentions the holy kiss in four different letters to churches, and St. Peter also instructs Christians, "greet one another with a kiss of love."

Positioned by the Holy Spirit, the book that is the centerpiece of the Bible, the Song of Songs, highlights the intimate love of God that is central to our salvation. In this remarkable poem God, the Lover, claims his Beloved in the most sexual of marital imagery.

God does not hold us at any distance from himself, he longs rather, for complete union with us, clasping us to himself in a complete self-giving, tender embrace. All of Scripture, the Church, the Sacramental life, and the saints testify to God's intense desire to be one with us. These couples, husband and wife, coming before his altar each Sunday are the living sign of the union God longs for between Himself and His People. When they share the

sign of peace in a kiss, man and woman joined by God, exemplify what salvation is all about - union, intimate union through mutual submission. A handshake in celebration of unity may be appropriate for those who are not such a sign, but it is not appropriate for the man and woman wed in God to celebrate their meaning with anything less than a kiss.

The reason that man and woman were created was to image the ecstasy and creativity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father and the Son, one in the love of the Holy Spirit, created man and woman to duplicate their love in human flesh. They willed to share their Divine life with their creature, mankind, even to giving the two, man and woman, their own Third Person to be one with them, pulling Creator and creature into a perfect union of bliss. By turning their backs on this marvelous union with God, and going off on their own, man and woman lost that wholeness that was originally theirs; the Bible describes the terrible divorce that we call “the Fall.”

Though Catholic married couples live in far from perfect situations, falling and failing time after time, still they long to live free loving lives, they long to be One with God, and they believe that is their destiny. They may not be aware of it, but their marriage is even now a complete sign of that destiny. Alice and Ed, Joe and Sally, and all the other couples worshipping on a Sunday before the Real Presence of their Lord, are there only because of forgiveness gained through his loving sacrifice for their sakes. Because of human failing and sin, they must live in a constant state of reconciliation with each other, otherwise they could scarcely muster the courage to kiss each other at the sign of peace. What a grace it is to witness these couples restating forgiveness and reconciliation in the sight of their children, and the whole Christian body assembled!

It is at that moment that we glimpse the order, the peace, the stability, the reassurance of the reign of God. The community that God is forming, that he calls, “Bride,” if only for a second is visibly formed, reassuring all that the Kingdom will come.

20 WHY EVANGELIZE A CATHOLIC FAMILY?

There is a new term abroad in Catholic circles. One meets 'evangelize everywhere. When Bishop Raymond Lucker (New Ulm, MN Diocese) says that ninety percent of Catholic people need evangelization just what does he mean? Perhaps the best explanation is to take a fictitious Catholic family, and see what evangelization would be in their case.

Bob and Joan are now in their forties and have four children. The oldest, Jan, is twenty; then two boys in their teens, Bobby, Jr. and David, and an "accident" little girl, Julie, who is much doted on, age four.

Strongly feeling that the Church traumatized them in their younger years, Bob and Jan call themselves "recovering Catholics." They complain about a negativism imbibed in Catholic schools and from Catholic pulpits about everything from sexuality to the wrath of God. As a result they no longer accept much of the Church's teaching from contraception to confession; they don't understand why divorced people can't remarry without this legalistic mystery called "annulment;" or why remarried couples without that paper cannot take communion. They read in the polls that they see eye to eye with the majority of Catholics in the U.S. Because Sunday morning is a difficult time for six independent wills to decide to go to church, attendance there is chosen rarely. These differences with the Church don't make the Adamsons bad people. Quite the contrary, they are moral and responsible persons who believe in God, who want to lead good lives, and who desire the best for their children.

Bob had to make a difficult adjustment a few years back when Joan took a class in Assertiveness Training and began to break loose from the restrictions of role. Shortly afterward she took Real Estate training and began to sell houses.

Julie is taken each day to Daycare - a good experience, Joan thinks. The boys are expected to come home from school and do household chores that have been Mom's exclusive responsibility. Their level of effort is a constant source of argument and frustration.

Jan has gone off to college, a thoroughly independent young woman. Joan made sure she knew that though they disapprove of irresponsible sex, she and Bob don't unrealistically demand chastity, so she has provided Jan with contraceptive information.

Bob struggles with attitudes which he feels are archaic for a man of the Twentieth Century. He doesn't like his daughter seemingly OK with contraceptives, he doesn't like his wife's absorption in her work, he doesn't like

Bobby Jr.'s odd haircut and atrocious clothes nor David's lethargy; and he doesn't like his own diminished interest in providing for the family. He wants the boys out for sports and extra-curricular activities, but then it must be good for children to do their laundry, clean the house, and cook meals.

Both Joan and Bob are feeling more and more emotionally at sea. Joan is not sure she still loves Bob, though she would never tell him so. She finds more fulfillment as a salesperson than her years as a housewife. For his part, Bob sees himself as neglected. He has learned to sew buttons on his shirt, and throw out socks when his toes punch through - Joan used to darn them when they were first married. There is a lovely younger woman at the office. His moral principles allow nothing more than a few fantasy thoughts, yet he wonders secretly if she is interested in him. He immediately counters such ideas with how much he loves Joan.

This week the Health Service at college sent home an urgent message that Jan is anorexic. Bob and Joan are non-pulsed at this report. They thought Jan was doing just fine; she's always been outgoing and a good student. Joan is especially upset because Bob looks to her for a plan of action. Why does she still have to settle things whether it is Jan or the boys having trouble, as David is more and more? Often her work demands her evenings and Bob is at home merely watching T.V. Jan's problem threatens to be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Joan angrily imagines herself packing up and walking out the front door, never to return. Then Bob would be forced into "growing up."

Needless to say, their sexual relationship which had been warm and mutually satisfying has dwindled to reluctance on Joan's part, and frustration with her coldness on Bob's.

Joan and Bob don't see their lives as disordered; they are deeply puzzled at what is happening to their once happy family. Both sense that in this direction the years ahead hold nothing positive for the family. What is the answer?

Though they are baptized Catholics, these people, Bishop Lucker would say, desperately need evangelization. That is, this family does not base its daily life, its interpersonal relations, its decisions, or its goals on a conscious relationship with Jesus Christ. All are knowledgeable about Jesus, they believe he was an historic person, the Son of God - even Julie sings the Christmas carols about his birth. Yet Jesus, his life, death and resurrection, are vague formulations that do not connect with life. "It is not normal to know about Christ, but not know Christ. It is not normal for people to go to Church and not be converted ." says Bishop Lucker. It is not unrealistic to write a happy ending to this story. Let's say that Joan and Bob realize that they are on a breaking edge. After a particularly serious argument, they are frightened and decide that they will go together to see Father Jim.

Father Jim is a spiritually awakened man who believes in the power of prayer, his priestly powers, the truth of the Scriptures, the authority of the Church, and the salvation offered only through Jesus Christ. Because of his lively faith-life his enthusiasm is catching.

First, he patiently and lovingly brings these two people face to face with Jesus. Who do they think he is? Why do they think he came to earth? And especially, what did he do for them? Have they ever considered that he knocks on the door of their souls and asks them to take Him in as the center of their life?

Joan and Bob are to take these questions home. They are to pray together every day for two weeks and come back with the assignment complete. If they should decide not to do this, they must seek professionals elsewhere who will approach their problems differently.

Bob and Joan are amazed at Father's view that their faith life is less than adequate. Something new is on their spiritual horizon that will shed light on every facet of their lives. It is difficult, but they rise twenty minutes earlier each day to meet Father's request.

In opening up to the Holy Spirit given to them at Baptism, and consciously accepting his gifts given at Confirmation, their focus changes almost overnight. It is plain now that Christ's presence has been ignored, and that they never have allowed him to control their lives.

It is never too late, Father assures them. God's rich promise never changes, "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened. . . If you. . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will God give the Holy Spirit to those who ask."

The conversion takes place differently for the two of them. Joan has two days when unexpected tears of joy come often. Bob experiences nothing emotional, but he feels ever so slowly, "invaded by peace." Both are amazed at their new hunger to read the Bible which they do by rising yet a little earlier.

When this conversion process takes place in psychologically healthy people like Bob and Joan, the effect on the family can be seen dramatically. No longer geared to desires and wants, priorities are set by attempting to discern God's will gleaned through prayer, Scripture, and heeding the mind of the Church. The family will not avoid all problems, but what a difference to have the Saviour and His Love to turn to!

It is not fictional that Joan will begin to put her husband and her children ahead of her own interests and her work. This will be a happy choice for her because of a joyful relationship to God. Gradually through the good teaching at St. Ambrose, the scripture-based preaching of Father Jim, and his further counseling, she begins to grow into the free woman who lives to serve others, not because of legalistic requirements, but for love of God.

Bob, on the other hand, will learn to take hold of responsibilities of spiritual headship of the family which asks him to serve unstintingly. God, he will learn, has given him all he needs to be a good provider materially, but also emotionally and spiritually for his wife and children. This means listening to each member of his family, and leading them gently but firmly to the Source. No longer difficult for him, he sets an example by faithfulness to the Sacraments.

Material things will be put in perspective. Both Joan and Bob will establish good stewardship, giving to God first out of their income, reducing their wants by living simply and rejecting things the media considers necessities.

While they begin to straighten out the family finances, Joan will find that being at home has an unexpected benefit - good home management saves money a thousand ways. Then there is the mysterious way that putting God first activates the promise of Christ, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be yours as well." Best of all, the children! Joan now encourages them to seek out the growth experiences of life that are waiting. Slowly Bob Jr. begins to look more "normal." (A worker with punk-style teen agers says) "...there's a lot

of witchcraft, drugs, alcohol hurt and pain;” their dependence on the shock value of their behaviour says “I’m hurting.”

The discipline of the family rests ultimately in Bob, but the children obey Joan because they see clearly there is no splitting Mom and Dad against each other like before. David is settling down because of the attention, love and discipline of both parents who have begun to pray for their children. Short prayers for special needs have been added to grace at meals.

Julie is being readied for school, learning her ABC’s and 123’s with Sesame Street, and Joan who begins to understand that a woman knits a fabric of security that clothes each child to begin their life in the world. That means thinking deeply about each child, “pondering in her heart” like the Blessed Mother - an impossibility when she was preoccupied with outside work.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is no longer shunned; Bob and Joan are beginning to teach the children by example how valuable their once a month visits to the confessional are to them. Pope John Paul says, “Experts stress that for a marriage to work, the sacraments are essential.”

Yet, Joan has a gift of working with people, and will keep an oar in real estate, waiting for the time when the children are grown, but having an outlet in the meantime. Never again will she ignore the family life together in favor of her own interests.

And Jan. Contact with both Joan and Bob each weekend, their sharing their new found love of God, asking her forgiveness for the spiritual neglect of years, has already eased the problem. They have provided Jan with a book, given to them by Father Jim, written for young people on the Pope’s teaching on sexuality. “There are no simple answers, but there are answers ... which have a lot do with . . .our inability to think about sex and love and marriage and children within a context that is sacred and holy .”

Medical help has not been disregarded, but Joan’s discovery of the power of prayer and the time to practice it , she believes will help Jan come to Jesus Christ herself. Father Jim has offered to meet with Jan for spiritual help for compulsive obsession. He believes Jesus is a Deliverer.

Sexually Joan is rediscovering the truth of C.S. Lewis assertion “you have not failed in obedience because of lack of love, you have failed in love because of lack of obedience. No one has ever told you that obedience is an erotic necessity.” Needless to say, Bob is in seventh heaven exhibiting a tenderness in his relationship with Joan which is enhanced by respect for her feminine nature he is learning through Natural Family Planning. Does this sound like a pious “let’s pretend”? Can evangelism work such wonders? Is there really any such priest as Father Jim, any such church as St. Ambrose? Can couples like Bob and Joan really expect such a turn-about in their lives?

There are uncounted Bobs and Joans out there who can witness to the truth of the above account, the writer and her Bob are one such couple. Perhaps an article like this will stimulate them to share their experience through *The Catholic Answer* letter department - another Catholic evangelism.

21 HOW TO MAKE DIVORCE LESS LIKELY FOR OUR CHILDREN

In the extended Christian family what word is there that strikes more dismay than “divorce?” In our heart of hearts the words of the Lord from the Prophet Malachi silently reverberate, “For I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, . . . So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless.”

A scan of a few articles about divorce finds an abundance of pain words, more than can be found under any other social malady - heartsick, disoriented, living daily only to survive, suffering, scars, devastation. These words are especially poignant because they describe the feelings of children. One million kids per year face the dissolution of their families. The child-pain experienced by divorce is perhaps greater than parental death. With divorce there is a tearing that longs for reunion, with parental death the very absoluteness must eventually be accepted. It is not to be wondered that psychologist Judith Wallerstein in “Second Chances, Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce”(1989 Ticknor and Fields) finds anxiety and stress evident in children even fifteen years after the final decree, and describes “sleeping effects” that will make it “tough” for these children to ever establish intimate relationships.

Children of divorce themselves, Wallerstein finds, tend to become conservative in their personal and family values. They reject marital cheating or open marriage. Instead they long for a lasting relationship and a happy marriage and family life. Many say vehemently, “I don’t want any child of mine to go through what I went through.” How can we rear our children so that they never put themselves and their children, our grandchildren, through divorce? I intend this to be an honest article rooted in experience and the Word of God, to get back to the basics and be verifiable. Therefore, I am incorporating the teaching of John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation: “Community of Family”(1982).

Large Catholic families used to be such a tough fabric of loving relationship that like strong canvas, they never tore, not even in gales of human emotions. Is such handmade stuff still to be woven on the loom of Catholic family life? Our forebearers could be quite unaware of these qualities because they assumed a Christian culture, while for us in the post-Christian age they must be conscious acts. When our dads got down on their knees to say an evening rosary, it was a common posture among their peers. Today such a decision takes firm resolve because it is

such a “peculiar” thing. Yet, these kinds of actions are found to develop in children the qualities that help hold marriages together. They will still do so, but today we must be aware of the destructive forces that are constantly present in the modern home as well.

We cannot eliminate TV.; nor realistically, can we guard every moment children watch TV.; we cannot unduly restrict our children’s acquaintances, nor be sure that all the literature our children see, even at school, does not undermine their values and selfhood. (This was written long before the tsunami of “social media”- the ubiquitous cell-phone, Twitter, and Facebook that have multiplied temptations a thousand-fold) . We can, however, at their earliest understanding, contrast the anti-Christian attitudes with the Christian opposites. Where there is infidelity depicted and promoted, we can point out the misery that is the direct result; where there is hatred and violence, more misery; where there is greed, or luxury beyond belief - only more misery. We can repeat and repeat, that these things are contrary to God’s will: that we live differently because God wants us to be happy not miserable. In order to expose falsehood - “Johnny, what they say is fun and what they laugh at as funny, simply is not true” - there must be a firm base laid in Catholic truth. What makes for permanence in a marriage and how can they be passed on to this generation? They are, of course, the same ingredients that make a home truly Christian, and will develop children who are secure in their inmost being, who are able to live out a commitment, whether called by God to marriage or to dedicated celibacy.

First, God revealed in Jesus Christ must be the central reality of our home. That means that mom and dad must put Him first in their relationship and their decisions. This is primary for a normal Christian life, but nowhere is it more evident that an active Christ-centered life is vital than in marital permanence. Statistics support it. Of the nominally religious 37 % will separate, while among religious Catholics the statistic is 8.8%. Even this number is unacceptably high, and with more consciousness, we may be able to reduce it for our children’s generation. But it will mean becoming “peculiar’ to our culture.

In the time of the apostles, the society in which this radical new life had to be lived out was very caustic to the Christian. Who thought that American culture could become again antagonistic to the exercise of faith? But it is essential to realize that it is. The apostle Peter called upon Christians of the First Century to be a “peculiar” people as the King James rendered the Greek word; Moses’ words to the Chosen People in Deuteronomy 14:2 are translated similarly, “The Lord has chosen you to be a peculiar people.” Perhaps this word meaning “beyond the ordinary” should gain new acceptance for Christians in the post-Christian age. It will take spiritual muscle to swim against the secular tide.

When Jesus Christ is enthroned as head of our household other things fall into line. First, we must help our children to internalize stability. This is not easy in a milieu which adores momentary fads, exemplifies restlessness, and nearly worships change. Practically speaking, how many material things do we cast into the trash bin, sell at excessive garage sales, or send off to Goodwill while we go on adding superfluity to our cupboards, closets, and basements? In “Community of Family” Pope John Paul II instructs parents to:

trustingly and courageously train their children in the essential values of human life. Children must grow up with a correct attitude of freedom with regard to material goods, but adopting a simple and austere lifestyle and being fully convinced that ‘man is more precious for what he is than for what he has.’(II-37)

What does this have to do with stability? A sense of permanence is instilled in children only with a God-centered value system. That is, God has given us this good thing, we shall use it carefully, we shall care for it, and it will last us a long time. Our home will function well because it will not have a lot of things that are whims, it will not have extraneous this and that that are tossed out when something more exciting comes along. And we will not be purchasers with an eye to being like others, or gaining their admiration.

We will, of course, be bombarded just like all families, with advertisements and with pressures by our children's peers, for Reeboks or L.A. Gear. But with some pride in it (and awareness that special needs of our kids may occasionally override an otherwise steady course) we will explain that their acceptance has more to do with their friendliness and peacefulness than what they wear on their feet. Besides that, in degrees appropriate to their age, we will acquaint them with their friend Jesus who walks the balance beam with them among their peers.

Stability has to do with material values, but even more with a solidarity the child gains with his other siblings and his parents in a daily prayer and sharing. No family is too busy for an essential plugging in to God. We want light from a lamp, but the lamp cannot provide it unless it is plugged into the electrical circuit and is deliberately turned on. By rising a half hour earlier and rousing the children, something much more valuable than a half hours sleep will be gained. The family, individual by individual, will be plugging into the spiritual energy that is God. Through this circuitry flows, first, the wisdom for a holy life, and second, the strength to actually live it. Continues Pope John Paul in his family exhortation:

By reason of their dignity and mission, Christian parents have the specific responsibility of educating their children in prayer, introducing them to gradual discovery of the mystery of God and to personal dialogue with him: The concrete example and living witness of parents is fundamental and irreplaceable in educating their children to pray. Only by praying together with their children can a father and mother - exercising their royal priesthood - penetrate the innermost depths of their children's hearts and leave an impression that the future events in their lives will not be able to efface. 111-60

The bonding that occurs in family prayer will never be successfully broken. True, children raised with this core experience will be tested like all humans, but this strong cord of solidarity with their parents, their siblings and the Church will resist the corrosive effects of our culture. Besides, there is something strongly unifying about being different from the Joneses. Parents find to their amazement that the child who grumbles most about getting up for prayer time, will boast to his friends about his family's "weird" habits. "Yeah, we get up at 6:00 to read the Bible! Groan"

I can testify that when those children reach their twenties and thirties, they will look back on that family group gathered in pajamas, snoozing through Dad's reading the Bible, as the best of memories. Their cherished childhood Bibles will speak to them of what was important in still highlighted phrases ("Bibles and markers were all in a pile in one corner of the living room - remember?") There is much concern about communication, but there is no substitute for the openness that develops among family members who pray halting sentence prayers together Our Holy Father writes:

The relationships between the members of the family community are inspired and guided by the law of “free giving.” By respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and every one as the only basis for value, this free giving takes the form of heartfelt acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity. 111-43

Stability, solidarity, and the third of the necessary triumvirate is chastity. No ingredient is more necessary to a successful marriage than two young people giving themselves to each other as virgins. This is aided by prayers through their growing up years that have mentioned other children growing up in other homes who, according to God's will, someday will be their spouses. Visualizing this person growing up with the same specifically Catholic values, helps them recognize that spouse when he or she appears, and certainly helps them recognize those who are not possibly that person. It isn't difficult to impress a young man or woman with how important it is to save themselves for the moment when their Lord joins them to the one he has chosen for them. At the same time it is clear how important it is that that future mate saves himself/ herself for them. One doesn't thoughtlessly give away a treasure and not feel diminished and regretful. And one can save a treasure and feel enriched. Again, plugged-in prayer opens up talk about anything without fear. Our Holy Father instructs:

Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: For sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person - body, emotions and soul - and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love. 111-37

The *roles* of mother and father when aligned with the family life given in the New Testament are another bulwark for permanence in marriage that is overlooked in this modern day. The fact that there is a *Godly order for families*, stated by all the apostles (see Col. 3:18-20; Ephesians 5:21-33), that this order gives roles that are not exchangeable, but have equal worth in God's eyes, is a piece of information not taught, but caught. A child can then frame a realistic idea of his own marriage and assume with ease the responsibilities of his sex that make the marriage work. This eliminates endless friction and uncertainty of his sexual role.

The Bible says that the man undeniably has headship and all the innate qualities to be provider and protector of his family, and the woman who supports him has all the innate qualities to be a nurturer and care-giver. In accord with this, so that it is the actual experience of the youngsters, the father of the family leads the family prayer, and is the spiritual head of the family. This is the ideal, and every wife needs to understand how to exercise patience and trust in order to allow the man to take up this vital responsibility. I Peter 2:18 -3: 6 may help set her course. The Holy Father tells us how important the father is in fostering qualities in children that make their future marriages secure.

In revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God, a man is called upon to ensure the harmonious and united development of all the members of the family; he will perform this task by exercising generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother, by a more solicitous commitment to

education, a task he shares with his wife, by work which is never cause of division in the family but promotes its unity and stability, and by means of the witness he gives of an adult Christian life which effectively introduces the children into the living experience of Christ and the church.

Being “plugged-in” does not automatically make family members temptation-proof. So how does a child respond to temptation? He must be taught to pull on his own switch so that Godly strength is his. It is as simple as telling him that when the temptation appears, to say “Yes” to God - pulling on his personal switch, which immediately says “No” to the temptation. Then the power to resist is his. This concrete personal integrity, guaranteed to guide one to a secure adult life, is built in one half hour blocks of daily family prayer. (Let Saturdays be a free day for teen-agers to sleep in an hour or two; and Sundays, the family prayer time is at mass).

In our emphasis on family prayer , we are not slighting the powerful “plug-in” and “switch” development of the sacraments of the Church. These remain our richest source of grace. Appropriating that grace has always been the challenge. We must believe and use that grace. Someone putting a thousand dollars in our checking account does us no good if we don’t believe it and never draw a check on it. Through family prayer time we can instill the practical belief that Jesus forgives and heals, that he befriends the child in the sacraments. Monday morning sharing by parents about what Eucharist means to them; the problem they took and how Jesus answered , can be one of the memorable moments of prayer time. They can lead the way in candid testimonies. “I felt so angry at for the way she left us with all the cleanup work at the church supper. She always does this, and I think she is lazy. But did you hear the gospel about forgiving seventy times seven? I asked Jesus to forgive me when I took communion. The anger went away. I could freely give her a little hug after mass.”

Does this work of family unity end when the young adult leaves home for work or college, and later into a marriage? It is important that warm contacts continue, and that the new unit of man and wife be woven into the family fabric. The parents make opportunities of fun and fellowship especially during early years of marriages - Baptisms, First Communions, picnics, card parties, social outings, big family birthday parties, celebration of holidays, sporting events etc. Our sons and sons-in-law (nine of the ten are Catholic, nine are regular church-goers) play poker once a month. Whatever the activity, it is a bonding that will act as support to those marriages. The larger the family, the more effective is this inner support system which, though often unstated, is recognizably rooted in Christ.

Rough marriage waters inevitably come to every marriage sometime during the first ten years; then this fraternal love will be a strong cord that will hold. There will be people to talk to, people who know and who care. The parents themselves will keep frequent contact with the newly coupled. When the young folks move away, round-robin letters, telephone calls, video and audio tapes (emails, texting) expressing love and concern - not nosiness, is a tending of the fabric that mom and pop can do. Prayerful concern will never be intrusive, but will be a heeding of what God would have done or would have left undone.

Children reared in an atmosphere of faith will never lose contact with the dynamism that lies behind their family relationships - the palpable love of God. It will hold them through hard times and give them hope for healing

and reconciliation when their marriage is someday tried. Let's take that devastating word "divorce" with all its attendant pain words out of the Catholic vocabulary and again become the "peculiar" people.

22 WHY CANT GOD BE MORE LIKE SUPERMAN?

Superman is dead, they say, done in by the super villain Doomsday. They also prophesy that through the powers of the comic book and the cartoonist's pen he will come back to life again.

It is amusing to consider how the Greatest Story Ever Told is plagiarized by the Superman originators, at least in broad outlines - a man of great powers, godlike, comes from another place and time to overcome evil and set the world aright. After all his amazing feats, he is seemingly conquered by death. But. . . he rises again.

GOD IS NOT LIKE SUPERMAN

However, here the parallels will end. Those on the inside of the comic book world say this time he will not be such a good guy, but in accord with the cynicism of our age, more shadowed with grey. His exploits won't take off from where they were in the Superman movies, when he always answered cries for help just as folks wished.

A schoolbus teeters over the edge of the bridge, its length pushed through the broken guardrails. The hysterical children inside face certain death in the torrential river below. But out of the sky comes salvation - Superman!

Airforce One loses an engine with the President on board. The frantic pilots try to control her in vain and the President and all with him plunge toward destruction. But out of the clouds comes salvation - Superman!

These scenarios from the movie are the dream-prayer of every person living out a calamity, and pose a burning question of every one who has experienced a tragedy in life. Why can't God be more like Superman? After all, God doesn't always answer cries for help just as folks wish.

A young mother in our little river town lost her husband to the late spring currents and is left with five small children. A brother had him in his grasp, but could not hold his limp body which was carried away. Did God simply not give that hand the necessary strength? Why didn't God intervene - the current stop or the man float? The questions continue to swirl in the grieving widow's mind. Why isn't God more like Superman?

When day after day I stood by the bed of my dying daughter, praying, praying, praying, I would have had God instantaneously repair her ravaged organs, restoring her to her young husband and baby daughter - and to all of us, her family. I would have had him fend off Death like Superman diverts the atomic missile one-handed!

GOD OR CHANCE?

How many times has the question been asked, “Where was God?” when only a matter of seconds, or of inches separated a way of escape from inescapable doom? How many broken hearts have bitterly turned away from God when it seemed he had failed to show the steadfast love proclaimed in the pulpit Sunday by Sunday?

A best selling book, “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” by Rabbi Harold Kushner attempts to assure us that though God is not all-powerful, he is all-loving. God has set things in motion, he writes, but after that initial miracle of creation nature must take its course. Yet, we hear daily of miracles, of people being snatched from the brink of death by an amazing set of circumstances. God is immediately praised. “It was God,” they say, “who saved me!” Kushner would disagree, saying, “It was chance.”

God or chance? This problem that has been pondered by sages over the centuries, and by considering it, we are attempting to step in where angels fear to tread. C.S. Lewis, the highly respected Christian writer, has approached this ticklish subject in two books: the first, *The Problem of Pain*, and the second, *Miracles*. Of course, his attempt, too, falls short of answering all the questions about evil in the world. At the bottom it remains a mystery. Yet, C.S. Lewis writes to shed a ray of light on the subject, gaining his own insights from the considerable light of the Holy Bible.

THE FIRST THREE CHAPTERS OF GENESIS HOLD THE KEY

To approach even a few of the whys about the calamities of life, we believers must begin with the first three chapters of Genesis. Our Holy Father in *Sign of Contradiction*, a book dating before his elevation to Pope, writes;

A non-Catholic philosopher once said to me: “You know - I just can't stop myself reading and re-reading and thinking over the first three chapters of Genesis.” And indeed it seems to me that unless one does so reflect upon that fundamental ensemble of facts and situations it becomes extremely difficult - if not impossible - to understand man and the world.

The Bible helps us to imagine that state by depicting a garden full of lush fruit bearing trees, of friendly animals, and a leisure in which to walk and talk with God. Man and woman are creatures of loveliness in body, mind and spirit. They uninhibitedly love each other without ever saying the unkind word, or doing the selfish act. They communicate with each other fully and understand each other completely. Never is there a misunderstanding. All the creativity of their exceptional intelligence and spirit is available to them, because they think God's thoughts after him and obey his Holy Will. The whole world is given to them “to rule over” - which is to say, to use to its best advantage for the furtherance of their race and to the glory of the Creator. We believe that even creation itself was not then subject to death and decay.

St. Paul tells us that this is the way it will be when all is restored in Christ Jesus. He even makes these statements in the context of our present suffering:

I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the Sons of God;

(Those “sons of God” are us! You and me. They are called “sons” because we are growing into the likeness of Jesus who is God’s only Son. When we are fully like him, then creation will be restored to its original beauty perpetually.)

for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope;

(when man and woman disobeyed in the perfect Garden, everything fell apart. Because man and woman are an extension of the physical universe in their very bodies, their condemnation to die affected everything all the way down to the most teeniest microbe. God subjected everything to death because of sin, but he did it at the same time offering hope - as we shall see.)

because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(Yes, with our redemption in Jesus at the Cross, the downhill plunge of creation was stopped. And when that redemption is complete, creation will be restored to pristine glory. We cant imagine a creation that doesn’t grow old and die, but, with us as children of God, it is to have that glorious liberty.)

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

Wow! St. Paul, you can say that again! We are groaning. And sometimes we wonder what difference our baptism has made. We are supposed to have the Holy Spirit with all his gifts operative in our lives. Yet, here we are still suffering. Obviously there is still some waiting ahead before your vision - and we believe this to be

inspired by the Lord himself - comes to pass. So we live in that hope.

In order for Eden to be really a Garden of Delight (which is the meaning of the word Eden), man and woman must have freedom; they cannot be mere slaves. Freedom means being able *to choose to love*. A puppet manipulated into an adoring attitude brings no particular joy to the puppeteer. God didn't make his human creatures to be puppets or robots. He slid no cassette into man and woman's head that only played out words and actions of loving kindness.

A little child comes freely and, to their delight, flings himself upon his parents. And to his delight, they receive him open armed. God receives joy as any father and mother does, from the freely given love of his child; therefore, these children he created must have the possibility open to them of choosing to love him . . . or sadly, not. For this other choice the Genesis story presents a symbol, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree stands there so perfect man and perfect woman, if they would rather decide for themselves, can turn to their own judgments of right and wrong, and not accept God or willingly follow his ways.

It takes an Enemy's intrusion into this perfect world for it to be possible for them to ever turn to their own judgment, or think an envious thought . After all, it was sheer joy to accept God and follow his ways. There would no envy, no jealousy, no competition in the Eden that God created. Some alien intelligence would have to plant such attitudes into the receptive, trusting, but naive human soil. We know the sad story well when the insinuations of the Enemy took root: the choice is made away from God, first by the woman and then by her husband. The Fall from perfection is the consequence. Rejected by them, God must sadly let them go their way. The super-stupendous gifts, greater than the creator of Superman ever imagined, that God had given to mankind are lost. They had been given everything that made man and woman fit to live as a friends of God, speaking with him eye to eye. In a sense, they were participating in the Divine life itself - to us now, unimaginable! But with their, "no, thank you," the brokenness begins: their supernatural life dies; then their natural life falters toward death as well.

THE LOST IS FOUND

C.S. Lewis writes, "Human Death, according to the Christians, is a result of human sin; Man, as originally created, was immune from it: Man when redeemed, and recalled to a new life (which will, in some undefined sense, be a bodily life) . . . will be immune from it again." We hear it proclaimed in the Eucharistic prayers, especially in the Fourth, that God has not abandoned us; he is restoring us through Christ.

Father we acknowledge your greatness:
 all your actions show your wisdom and love.
 You formed man in your own likeness and set him over the
 whole world to serve you, his creator,
 and to rule over all creatures.
 Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship

you did not abandon him to the power of death, but helped
all men to seek and find you. . . .
Father, you so loved the world
that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son
to be our Savior.

St. Paul repeats the assurances of the Old Testament about the surpassing wonders of God's perfect plan for us, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor. 2:9, RSV) He records that he himself was raised to Third Heaven - which is the Heaven in which God lives, where he saw these wonders; so he speaks from personal experience when he says it is all too wonderful for words. You can read his own overawed description in Second Corinthians, chapter 12.

But, meanwhile back at the ranch, it is this fallen world we live in - a world that is full of sin and error with consequences that the loving God never intended. The newspapers and T.V. news never let us forget that mankind's heart tends to 'evil continually.' Lewis reminds us:

"When souls become wicked they will certainly . . . hurt one another; and this, perhaps accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings of men. It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs; it is by human avarice or human stupidity, not by the churlishness of nature that we have poverty and overwork.

We might add that man's sin also accounts for the scourges our time: AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, and many of the causes of cancer and heart disease.

BAD NEWS: GOOD NEWS

There is good news, however, news that the media never deals with, news can only be heard within the Church. That is that we Christians, sinners all, are in the process of transferring membership from this fallen realm to the realm of the Kingdom of God where super-stupendous gifts of supernatural life will be ours again. Sometimes we see glints of heaven already, often in bleak circumstances of our daily lives.

In our little church we have an active prayer network. One of our young women the midst of delivering twins, had happen what is almost always a fatal complication. Her uterus was torn and the main artery opened. Only the big city hospital, an hour away by ambulance had the necessary resources to save her, but there was no hour's leeway; saving her had to be done in minutes. Alerted by her parents when the difficult labor began, the prayer network had begun its work. Because of intense fog, the helicopters could not respond to the emergency call by the hospital. But hardly had the phone been cradled; when the fog lifted the flight prohibition was lifted. The helicopter arrived in minutes airlifting Paula immediately to the emergency medical team that awaited her. Today, what joy it is to see her with her husband struggling to control three little boys in the front row at mass.

We've all witnessed a miracle - someone is rescued from imminent death, someone is healed beyond the ability of science, someone is stopped from doing evil and is converted to God. But other times - - -well, the grace necessary seems lacking. Lewis calls up an image of this world by naming it, "Enemy Occupied Territory." Though

the good world is God's, he made it and he sustains it, an enemy has occupied it and attempts to claim it for his own. Satan demands a heavy tax from every human being living in his stolen territory - death. Death, says St. Paul, "is the wages of sin" and "the last enemy to be destroyed." (Romans 6:23, I Corinthians 15:26)

In the meantime, Lewis explains, these soul shattering sadnesses of the realm of death are ways we are brought to God. Otherwise we would coast along, all downhill, because of our fallen nature' cooperation with the Enemy, and never even know the danger until we slid into the maw of hell. That's because without these rude awakenings we never come to see ourselves; that we do, indeed, live in Enemy Occupied Territory, and that we continue to further the Enemy's designs like quislings and traitors to our Lord.

THE LION OF SALVATION IS JESUS

Another story of Lewis', the beloved children's tale "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," pictures it all dramatically. Deep Magic ordains that breaking the law is punishable by death. Because of Edward's betrayal of his brother and sisters, the White Witch in accord with the Deep Magic can demand his life - Edward broke the law. The great lion Aslan, however, takes his place, suffering degradation, physical torment, and agonized death at the hands of the Witch, so that Edward may live. Aslan is the story's Jesus who has forgiven our treachery, taken our place, and overcome death's author. Through him the way has been made for us to overcome him, too.

Yet, it is a WAY and how often are we really on it? If we were, would we not see many more of those God-incidences which Kushner calls coincidences? Jesus promised that those who abided in him would actually do the works he did, and greater works.

Perhaps when the miracle happens there is a force of believing prayer at work, perhaps when the miracle happens there is an upward surge of trust and love that breaks out the dark ceiling of the kingdom of this world letting in pure light. Perhaps there is a total acceptance that no one sees, but which is a channel for God's power to lift in an instant a threatened person out of death to life. That faith-surge may not come from the victim, it may come from a saint invoked, from a loved one inspired to pray in that moment, from a bank of prayers and penances previously invested the treasures in heaven, or from an instinctual faith-cry to God from an unknown bystander.

Are we ignorantly dealing with a tremendous mystery? Oh, yes! But the outlook certainly is not as dire and mechanistic, nor is God as helpless as Rabbi Kushner would have it. His approach ends with the Bible character, Job. One look at our Bible's Table of Contents tells us that our good news as Christians begins *after* Job. Job, standing for a moment in a pencil of hope which quickly fades, can only plaintively ask, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Every C.C.D. child knows more than that dear old saint Job.

It is not God whose hands are tied by the nature he created - look at Jesus; he walks on water, multiplies bread, casts out evil spirits, heals the sick, and raises the dead. No, it not God whose hands are tied, it is us who are bogged in unbelief, in rebelliousness, and in fatal attractions to the Prince of this World. When we love as he loved, when we abide in him as he does in us, will we really do his works? Maybe we already do some of them without knowing.

BUT, THE SAINTS SUFFER.

But, you will say, “What about the trials and afflictions of the saints. Certainly if there is this faith-surge available upon which God’s power enters human affairs, they should be the ones lifted out of disaster. They abide in God and love as purely as people can.”

The saints were rescued. Many times. We all know the stories of St. Francis and the wolf, of St. Anthony and the demons, of St. Athanasius and his accusers, of St. Theresa and her rebellious community. And many more times they rescued others through miracles - those cracks that let in light through our low ceiling. They still do; just ask those who have a devotion to The Little Flower, or who pray to St. Jude or St. Anthony. You will hear amazing testimonies. But strange as it is to those of us who beg not to be so tested, there comes a time when saints seek suffering. St. Paul writes about actually rejoicing in his pain:

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Col.1 :24 RSV)

There is a point when these mere humans, so in love with Jesus, ask to share his suffering in order to be effective in overcoming evil in the world. Through their submission to the trials of Satan they seek “to be poured out as a libation.” They beg to participate in salvation. When we see them suffer, they are not being overcome by evil forces; they are instead shortening Satan’s chain so that the rest of us might be that much freer from his woes. When saints suffer, they never cry to God asking him to act like Superman in order to alleviate their pain.

JESUS IS THE MIRACLE UPON WHOM ALL TRUE MIRACLES HINGE

If it could be, that like Superman, God willed to rotate the earth backwards in order to reverse some calamity, what kind of a chaotic place would earth be? What if, by a kind of divine whim, natural laws would be repealed, or reversed so that a special one was spared an otherwise inevitable tragedy? What if, to rescue God’s chosen ones from the evils of the fallen creation, such a scenario were not only possible but happened all the time? This would be God acting like a cosmic Superman.

Life on this planet would change from being laced with danger, but also with promise, to a nightmare existence. Nothing could be depended upon from one moment to the next. No plan could be made, no enterprise undertaken, no child given a promise, no baby assured his next breath. When miracles happen in the Christian kingdom under the hand of Jesus they do not disorient us by undoing or disrupting the natural. As Lewis says, ‘The fitness of Christian miracles and their differences from these mythological miracles, lies in the fact that they show invasion by a Power that is not alien. They are what might be expected to happen when she (nature) is invaded not simply by a god, but by the God of Nature. . They proclaim that He who has come is not merely a king, but the King, her King and ours.’ The Creator bends his creation to His will. Superman invades it as an alien and disrupts it.

If God’s interventions were not that of one who works within his own creation and uses his own natural law, but were instead like Superman’s, it would mean that we no longer had the dignity of being personally responsible for our thoughts or actions. Our freedom would be meaningless. Did the bus driver lean out the window to ogle a pretty jogger when he should have been driving carefully over the bridge? It makes no difference. Did the mechanic drink on the job so that the jet engine’s problem went unnoticed? No matter. We may long for that lack of

cause at one moment, but do we want to have a world invaded by capriciousness? Wouldn't we rather have even the occasional terrible but logical results of foolish or evil actions than day to day life in a madhouse?

For Christians something better than Superman is here - in fact, the real Super Man is here. Here is the Rescuer who we call "Redeemer" and "Savior." With him, in ways which have a great deal to do with trust, we do escape many of the "pitfalls, trials and snares" as we sing in declaring God's Amazing Grace. Somehow through our Redeemers grace, the bonds of Satan which cause all the "de" words: deception, depression, despair, debility, decay, defeat, and death, are loosed. We have a tremendous all-powerful, all-loving God who overshadows poor Superman as the sun does a candle.

Lewis summarizes, "The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say *that God became Man*. Every other miracle prepares for this, or results from this. . . every particular Christian miracle manifests at a particular place and moment the character and significance of the Incarnation. There is no question in Christianity of arbitrary interferences just scattered about. It relates not a series of disconnected raids on Nature but the various steps of a strategically coherent invasion - an invasion which intends complete conquest and 'occupation.'"

So the world has been retaken from him who tried to make it Enemy Occupied Territory. God still rules his good world. *Trust* in Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, with *obedience* to him are the keys for channeling his miracle power into our lives. They are the passports handed to believers that lift them from the fallen kingdom of this world to the Kingdom of God which, with that trust and obedience, begins here and now.

Our daughter Mary's suffering death we could never equate with a loving God. Because of Jesus, we knew that what she was experiencing was certainly not his perfect plan. So where did this come from? There was the obvious answer. This came from the strong spirit of evil in the world, in which she and we, unwittingly and wittingly, are a part. And we struggled, along with uncounted others through the ages, with how such evil could exist in a good world and afflict good people? It set us seeking to know more of God.

After praying and praying and praying, how did we cope with God's "no" when our daughter Mary died? To the end we believed in God's miracle power to raise her up, to free her from the miles of tubes, from the incessant drip of drugs, from the hated hiss of the respirator. We stood on the brink of the greatest mystery and looked into what was total blackness. Still unfathomable to us, is this "no" that came from that infinite dark. But an even more unfathomable thing happened. We found ourselves encompassed by love - an experience of the spirit akin to the ear when it is being engulfed by a transcendent Brahms' theme. Gradually we found, irrepressibly growing, a stronger belief in Our Lord than we had had before. Now we could vision Mary in a happiness that was the absolute opposite of darkness - pure light, her human nature transformed. Now we could even believe that her husband and baby daughter were to be profoundly blessed. A miracle! Through our grief and tears, Jesus came and stood very close. He didn't turn the world backwards to rewind time so that we could catch that cancer before it caught her, but he turned us around to him so that we would relinquish her to him in faith. Which way is incomparably the best? Which way raises us to a place where we can hope someday to share with our daughter his divine nature in a new Eden?

There is a song sung by Lois in the Superman movie that transcribed through ears of the spirit seems appropriate for an encounter with our Saviour, the only true Super-man.

Lois has been lifted up into the night skies of Manhattan to fly with her hero in an experience that is both terrifying and thrilling. She is totally dependent upon his strength and his other-worldly gifts. A deep trust sets in, a surrender to this Someone who is so utterly dependable and strong. Upon him she has staked her life. She is falling in love. Mentally to herself, she internalizes these words to the music:

Can you read my mind?
Can you picture the thing I'm thinking of wondering why you
are all the wonderful things you are?

You can fly! You belong to the sky!
And tonight we belong to each other.
If you need a friend, I'm the one to fly to
If you need to be loved, here I am - read my mind.

Fictitious Superman does read her inmost thoughts as only Our Lord can really do. God can't be like Superman because his nature and his love so outclass that puny one dimensional characters nature and love, and because what this fallen world needs is not more chaos, but a total restoration to wholeness. Yet, our deepest human longings are projected on this storied hero. Lois speaks about what every person, man and woman, desires in his heart of hearts, an intimate experience with Our Lord, the God who sees right through us, who reads our inmost mind, upon whom we can wholly trust, and who like a Lover gives himself to us.

23 A LITTLE SUITCASE OF BOOKS

It had taken me most of a week to get up the courage to open the battered suitcase that had been sent to us: part of the leftovers of a life. Why do these bitter-sweet remembrances cluster around sad anniversary times? Mary's in-laws could have sent these things back any time, but here they are - the very week of July - the time when our emotions intensify each year.

I deliberately unclasp the lid and look inside. Well, it is really nothing - just a suitcase full of books. A couple of old school texts are the biggest, then some booklets, a few hard cover books, and a paperback or two. Musty, none of it looks interesting. I feel both relieved and disappointed.

Somehow I was looking for messages something that would say, "I don't miss a thing, Mom. I'm right here with you. I wish you'd realize it!" Something that would bring back all that she was to us. Some kind of symbolism we could interpret as a loving communication from her new life with God.

There should have been some sign, but there was nothing. I pick up a big red hardcover that declares: *The Conquest of Cancer*, and then a paperback bestseller which falsely promises, *Getting Well Again*. With some feeling, I toss these two books onto the waste barrel and sadly go on with the day's affairs.

It was the next morning when the first message came from the old suitcase. Bob brought in a substantial, pale blue paperback. "Did you see this New Testament?" he asks. Look what's here." He opens the cover, and there in her round, determined handwriting, about ten- year old maturity, I guess, were four words above her signature, I love you, God. Mary S. Cross." That was all, but it was enough - wonderful! I smell the book, and even the mildew seems pleasant.

What other things were there like that? The next hour is spent reexamining the suitcase, book by book. Four of the heaviest and most costly are college texts: a *Listening* book with a record in it. She had learned to like some classical music even though she was incurably a child of Motown. *Introductory Typing* had taught her to type, and College English Workbook to write decently. But this book with its deceptively simple title, *Psychology* - hadn't she first begun to question her own stability when studying this? She'd seen herself in every aberrant personality, and had experienced a gradual loss of faith. Talks together had helped, but only until some other anguishing question intruded.

The Italic Way to Beautiful Handwriting! I readily visualize those slender hands, the fingers so adept and covered with dainty silver rings, sketching the flora she loved. I cherished the cards she inked - a spray of cedar fronds with their husky seeds, a clutch of roadside grass all plumey, a stem of Queen Anne's lace. In a Mothers Day card decorated with garden flowers, she had written,

I love you Mom, and I miss you. You are by far my best friend,
and I think that's the best thing a girl could say about her mother.
My prayers are with you on the day set aside for you.
May God bless you and keep our hearts close together. -
Much love, Mary.

The Italic Way was to enhance these cards with refined script, I suppose, but I prefer her own familiar lettering.

Are You Really Serious About Losing Weight? Oh, yes, that obsession. The yellow booklet opens to pages titled, "A Personal Review." Her handwriting with those distinctive round letters is more maturely formed. "What are your favorite foods," the booklet asks. Among her entries are three, each followed by parentheses enclosing the same words:

baked beans (any and all)
ice cream (any and all)
hamburgers (any and all)

I see her stirring the crockpot, her dark hair drawn back into a thick, heavy braid. I see her intently turning the meat on the grill, and scooping the ice cream onto pie for all the kids. She did love family parties, hamburgers, and God, even through the ups and downs. Y

Then there is this one, *Say Yes to Michigan!* It is a promotional piece filled with gorgeous pictures of blue water, sand dunes and green hills. The cover picture is of the great Mackinaw Bridge twinkling with lights on an early evening. In Mary's mind, Michigan was next to heaven itself. With her brothers and sisters she had spent her summers as a little child swimming in the crystal waters and playing on the white sand beaches near Traverse City. Indelibly the beauty and solitude had marked her soul. That was why, in her turbulent, late-teen years she had gone back. Perhaps she would find herself there. Perhaps God would speak and line out her destiny. But God was silent, and she didn't know that his silence often tests our love and commitment. Impatiently she turned away and made Michigan her own hell.

God rescued Mary. She recognized that. How grateful she was that she didn't marry one of the drifters she drank with, or that she didn't die of drugs as did one of her friends. She made it back home. Bob and I knew how the father felt at the return of the prodigal. We, too, must have feasted, not with the fatted calf, I don't remember, but probably w a crock of baked beans, pounds of grilled hamburgers, and gallons of ice cream.

It was her decision to return to the sacraments. With relief she celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a priest who had known her from childhood. Perhaps it was then that she bought this *Young People's Book of Saints*, and this one, *Godliness Through Discipline*. Underlined in red is "Discipline means to continue to say 'no' to self and to say 'yes' to Christ every day, until, one by one, all the old habitual ways are replaced by new ones." That fits the renewed, enthusiastic years when she re-embraced her Church life.

I pick up two more booklets which mark her progression into the too brief years as Gerry's wife and then as the mother of a beautiful little daughter, Audrey. *Beginning Your Marriage* by a Jesuit priest, who instructs in fidelity, explains how to build a lasting relationship and enjoy conjugal sex, and how to establish good parenting roles. On the back page is a short poem similar to the nuptial blessing:

May your marriage be a long adventure
in personal growth.
May you have true friends to stand by you
in joy and sorrow. –

May you see your children's children
to the third and fourth generation.
May you come to old age and grey hair
in peace and contentment.

Through tears I scan the second one, *Handbook for Today's Catholic Family*. Just a few weeks ago, Bob and I had been at a family wedding where Audrey, a beautiful replica of her mother at five years old, walked down the aisle carrying a flower basket. Gerry was proud, we were proud, but we struggled with tight throats and welling eyes. Later, Gerry wondered out loud if that young couple could possibly believe that the happiness of their wedding day could end . . . so soon.

A small slip of paper marks a page. There are four points here that speak of how Mary wished her family to live:

- You are trying to help each other believe the Good news, despite the fact that it is so good it's hard to believe.
- You are retrying to see Jesus in each other.
- You dare to talk to God as "Abba," Father, "Who has made your family his family.
- You are trying to realize more and more that your family is his Body; that whatever happens to one of you happens to him.

At this point I must get up from stooping and stretch my legs. I walk over to the trash can, where the books about cancer recovery are still on top. It's clear that they, too, belong to this collection which now seems uncannily reasonable and complete. I resolve to keep it together on a shelf of its own, a whole compendium of messages from Mary. Surely, her little family was and is God's family still, even though the young mother is in another realm and the young father and small daughter continue to occupy the temporal.

The last couple of books don't seem relevant. One is a book of strange little houses - hippy kinds of houses, and the other is Phyllis McGinley's book of Christmas poetry, *A Wreath of Christmas Legends*- I've never been strong on poetry, and anyway it's July, so I top off the pile of books with these, and go to make room somewhere in the house for another shelf of books.

The timing is hard to believe! But a blue Ford pickup draws up to the back door. Gerry opens the driver's door, and a little girl dressed in bright pink shorts appears from the other side. Farm machinery has brought Gerry out from the farm for parts, and Audrey is his companion so they can visit "the other Grandma."

We enjoy a good chat on the back porch, sipping lemonade and recalling briefly that three years ago today was the Resurrection Mass for Mary. “Only three years,” says Gerry. ‘It seems.. .like more - like less. We ramble on through lighter things.

Audrey says, “My dad is going to build me a playhouse.”

“Really, Audrey? What a lucky girl! A house all of your own?”

“It’s going to have a kitchen for my stove and frigerator, and three rooms. Three rooms.”

Gerry adds, “Maybe not three room, but a deck with a sandbox. I keep telling her, ‘just draw me a picture of how you want it.’”

“Dad,” she shakes her head, “I can’t draw a picture right.”

A sudden idea strikes me. “Wait a minute! I have just the thing!”

In seconds I return with the book of fanciful little wooden houses. Leaning back on her dad, Audrey begins to thumb through the pages. The minutes are punctuated with delighted exclamations.

“Oh Dad, look at this! I want a ladder like this one to my bed up there”

“Daddy, look! A window with a plant.”

“Oh see, a stairway made of a tree right up to a deck!”

Gerry is laughing, “Wait, wait, hold on there.” But I see him registering all the ways he can please her. He studies the deck with a sunken flower garden which could be a sandbox just as well.

“You may have the book, Audrey,” I say;” It was your mothers.”

She closes it carefully, and clutching her treasure, she and Gerry say their good-byes. I see only the top of her head as the truck backs out of the drive, but a little hand waves before they disappear down the hill.

“Dear Father, surely they are your family and you have them in the palm of your hand.”

Having received so many message, I must take a last look at that poetry book which Isuddenly believe will top off an anniversary of Mary’s resurrected life that I will never forget. I walk back into the cool, dark garage and pick it up. The last poem is titled, “Legend of the Holly.”

Alas, alas, the little Newborn
 Has pricked his finger upon a thorn,
 He left his blood on the piny leaves.
 Heavy of heart the holly grieves,
 Sees in a terrible vision how
 A crown of holly shall bind his brow
 When Child is man.
 For sorrow and shame
 The berries have blushed as red as flame
 Says Mary the Mother.
 ‘Take no blame.’
 desolation to joy makes way.
 (Hang high the holly!)”