

❖ Ad Veritatem ❖

Volume 1 Issue 9

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TEAM UP '97: SUPER SATURDAY MEN'S CONFERENCE

On Saturday February 8, 1997, all Catholic men are invited to attend a conference just for them!!!! "Team Up '97 - Super Saturday Men's Conference" will address challenges facing Catholic men in the 90's at work, home, and as individuals.

Featured speakers will include:

- JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT who is a contemporary Catholic recording artist.
- FR. RICHARD ROHR, O.F.M., an internationally known speaker and author.
- DAN O'NEILL, co-founder and President of Mercy Corps International.
- FR. JIM CLARK, a national conference speaker and retreat director.
- FRANCISCO FIRMAT, Orange County Superior Court Judge.

The conference will occur on February 8 from 8:30 am to 5 pm at the Long Beach Convention Center. The cost is \$25 per person with a \$5 discount if ticket is purchased prior to January 15, 1997. For more information, call Catholic Men Fellowships, the sponsoring organization, at (714) 580-1060 or email: "Catholicmen@aol.com".

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Next Meeting: Noon on December 19, 1996 at Rutan & Tucker will be led by Rich Neuland. The Topic: "The Plank in Your Eye".

Our Retreat: June 6 -8, 1997 at Marywood, the Diocesan Center in Orange. Our Chaplain, Fr. Hugh Barbour, will be our retreat Director. The retreat will be a traditional, silent retreat with conferences and meditations taken from the writings of our patron, St. Thomas More. There will be opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance, Eucharistic Adoration and quiet time with the Lord.

The Perfect Christmas Present

By: Fr. Hugh Barbour, O. Praem
Our Chaplain

"Adam lay ybounded, bounden in a bond, four thousand winters thought he not too long, and all whas for an apple, an apple that he took, as clerkes finden written in their book..." So goes the text to the medieval English Christmas carol. The sin of Adam, original sin, of which we spoke in the last issue of *Ad Veritatem* is the negative "reason for the season" of Christmas. The Savior, Son of God and Son of Mary, whose coming was promised as soon as our first parents fell (see Genesis 3:15) came first of all for the redemption of the human nature He had taken on Himself from original sin and its effects. Given the undeniable effects of original sin--the most experientially verifiable of Christian dogmas--we can understand why "Tis the season to be jolly..." The hope of holiness and wholeness, the possibility which we see lived out in the lives of saints, given to us by Christ: here is the true cause for our rejoicing.

Our Protestant brethren understand, as we do, that Jesus has come to redeem us from our individual, personal sins; this is a very crucial aspect of our faith in the Savior. Yet

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More insisted that "nothing can contribute more effectively...to the implanting of every sort of virtue in the Christian breast than pious and fervent meditation on the successive events of Christ's Passion."

**Thomas More: A
Portrait of Courage**

Editor's Note:
"Ad Veritatem" is Latin
for "toward the truth".

A SPECIAL GIFT FROM GOD: THE PRIESTHOOD

By: Anne Lanphar

The invitation came as a surprise. My husband, Bob, and I had never been invited to an ordination so when the invitation arrived inviting us to the ordination of three young men from St. Michael's Abbey, we decided to attend. We had witnessed all of the seven sacraments except Holy Orders.

The day dawned beautiful and warm. The ordination was to be held at Holy Family Cathedral. We arrived early since we were unsure what to expect.

We sat in the main part of the Church as pews to the right side of the altar were reserved for the young seminarians from St. Michael's who would be serving as the choir. The pews to the left of the altar were reserved for all the priests who would be participating. As I silently watched, many people prepared the altar for this special event. There was an air of anticipation - something very holy was going to occur here - soon.

I thought back about what I knew about the sacrament of Holy Orders. It was one of the seven sacraments created by Jesus and one of the three sacraments that left an indelible mark on the soul. Christ instituted the sacrament at the Last Supper and since that holy night there have always been priests on earth serving the people by bringing the other sacraments, most especially the Holy Eucharist. Without priests we would not have any of the Sacraments. The priests, these men here today, were our direct link to Jesus Christ. I was about to witness the living apostolic tradition of the Catholic Church.

To the right side of the altar I studied the beautiful mosaic picture depicting a church on a rock... "*Simon, you are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it...*" (Matt. 16:18) There was also a set of keys shown... "*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven...*" (Matt 16:19) A boat was also part of the picture symbolizing Christ's direction to his apostles "...*I will make you fishers of men...*" (Mark 1:17) To the left of the altar was another mosaic picture showing a spring of water depicting grace, and the bishop's mitre and crosier (staff) - the outward symbols of the authority of the Bishop. The crosier is symbolic of the shepherd's staff... "*Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep...'*" (John 21:15-17) In the bottom left of the picture was a small crest with the words "In veritatae ambulare" ("To walk in the truth"). This was the personal crest of Bishop MacFarland, the

Bishop of Orange, who would be conferring the Sacrament of Holy Orders this day on three young men, making them part of the Priesthood of Christ.

I was brought back to reality when the music began and the congregation rose. The procession started: first the altar boys carrying the cross followed by many, many priests from throughout the Diocese and finally the Bishop, dressed in all the beautiful vestments of his office, wearing the mitre and carrying the crosier. The solemnness of this holy occasion was palpable in the Church.

The Mass began - the same Mass that would be celebrated in every country of the world that day by priests - bringing the Holy Eucharist to Christ's people. "*I believe in the one, holy Catholic and apostolic Church...*" (The Nicene Creed). Here before me was living proof of these 4 characteristics of Christ's church on earth.

After the homily, the ordination ceremony began. The outward sign of the sacrament of Holy Orders is the laying of hands on each candidate by the Bishop. Each of these young men were called by God: being a priest is a privilege, a special calling from God - it is a not a right, not something to be earned. After the laying on of hands by the Bishop, each and every priest present came forward and placed his hands on the head of each young priest, praying over him. There were so many different types of priests, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Vietnamese, short and tall, young and old, men who had been in the service of God their whole lives. I was most

struck by what then happened: each of the priests, including the Bishop, one by one, came forward and bowing their heads, received the blessing of each of these new young priests!

The Mass continued, con-celebrated by all the priests present, including the three new priests. They brought us the Eucharist, the true presence of Christ on earth.

Being a cradle Catholic, I have always taken the presence of priests for granted. They were always there when I needed them - for Mass, for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for advice, for consolation. I had never really thought about them - I expected them always to be there like a child that always expects their parent to be there whenever needed. I never really thought about priests as people - men who had given up their lives for service to God and His people - *and me*. They are truly a gift from God to us all. Without them, where would we be?

(Continued on page 3) A Gift from God

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(Continued from page 2) **A Gift from God**

The presence of the Holy Spirit was incredibly strong in the Church that day as was Mary and all the angels and saints. This was a special day not only on earth but also in heaven, before the altar of God bringing to mind the vision in Rev. 14.

The Mass concluded, the recessional hymn began and the procession of priests and the Bishop began to exit the Church.

I stayed in the pew - literally overwhelmed with this special event in which I had just participated. I sat thinking, contemplating, absorbing, rejoicing. Then I was blessed to witness something incredibly beautiful. One of the new young

priests came down from the altar. His mother was in the second row. As he approached her, she knelt down and he blessed her with the sign of the Cross placing his hands softly on her head. She gently, lovingly, took his hands in hers, and kissed them - those special hands that she had brought into this world, had held so many times, had washed and which were now the instruments of Christ on earth. Tears came to my eyes as I turned away from this precious moment between a mother and her son and I thought about the love between another Mother and Son....and I prayed that someday, if it was God's will, that one of my sons might be called to this special sacrament.

(Continued from page 1) **Our Chaplain**

Christ's coming is not first of all for our own individual sins, but for the good of our fallen nature even if we were never to commit a sin of our own. Just as the fall of our first parents resulted in a universal, shared inheritance of a human nature still good, but seriously wounded, so Christ's principal work is to restore human nature as such, by overcoming the moral and physical sicknesses of soul and body, and the death to which they lead. Perhaps we have had the intuition that our greatest spiritual difficulties are not our sins, but our many conflicting inclinations, imperfections, and drives, which come not so much from our sins as from our wounded drives, which come not so much from our sins as from our human nature. To be sure we are sinners, but even once our sins have been forgiven, the biggest task we have is to live in accordance with our reason and faith, in the midst of the constant warfare of our passions. We want to speak too much, eat too much, sleep too much, indulge our other passions, we feel greedy, wrathful, irritable, lazy, lustful, even when we do not sin, do not give in. The tug of inordinate desires in our nature is one of the greatest crosses we bear. Saint Paul was surely a saint, forgiven his great personal sin by the mercy of Christ in a most extraordinary way, yet as holy as he was, he suffered from the onslaughts of his passions. These passions are the result of original sin, the so-called "law of sin" dwelling in our bodies. Saint Paul speaks of his "thorn in the flesh," which he prayed thrice that the Lord would remove. The answer came from Christ: "My grace is sufficient for you, for strength is made perfect in weakness." The saints ceased to offend God, they were ready to die rather than commit a mortal sin, and yet this was not because they did not endure the effects of original sin, just as the all were subject to death, no matter how holy they were.

The point of the Christian life is not only to have our personal sins forgiven, but, after this obstacle has been removed, to continue to grow in holiness, until, by God's grace, gradually, bit by bit, the weakness of our human nature becomes the very strength of Christ. As the apostle says: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." Perhaps the reason why we still have such a problem with repeated falls into our favorite sins is because, once we are forgiven through our contrition and the sacrament of penance, we then do not seek to move on and make positive spiritual progress. Unless we are seeking Christ's grace to be healed not only of the guilt of our sins, but also of their root causes sunk deep in our souls and bodies, then our Christian life is only a shadow of what it is meant to be. For this we need a regimen of daily prayer (Would thirty minutes a day be too much if there were money to be made by praying? Our Lord says "Where your treasure is there will your heart also be." But, come to think of it, we don't make money watching television for a whole hour: so where's our excuse for not praying?) and Penance.

No time of the year is associated with partying and pleasure as much as the Christmas season. What better atmosphere could there be for a consideration of the self-imposed suffering of penance and mortification! (Do I hear a "bah, humbug!") Prayer wins for us the grace we need to move along toward true happiness and peace of soul by establishing living contact with God in our hearts. Penance is the opportunity to contradict our less noble inclinations by giving up something we are permitted to have. True enough the Advent season is not a time of penance in the way Lent is. But some penance is in order all year 'round. If we never say "no" to some legitimate desires, then chances are we will not be able to say "no" to some sinful ones.

If we want to understand the mind of Christ the Savior at Christmas, then we should try to overcome our weaknesses by some voluntary self-denial. Take a little less food, pour one less drink, rise a half-hour early and pray a thoughtful rosary before everyone else gets up, do that chore so often neglected, wait and calm down before offering that helpful criticism, turn off the TV and be silent, read a good, Catholic book like the adult Catechism of the Catholic Church (original sin is treated in pages 386-412!) instead of the latest professional thriller, give more to the needy, and wait awhile for that improved PC, take five minutes in the shower instead of ten, or adjust the water a few degrees lower. If we offer Christ these works before Christmas, works of penance which help to overcome our wounded nature's defects, then our joy at His coming can be more authentic. We might even begin to understand why He came wrapped in poor rags lying in a feeding trough, unwelcomed by the busy world, and becoming wiser even than the wise, we might offer Him the best present we have to give, not something money can buy, but something He can use, that which Mary and Joseph gave Him: a human nature restored and whole.

Scriptural Corner:

"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:38

Comment from The Navarre Bible - Saint Mark's Gospel.*

"Each person's eternal destiny will be decided by Christ. He is the Judge who will come to judge the living and the dead (Mt 16:27). The sentence will depend on how faithful each has been in keeping the Lord's commandments—to love God and to love one's neighbor, for God's sake. On that day Christ will not recognize as his disciple anyone who is ashamed to imitate Jesus' humility and example and follow the precepts of the Gospel for fear of displeasing the world or worldly people: he has failed to confess by his life the faith which he claims to hold. A Christian, then, should never be ashamed of the Gospel (Rom 1:16); he should never let himself be drawn away by the worldliness around him; rather he should exercise a decisive influence on his environment, counting on the help of God's grace. The first Christians changed the ancient pagan world. God's arm has not grown shorter since their time." (Page 126)

* The Navarre Bible, an edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University.

From The Library:**Come Down Zacchaeus** by Thomas H. Green, S. J.

As the Church moves into the "age of the laity", Father Green helps us to understand what is distinctive about lay spirituality. The laity, he emphasizes, is not called to live some distant and detached monastic life, but to live the gospel on the ground of their ordinary daily lives. Green offers ideals and principles of lay spirituality and suggests some ways of putting them into practice.

From St. Thomas More's Writings:

"Mistrust Him, Meg, I will not, even though I feel myself faint. Indeed, although I should feel my fear even to the point of overthrowing me, yet shall I remember how St. Peter, with a blast of wind, began to sink for his faint faith, and shall do as he did—call upon Christ and pray Him to help. And then I trust He shall set His holy hand unto me, and in the stormy seas, hold me up from drowning..."

"And finally, Meg, this I know well, that without my fault He will not let me be lost..."

Wegemer, Gerard B. Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage Scepter Publishers (1995) page 180

Ad Veritatem**ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY**

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NEXT MEETINGS: Thursday, December 19, 1996

TOPIC: "The Plank in Your Eye"

SPEAKER: Richard Neuland

PLACE AND TIME: Rutan & Tucker, 12th Floor, 12 noon R.S.V.P. 641-3450