

❖ Ad Veritatem ❖

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A Special Speaker: Fr. Steve Duffin

The guest speaker for this Thursday, November 20th, is Father Stephen Duffin, the associate pastor of St. Catherine of Siena parish in Laguna Beach.

Fr. Steve grew up in Orange County as a member of St. Juliana's parish in Fullerton. He attended Troy High School and earned his undergraduate degree from California State College, Fullerton in 1986. Father studied for the priesthood at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo. Although a young priest, ordained in 1991, Fr. Steve has acquired a reputation throughout the diocese as a terrific and inspiring speaker.

The Father's topic of "The Heresy of Activism" will discuss the primacy of prayer in all our activities: that Christian activities must be centered on a strong spiritual internal life. †

NOVEMBER MEETING:

TOPIC: *"The Heresy of Activism"*

SPEAKER: *Fr. Steve Duffin*

DATE & TIME: *Noon on this Coming Thursday, November 20th*

PLACE: *Village Farmer's Restaurant in South Coast Village, 1651 Sunflower, Costa Mesa.*

On the Road to Heaven?

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

Father Hugh is serving as Abbott at St. Michael's high school and seminary this month in the absence of Abbott Eugene. Therefore, we are once again reprinting a portion of a column that he writes for Envoy, a Catholic Apologetic & Evangelization magazine. Father's column answers questions from readers. The following is reprinted from his column published in the Premier Issue. To subscribe to this terrific publication, please call 1-800-55-ENVOY. Father Hugh will be advising us once again next month!

QUERY: Has the Church changed her teaching on the relation of non-Catholic Christians to the Catholic Church? A friend of mine has given me some literature written by followers of the Society of St. Pius X which says that the teaching of Vatican II and especially of Pope John Paul II on

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More was moderate and courteous in arguing with others, especially when he was in the winning position.

Thomas More:
A Portrait of
Courage (p. 63)
Gerard Wegemer

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

cially of Pope John Paul II on Ecumenism plainly contradicts the previous teachings of the Church, most especially the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI *Mortalium Animos* of 1928.

ANSWER: Anyone who reads Pope Pius XI on the ecumenical movement and then Vatican II and John Paul II on the same topic will surely notice a big difference, and perhaps an apparent contradiction. Faithful Catholics, however, will not be quick to judge that there is a real incompatibility between the two. There is a tremendous difference between the two approaches, but that does not mean there is a doctrinal *contradiction*. The Church can deal with various questions under different aspects. Ecumenism is one of those questions. The traditional approach to those who adhere to non-Catholic bodies was based on a constant, rigorous use of the terms heresy and schism in their full sense of an apparently deliberate, conscious dissent or doubt from Catholic dogma or communion with the Pope. Similar to this would be the way in which St. Paul states that “*neither idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor revilers, nor robbers shall inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Cor 6:9-10). In this sense, there can be no dialogue or ecumenism with heresy or schism any more than the Church could come to an agreement with stealing or drunkenness. But even though we accept St. Paul’s words, we still refer to the Good Thief who inherited the Kingdom on Good Friday. And even though we accept, for example, the truth of the ringing words of Pope Boniface VIII in *Unam Sanctum* (A.D. 1302) denying membership in the Church and thus salvation those whom commit the sins of heresy and schism, still we call Protestants Christians and accept the possibility of a valid baptism administered by them. Thus it is that in current practice since Vatican II, the approach has been to assume not that non-Catholics are heretics and schismatics in the strict sense described above, but to assume that they are in good faith, raised in the profession of certain errors in matters of Catholic doctrine, and thus not real “formal” heretics or schismatics. With such as these, who are presumed to be without fault, there can be dialogue and even mutual prayer, as long as there is no doctrinal error

in the prayers, just as one is free to associate charitably with those who hold moral errors in order to help them either to be converted or to avoid the sins to which they are prone, as long as one does not seem to approve of their misguided actions.

Even Christ at times dealt with doctrinal error in what seemed to be a contradictory way (though it was not really contradictory). For example, in speaking to the Pharisees, He warned, “*He who is not with me is against me*” (Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23). In speaking of those who invoke His name without being His followers, He said, “*He who is not against us is for us*” (Mark 9:40). Some who profess errors are like the Pharisees, hardhearted, stubborn, deliberate heretics who deserve eternal damnation; they do not belong to Christ. Others who unwittingly profess errors, through no fault of their own, and so are not “*of our following*” (ie. in full communion with us), are nonetheless on the road to heaven, calling on the Holy Name of Christ our Savior. Christ, and His Church, treat these two groups differently.

The question of whether it was wise to change the approach so quickly and dramatically from the strict and objective, to the pastoral and personal is another matter. We shouldn’t be surprised if the approach changes, at least in regard to certain groups or circumstances, nor is wrong for the faithful to suggest that changes should be made if the current approach is not contributing effectively to the evangelization of the world. If the followers of the Society of St. Pius X had done only that, making use of the freedom proper to clergy and lay faithful, there would be no problem. Sadly, they have not done their duty as Catholics to seek to understand and obey respectfully, even if they have criticisms on the practical level. †

God is love.

Our Plea: Justice or Mercy?

By: Anne Nelson Lanphar, Esq.

One of the mostly contested debates currently waging in this country involves the use of capital punishment. I have always been a strong advocate of the death penalty but recently I have reviewed my position and found it wanting. This article will explain how and why I came to change my view.

The Catholic Church teaches that societies have the right to utilize capital punishment under the same arguments that justify the use of deadly force in self-defense. The second argument in favor of capital punishment is the demand for justice for the victims and their families as well as society. One of the strongest practical arguments to support capital punishment is its deterrent effect with another argument centering on the cost involved in maintaining a murderer in prison for life.

Last March, Father Leo Celano spoke at the monthly meeting of our Society. He is currently the Catholic chaplain at the California Youth Authority in Norwalk which serves as a “clearing house” for youthful offenders involved in serious crimes. Father pointed out that 80% of these boys (primarily ages 14-20) come from fatherless families – they come from gang areas where they have no real family security except for the gang which serves as their substitute family. They have little to no awareness of any alternatives to their life style and they have virtually no hope of even living to middle age. The most notable statement that Father made was that it is very difficult to talk to these boys about a loving God who is “Our Heav-

enly Father” when, to this audience, a “father” is a missing person that has abandoned them and obviously doesn’t care about them.

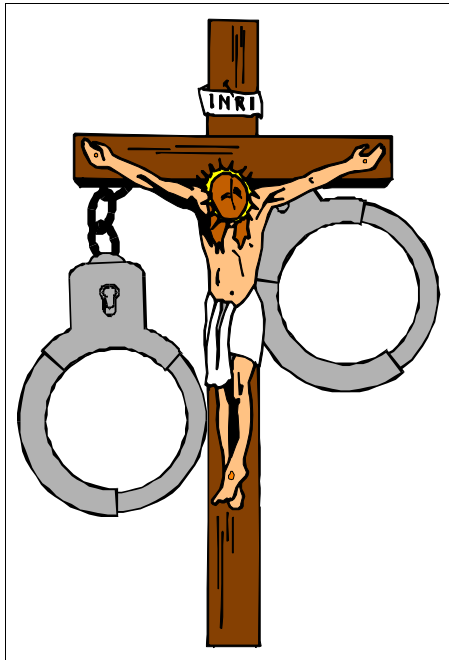
Father Leo invited my husband Bob and me to become involved with the CYA to present some basic classes as a married couple – something that most of these boys have rarely witnessed. When we went to visit the facility, I was

really scared – these young men are accused of serious crimes including murder. As we started through the facility, we saw a group marching through with 2 guards. I will never forget my first impression: “My God, they look like my sons, they look like the boys in our Scout troop! Their eyes are scared. They are so young! How can this be?” When I looked into their eyes, I saw boys – children. They were so young – they could not be hopeless – they had barely started living.

I am not naive – I know these boys have committed serious crimes and they must be pun-

ished but will punishment alone change them or just make them more strongly cornered into their lives? If we don’t show them alternatives, why should they and how can they, change? When looking back on my life, the highlight events that caused me to change occurred when I did not in any way deserve love but the other person gave it anyway. I specifically remember at age 11 being forgiven by my aunt for stealing a transistor radio. I was so scared and humiliated when I had to face her but her first act was to hug me and tell me she

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loved me, then she talked about why it was wrong and I did receive some punishment. From that day forward, I solemnly promised God and myself that I would never steal again. But it was her love given when I didn't deserve it that changed me, not the punishment.

My world and my background are so different from these boys, how can I possibly relate to them? How could I teach them? Was this worth doing or was this hopeless and wasting my time? By a very interesting series of coincidences, Bob and I learned about a prison ministry class conducted by the Los Angeles Diocese which has a number of Catholic lay people who assist the appointed chaplains in the youth and adult prisons throughout the LA area. The class was extremely well done and the chaplains told us so many things that surprised us – how the criminals have a strong internal code that no one hurts a teacher or a chaplain. The stories they told were inspiring and amazing. However, the most startling revelations came from the panel discussion – the panel was comprised of former convicts and family members of convicts. Amazingly each and every one of the convicts made it absolutely clear how much the few words of kindness from the Catholic volunteer chaplains meant to them: the fact that someone remembered their name and actually cared enough to volunteer their time to come to this awful place and visit them, touched them deeply. They emphasized that they would think about the kind word, or that the chaplain remembered their name, or the little touch on the shoulder, *for days!* Each of them gradually become involved with religious classes as a result of these volunteers who told them that they were worth saving, something that no one else had done! They knew what they had done was wrong, they made no excuses, but they emphasized that they had viewed themselves as worthless, not worth saving, not worth forgiving, until someone showed them that God did care.

One young man, Juan, now age 26 was a former gang member who had been arrested and convicted of a gang murder at age 16. He took the

blame himself because he refused to name the others who were involved. At the time he thought that his gang would support him especially since he had honored the code of silence. He was sadly surprised when they did not come through for him as he expected – not one visit, not one letter, not one dollar, nothing. He said that the only person who stood by him through it all was his mother. He admitted he was a tough guy in prison – he believed it was either be tough or be a victim. He was often in trouble and ended up in solitary confinement. Because of the involvement of a Catholic chaplain, he gradually started to see himself and his life, for what they were. He came to a point where he wanted to try to change, to no longer be part of the gang in prison but was afraid – he was afraid of being killed by the rival gang whose member he was involved with killing. He was so afraid that he preferred to stay in solitary confinement. Gradually he withdrew from the others with whom he hung around and became mostly a loner. The Catholic chaplains helped him to come to believe in himself and in God and that he was not ever alone – God would be with him. Juan said that he was very afraid of going back to his home because he would be surrounded by the same gang – his own and the rivals. To prevent this, his mom moved from their home 2 years before his release. When he was released, he went to live in the new area with his mom and he started a new life. One evening he went to Baskin Robbins to get some ice cream when the employee called him his old gang name – Juan denied being that person and left. He said he drove to a side street and had to stop the car because he was shaking so badly – and he prayed.

When Juan finished speaking, I was deeply moved. This young man, a handsome young man, came from such a difficult background with so few opportunities and was facing such difficult odds, I was astounded at his courage and faith. I realized how easy my life really was and it put my problems in a whole different light. I went up to him and gave him a small gold crucifix and chain. I hoped it would help remind him

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that he was never alone. As I turned to leave, he caught me and said that he couldn't take it. I was surprised but asked him to please wear it – he had helped me feel less afraid of this ministry and that the only way to keep Christ was to share Him. I must admit that tears filled my eyes during this discussion. He was also moved and gave me a big hug! There I was hugging a gang member convicted of murder! I realized something that I had not really thought about before: these people involved in serious crimes, are individual human beings each with a soul given to them by God, each of which is precious to God, each of which is capable through the grace of God *TO CHANGE and to be saved!*

Recently at Sunday Mass, one of our parish priests, Father John, spoke about capital punishment. He made a few outstanding points but the one that struck me hard was this: if we take the life of a criminal, aren't we cutting off the chance, the real chance, that this person could, through the grace of God, find God and repent? At this point, I remember a movie I had seen years ago "The Scarlett and the Black" which was the true story of Monsignor O'Flaherty, a priest who lived in the Vatican during World War II and ventured out at night to help hide the Jews and others. His adversary was a Nazi officer who was subsequently convicted of war crimes and spent the rest of his life in prison. For twenty years, Monsignor visited this man whom everyone else had forgotten. Eventually the Nazi was converted and ultimately died a holy death. This conversion would not have happened if he had been executed. Do any of us have the right to alter God's timing and to cut off the opportunity for any soul to be saved? Is there anything of more value than a human soul? Can any of us really say that there is no chance that a specific person could find God and save his soul? Judas lost his soul because he despaired that his crime was so bad that God couldn't possibly forgive him. His fatal sin was that of despair. Can we despair that God can not forgive even the worst criminal? I also thought about the Good Shepherd: "*Now the tax collectors and sin-*

ners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:1-10) Is there anyone more lost to God than a murderer?

As I started to listen to Father's sermon again, he was discussing the awful situation of society inadvertently executing an innocent person. I wondered if this really happened all that often and thought about the argument that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one. At that point, I happened to look up to the front of the Church and focused on the crucifix. It suddenly dawned on me that I was looking at the strongest possible evidence that human societies do make mistakes and execute innocent people – *Christ Himself was such a victim!*

But what about justice for the victims and their families?

JUSTICE. This is a complex word. In the *Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare aptly points out:

*"Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for
mercy."*

In the Eucharistic Prayer I at Mass the priest prays: "*Though we are sinners, we trust in your mercy and love. Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness.*" Even in the Lord's Prayer we say: "*Forgive us our trespasses AS we forgive those who trespass against us.*" I am not sure it is really wise for us

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to demand God's justice - it might be wiser for us all to seek His mercy.

But is capital punishment really "justice"? The civil law, which follows the moral law, is clear that a person has the right to use as much force as necessary to defend himself from harm. A victim can not use excessive force nor can the victim seek revenge. If the victim exceeds these limits, the victim will be answerable under the law. Does society's right to defend itself exceed these same limits that apply to an individual whose natural desire to use excess force or to seek revenge is at least understandable? If society has the means to place the criminal in life imprisonment, isn't going further than necessary to take his life really a form of revenge rather than self-defense?

The Catholic Catechism states:

"2263 The legitimate defense of persons and societies is not an exception to the prohibition against the murder of the innocent that constitutes intentional killing. 'The act of self-defense can have a double effect: the preservation of one's own life; and the killing of the aggressor... The one is intended, the other is not.

2264 Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore, it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life. Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow:

If a man in self-defense uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repels force with moderation, his defense will be lawful...Nor is it necessary for salvation that a man omit the act of moderate self-defense to avoid killing the other man, since one is bound to take more care of one's own life than of another's. (St. Thomas Aquinas)

2265 Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for someone responsible for another's life, the common good of the family or of the state.

2266 Preserving the common good of so-

ciety requires rendering the aggressor unable to inflict harm. For this reason the traditional teaching of the Church has acknowledged as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty. For analogous reasons those holding authority have the right to repel by armed force aggressors against the community in their charge.

The primary effect of punishment is to redress the disorder caused by the offense. When his punishment is voluntarily accepted by the offender, it takes on the value of expiation. Moreover, punishment has the effect of preserving public order and the safety of persons. Finally, punishment has a medicinal value; as far as possible it should contribute to the correction of the offender.

2267 If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person."

If the United States with its vast wealth and resources does not have sufficient means to provide bloodless alternatives to capital punishment, such as life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, what country of the world does?

An argument that is commonly advanced is that society does not want to pay the cost for keeping someone in prison for life: it is cheaper to kill them. Actually the facts do not support this assumption as it costs 6 times more for the process to execute a criminal through capital punishment than to support him in prison for his life! "In Florida, which may be typical, each death sentence is estimated to cost approximately \$3.18 million, compared to the cost of life imprisonment (40 years) of about \$516,000." (Dead Man Walking, Helen Prejean, C.S.J., page 129).¹

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But our heart bleeds for the victims and their families. As between the innocent and the guilty, isn't it better to take the side of the innocent – to help them recover? Of course, but are we really helping the victims by executing the criminal? Many family members claim that they need to see the execution to “have justice” or “closure”. But hate and revenge NEVER gives peace or closure. As Christians we need to help the victim's family understand this and to look higher – to God and to trust God for justice and peace. The only true way to feel at peace is for these people to forgive the criminal! Radical? Yes, I guess Christ was radical. But these are *His* words! Of course, the only way to accomplish this is to truly give the hatred and anger to God. The Old Testament covenant of “*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*” was replaced by Christ's new covenant requiring us to “*Love our enemies!*” I can not possibly imagine the pain of losing a loved one, especially a child, to a violent crime, but I firmly believe that we must help the family find true peace in Christ's covenant of forgiveness not encouraging them to dwell in the bottomless pit of hatred. “*Deliberate hatred is contrary to charity. Hatred of the neighbor is a sin when one deliberately wishes him evil. Hatred of the neighbor is a grave sin when one deliberately desires him grave harm. 'But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.'*” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Section 2303.) As Christians shouldn't we gently and lovingly remind the victim's family of the true way through Christ rather

than encouraging them to become additional victims of hatred and sin?

My last argument is very basic and more a practical risk analysis: we can not possibly be violating God's law by *not* using capital punishment, so why take the risk when we have a reasonable alternative?

Bishop Sheen used to say when he visited prisoners: “*The only difference between you and me, is that you got caught!*” Haven't we all committed serious sins for which we deserve punishment? Are we really so different? Are we so free from sin that we dare cast the first stone before God?

Lord, though we are sinners, we trust in your mercy and love. Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness. Lord, our plea is for mercy. †

¹ Sister cites the following resources in her book as the basis for this statement. David von Drehle, “The Death Penalty: A Failure of Execution,” *Miami Herald*, July 10, 1988. See also Robert L. Spangenberg and Elizabeth R. Walsh, “Capital Punishment or Life Imprisonment? Some Cost Considerations,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 23 (1989): pp. 45-48; Margot Garey, “The Cost of Taking a Life: Dollars and Sense of the Death Penalty,” *University of California-Davis Law Review* 18 (1985): pp. 1221-1273; and Massachusetts Bar Association, “The Dollar and Human Costs of the Death Penalty,” in *A Special Issue on the*

Anne Lanphar graduated from University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1977. Until recently she was partner in the real estate department of Rutan & Tucker having been with the firm for over 18 years. She is now a Vice President & Senior Associate Underwriter with First American Title Insurance Company. Anne and Bob have been married for over 21 years and they have 3 sons, ages 17, 15 and 11.

Truth is not invalidated nor diminished because of the failings of the individual who espouses it rather it is often those very failings that has led the individual to the truth.

From the Writings of St. Thomas More:

To help in this fight against blinding pride, More offers three images of the human condition.

First he pictures a proud prince who glories in the grand station in life that has been granted to him. “How slight a thing [that] would seem,” he says, “to anyone who would often and deeply remember the death that shall shortly take away all this royalty.” This proud prince is forgetting that “he shall within a few years...have his dainty body turned into stinking carrion, be borne out of his princely palace, laid in the ground, and there left alone, where every lewd lad will be bold to tread on his head.” More points out that a “deep consideration of this sudden change, so surely to come and so shortly to come, would withdraw the wind that puffs us up in pride.”

A second image compares the world to a stage on which each person is given a part to play. How foolish it would be for some worthless fellow to get puffed up with pride just because he happens to get to the part of a lord dressed up in a golden gown. “Would you not laugh at his folly, considering that you are very sure that when the play is done he shall go walking as a knave in his old coat?”

This image, however, More considers “too merry for this matter.” “A more earnest image of our condition,” one that he deems “a very true figure” of our state, compares life to a prison. (More favored this image throughout his life; it appears in both his earlier and his late works.)

As for escaping, no man can look for [any hope of that]. The prison is large and has many prisoners in it, but the jailor can lose none. He is present in every place that we can creep into...There is no remedy, therefore, but as condemned folk and remediless in this prison of the earth we drag on for a time, with some bound to a post, come wandering abroad, some in the dungeon, some in the upper ward, some building themselves bowers and making palaces in the prison, some weeping, some laughing, some laboring, some playing, some singing, some chiding, some fighting. No man, almost, remembers in what case he stands until, suddenly, with nothing such looked for, young, old, poor and rich, merry and sad, prince, page, pope, and poor-soul priest—now one, now another, sometimes a great rabble at once, without order, without respect of age or of estate—all, stripped naked and shifted out in a sheet, are put to death in different ways in some corner of the same prison, are thrown there in a hole, and are eaten either by worms under the ground or by crows above. Now come forth, you proud prisoner, for I know...all your pride is because you forget that [this world] is a prison.”

From Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage by Gerald B. Wegemer Scepter Publishers (p. 95)

Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem

Latin for “To turn truth into laughter”



A doctor, a lawyer and an engineer are arguing over which of them has the second oldest profession in the world. The doctor says, “On the sixth day of creation, God created Even from a rib of Adam. That was the first surgery.”

The engineer says, “I can beat that. On the second and third days of creation, out of chaos, God created the universe with the planets and stars, all in an orderly fashion. That was the first engineering job.”

The lawyer says, “I rest my case. I win.”

The doctor and the lawyer look at him, amazed and say, “What are you talking about?”

The lawyer smugly looks at them and calmly says, “Who do you think created the chaos?”

The Conversion of My Father

By: Michael Shonafelt, Esq.

It is May 9, 1929. The ancient chapel of Mission San Buenaventura, dark, and heavy with the sweet, spicy scent of incense, is filled with worshipers. Women with large hats and men in starched, white collars look with pride upon a small group of children kneeling reverently before the Spanish baroque altar. From the *reredos*, the wooden faces of the mission's patrons seem to fix their heavenly gazes on the scene as it unfolds beneath them. The mission's pastor, richly bedecked in laced alb and a fiddleback chasuble of gold brocade holds the tiny host before the face of each new communicant.

Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam.

For my father, eight year-old Paul Anthony, the event marks the beginning of a long and serpentine journey of faith. The old mission church, dedicated to the memory of the great Franciscan saint and philosopher, Saint Bonaventure, would provide the backdrop not only for the journey's point of departure, but also its rediscovery almost seventy years later.

The first communicants of 1929 came of age during the Second World War. For many, the Eucharist would be their last and only consolation before dying in the jungles of the Pacific theatre or on the beachheads and forests of Europe. And many would take brides before embarking on their journeys overseas, hastily seeking the blessings of the nuptial mass before leaving their homes, perhaps for the last time.

My father was one of those. But when the victory was finally won, he, like many, returned to an empty house. The dreams of home life lived and relived in the mind's eye during war-

time exile were shattered in an instant by one letter in which his wartime bride announced that she would be gone for Chicago before he even reached home port.

Instinctively, my father sought the consolation of the Church. In the secrecy of the confessional, the priest, unceremoniously and without compassion, dismissed the spiritual perturbations of my father, the victim of a broken marriage at the age of twenty-four. "You got yourself into this mess. It's your problem, I can't help you."

Thus began a fifty year exile from the sacraments of the Church.

My father married again, took two degrees from U.S.C. as a beneficiary of the G.I. Bill, and began a career in education. He was a positivist, schooled in Behaviorism, and for all practical purposes, an agnostic. When his second marriage failed, he began in earnest, at the age of forty, to start a family with his third wife, my mother.

It was a difficult time to raise a family. By the late 1960's and early 1970's, the world was being turned upside down. God was proclaimed dead, Frank Sinatra extolled the virtues of doing it "my way", divorce was the norm, drug use among adolescents was infecting the sanctuary of family life, and even the most foundational of moral premises were being doubted and challenged. Few families could escape unscathed.

My mother had converted to Catholicism at a young age, and though her marriage to my father had prevented her from the practice of her faith, she saw to it that her children were baptized and supplied with the minimum necessary for initiation in the sacraments. It was moot for

Among the most ardent of my prayers during this time were those prayed, sometimes in tears, for my mother and father. I dreamed of one day witnessing their conversion...

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my father, who could not see any utility in the ceremonies of the Church, which itself was now rocking in the tempests of the post-Vatican II era.

The moral bankruptcy of the age set the backdrop for my conversion. By the time I was eighteen, I knew I wanted to be a priest. My mother and father, perhaps to their chagrin, quietly acquiesced and relinquished their third son to the cloister.

Among the most ardent of my prayers during this time were those prayed, sometimes in tears, for my mother and father. I dreamed of one day witnessing their conversion, and envisioned with great clarity my first Mass in which I myself would give to them their communion of reconciliation with the Church.

But the Lord would not have it so. After three and a half years, I discerned that God's purpose for me was outside the hallowed walls of Saint Michael's Abbey. While my faith was fortified and enriched by the years in the Abbey, my discernment regarding the priesthood had waned. I perceived that God was calling me elsewhere. I eventually married and had three children, my only regret being that I would not realize the vision I had so often pondered as a seminarian.

In the years that followed my sojourn in religious life, I became occupied with the myriad concerns that are inherent in the service of God as a layman. I continued my prayers for my mother and father, and solicited a hundred more from the faithful among the friends I was blessed to know. My wife took up the banner and became at least as devoted as I to seeing my mother and father once more in the bosom of the Church. Yet, for all the prayers, I saw no change.

That is, until my father expressed an interest in collaborating with me on obtaining an annulment of his first marriage. It was a daunting task. There was no record that she even existed. The papers were filed and we waited and prayed. After two years, an answer came. The marriage was declared a nullity.

Then, the floodgates were opened. It was

my father's mission now. For the first time, I heard my father talk about *his* soul. He told me one night, "*I want to go to confession. I want this burden lifted from my soul.*" He was seventy-six years old.

We were in Ventura one morning in the Summer of 1996. I attended Mass at San Buenaventura Mission and afterward told the pastor, Monsignor O'Brien, my father's story. An appointment was set for my father's first confession in over fifty years, and later that day, I walked with him to the door of the mission's rectory. He was apprehensive, yet resolved. I left him with the Monsignor and went to the old church to pray a prayer of thanksgiving. I gazed into the sanctuary of the old church and marveled at the wonders that were being worked before my eyes. Moments later, my father joined me at the altar rail and we prayed together there. As we left, he looked back at the mission church. I reminded him that this was the scene of his First Holy Communion almost seventy years prior. "*Yes,*" he said, "*I guess I've come full circle.*"

At the Mass where my father was to once more receive the Eucharist after over fifty years without the sacraments, there was a tap on my shoulder and a summons to the vestibule of the church. There I was told that there was a shortage of Eucharistic ministers that day and, because I had been an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist to the sick, they needed me to assist in distributing the Blessed Sacrament. I had never been a Eucharistic minister before, except to the sick in nursing homes.

It was another sign that God was smiling upon this great moment in my parents' journey of faith. When my father came forward to take the host for the first time in over fifty years, *it was I* who gave him his communion of reconciliation with the Church. This was the realization of my dreams so many years earlier.

My mother made her confession at Saint John Fisher Church in Palos Verdes, and both my mother and father were joined in the Sacrament of Matrimony at a nuptial Mass on Septem-

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ber 24, 1996. †

Michael Shonafelt is an associate with the law firm of Nosaman, Guthner, Knox & Elliott having received his J.D. degree from Loyola School of Law in 1996. Michael has a master's degree in education and taught in the L.A. school district while attending law school. He and his wife have 3 children under the age of 6! His 3 years of studies at St. Michael's Seminary are reflected in his regular contributions to

Scriptural Corner:

“And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.” And he rose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring me the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” And they began to make merry.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, “Your brother has come, and your father killed the

*fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’” **Luke 15:11-32***

Comment from the Navarre Bible:*

*“Mercy, as Christ has presented it in the parable of the prodigal son, has the interior form of the love that in the New Testament is called *agape*. This love is able to reach down to every prodigal son, to every human misery, and above all to every form of moral misery, to sin. When this happens, the person who is the object of mercy does not feel humiliated, but rather found again and ‘restored to value’. The father first and foremost expresses to him his joy, that he has been ‘found again’ and that he has ‘returned to life’. This joy indicates a good that has remained intact: even if he is a prodigal, a son does not cease to be truly his father’s son; it also indicates a good that has been found again which in the case of the prodigal son was his return to the truth about himself” (*Dives in misericordia*, 6). †*

** The Navarre Bible is a renown edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University.*

From the Library

The Soul of the Apostolate

by

Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard, O.C.S.O.

“It is surely significant that the day on which the author of this modern spiritual classic, the *Soul of the Apostolate*, was born in the French Alps, was the feast of St. Gregory the Great, March 12, 1858. For it is one of the cardinal principles of St. Gregory’s mystical and ascetical teaching that there exists an inseparably close relation between the so-called “active” and “contemplative” lives, so much so that though one may dominate over the other (and the most perfect state is that in which contemplation dominates) yet in the soul of anyone called by God to high sanctity the life is always essentially a mixture of contemplation (love of God) and action (love of neighbor).

Now it is precisely this problem which the brilliant and ardent Cistercian abbot of Sept-Fons, in central France sets himself to elucidate and discuss in this book, which has gone into many editions and hundreds of thousands of copies in many languages, and was the bedside book of Pope Pius X.” (From the Foreword) †

AD VERITATEM

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Our
Next
Meeting:

DATE: *Thursday, November 20th @ NOON*

PLACE: *Village Farmer’s Restaurant*

1651 Sunflower, Costa Mesa

TOPIC: *“The Heresy of Activism”*

SPEAKER: *Fr. Steve Duffin*

FOR INFORMATION: *Anne Lanphar @ 647-2155 or Dave Belz @ 347-0447*