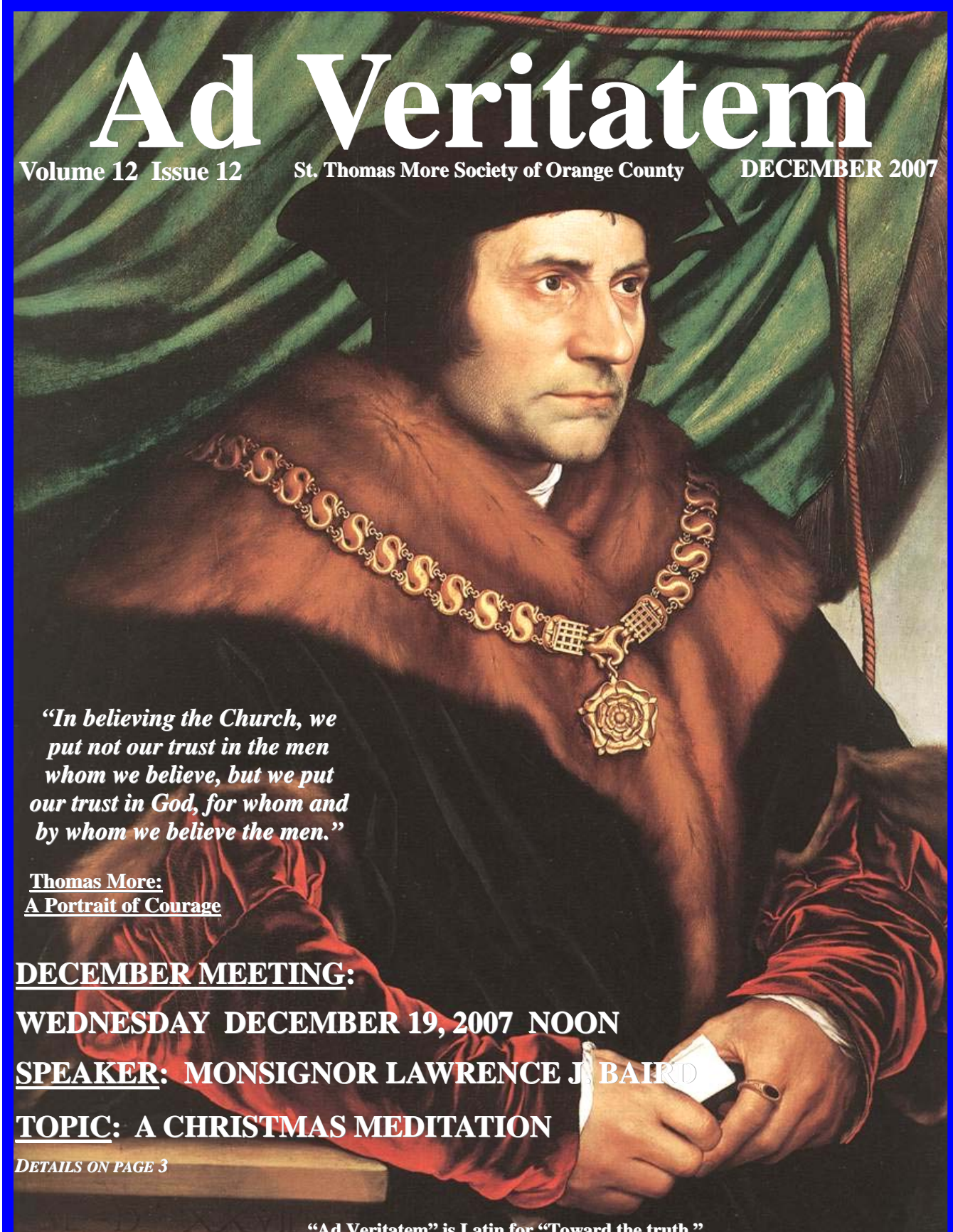


Ad Veritatem

Volume 12 Issue 12

St. Thomas More Society of Orange County

DECEMBER 2007

A detailed portrait of Thomas More, the English philosopher, lawyer, diplomat, and statesman. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark cap and a voluminous, fur-lined red robe. A gold chain with a large, ornate pendant hangs around his neck. He is looking slightly to the right of the viewer with a serious expression. The background is a dark green, draped fabric.

“In believing the Church, we put not our trust in the men whom we believe, but we put our trust in God, for whom and by whom we believe the men.”

Thomas More:
A Portrait of Courage

DECEMBER MEETING:

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 19, 2007 NOON

SPEAKER: MONSIGNOR LAWRENCE J. BAIRD

TOPIC: A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

DETAILS ON PAGE 3

“Ad Veritatem” is Latin for “Toward the truth.”



WHO WE ARE

In 1966, the movie *A Man For All Seasons* inspired the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to recognize this film as the Picture of the Year. This was one of the few occasions in the history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences where the life of a religious figure won the hearts of the motion picture industry's elite. The central figure portrayed in *Man For All Seasons* was, of course, St. Thomas More, the great lawyer, statesman, apologist, husband, father and faithful Catholic. In 2000, St. Thomas was honored as the Lawyer of the Millennium by a secular panel of historians for the British Commonwealth. Shortly thereafter, John Paul II declared St. Thomas as the Patron Saint of Statesmen.

Inspired by a homily given by Bishop Norman McFarland at the 1995 Red Mass of Orange County, five "fearless" members of the Orange County bar met shortly thereafter at the law offices of Rutan and Tucker in Costa Mesa. These lawyers all shared the realization that the legal practice takes a severe toll on the personal and spiritual lives of those involved in it and that many in the legal profession had become too focused on the material life with the natural consequence being the de-emphasis on their spiritual life. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the formation of a new organization for lawyers and judges in the County of Orange with its mission being to publicly support and encourage the spiritual development of its members in their Catholic faith. The group chose as its patron St. Thomas More, the greatest lawyer of his time, who was a dedicated husband and father with a deep and profound commitment to his Catholic faith, his profession and his fellow man. Thus the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County was born.

Attendance at the monthly meetings in the early years was sporadic. Our spiritual director, Fr Hugh Barbour, wisely advised us not to worry about numbers because it was more important "to be than to do or say." He encouraged the virtues of patience and perseverance. His sage advice, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and St. Thomas More, has led us to our current level of a fourteen member Board of Directors of lawyers and judges and a mailing list for the monthly newsletter of over 970.

The goal of the Society is to inspire and lift up the minds and hearts of the legal community of Orange County to follow the example of St. Thomas More by integrating God in every aspect of their professional and personal lives. The Society seeks to accomplish this goal through inspirational speakers at monthly meetings, this newsletter, the Red Mass, a website, an annual spiritual retreat and other events. The St. Thomas More Society also seeks to provide a haven where those who are committed to their Catholic faith as well as those who are seeking to learn more about the Church, can find fellowship and encouragement in the face of overwhelming media and cultural forces working against that pursuit.

St. Thomas More, please pray for us. ☩

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Don Hunsberger at (714) 663-8000 or email to dah@hunsbergerlaw.com, or
Judy Patno at (714) 871-6655 or email to jpatno@patnolaw.com.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE at www.stthomasmore.net

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AD VERITATEM EDITOR
ANNE LANPHAR

DECEMBER
MEETING

MONSIGNOR LAWRENCE J. BAIRD
“A Christmas Meditation”

WHEN:
NOON
Wed. Dec 19th

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A native of Canada, Monsignor Baird’s family immigrated to California in 1961. In 1965, he received a bachelor’s degree in philosophy at St. John’s Seminary in Camarillo. Ordained in 1961, he earned a master’s degree in theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley in 1981. Monsignor has served the Diocese of Orange in many positions including associate pastor of St John Vianney and St Anthony Claret and pastor of St Callistus and St Polycarp parishes. He has also served in many administrative positions such as Ecumenical Officer; Director for Youth Ministries; Director of the Marywood Center; Director of Communications; Director of Office of Development, Editor of the Orange Bulletin; Chaplain of the Catholic Alumni Club, and many more. Monsignor has served in many volunteer roles including National Conference of Christians and Jews; Concern of Orange; United Way Board of Directors; Chaplain to Legatus; Board of Advisors for St Michael’s Preparatory School; and Director of Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums. He was named a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre and recipient of the 2003 Defender of the Faith Award. Monsignor is currently a member of the Diocesan Finance Council and serves on the Board of Directors of the Orange Catholic Foundation and is the pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in Newport Beach and Administrator of St John Vianney Church on Balboa Island. †

STM MONTHLY MTGS:
3RD WEDNESDAY OF MONTH:

JANUARY 16
FEBRUARY 20
MARCH 19
APRIL 19
MAY 21 †

ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY
ANNUAL MCLE SEMINAR

Saturday, January 26, 2008

Earn 3 hours of credit for Ethics,
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CALENDAR
REMINDERS



IN THIS ISSUE:

4

A Message from our Chaplain
Trusting the Church for the Truth

5

The Battles of Pope John Paul II
Christopher Stafford

7

Universal Church, Global Village
Fr. John McCloskey

10

Scriptural Corner
John 14:6

11

Seeing Clearly
Archbishop Charles J. Caput, O.F.M.



The Battles of Pope John Paul II
Page 5



Universal Church, Global Village
Page 7

16

Thought for the Day
Answering His Call

15

More on the
Church’s Authority

17

Papal Message
The Church & Truth

22

The Catholic Catechism
Truth

24

From the Library
Chance or Purpose?

TRUSTING THE CHURCH FOR THE TRUTH

FR. HUGH BARBOUR, O. PRAEM, PH.D.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPLAIN



CHRIST GIVING THE
KEYS TO ST PETER

Lorenzo Veneziano

(1370)

QUESTION: *How can I trust the claims of the Catholic Church without knowing all her theology and without being able to justify some of the dark chapters in her history? How can I have an assurance that the Catholic Church is Christ's Church when there are so many facts and details I cannot know?*

ANSWER: The question you ask has deep roots in a wider cultural problem that must be overcome. Many modern theologians, such as Karl Rahner, assert that no one can really master theology any more because the information to be digested is too great for one person, and that the Church can no longer make universal creeds or catechisms because of the complexity and diversity of both the world and academic disciplines. This assertion, however, is not true.

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, many in the West have been afflicted by what the Holy Father calls "philosophies of suspicion." This means that the first question many people ask is not "What is this?" or "Is this true?" but, rather, "How can I know for sure?" Protestantism was born out of this attitude, a modernist and unbiblical approach to divinely revealed Truth. The whole thrust of Protestantism is to establish an unassailable personal authority to determine truth and to give the individual an absolute assurance of his salvation.

We've all heard the standard Evangelical Protestant questions: "Have you been saved?" and "If you died tonight, do you know if you would go to heaven?"

The problem is, these are the wrong questions to be asking. They are certainly not the questions Jesus and St. Paul and the other Apostles asked their hearers. The more crucial question is: "How do you know that what you believe is true?"

The normal, serene approach appropriate for human nature is to assume that knowledge, and knowledge of the truth, will lead to happiness and salvation. If one examines the Sacred Scriptures, those who have faith accept God's word in simplicity because they are used to accepting what is presented in a reasonable and authoritative way. They ask questions: "How can this be since I know not man?" "Can a man return to his mother's womb?" "Then who can be saved?" They ask such questions because they are reasonable and want explanations, not because they are driven by anxiety about their salvation. The biblical man knows that the truth will make him free and will lead him to salvation, so he seeks truth first trusting that happiness and salvation will follow: "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life," said St. Peter just after our Lord pronounced the most unprovable and mysterious words he ever uttered in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, words which Protestants cannot accept

Trusting the Church for the Truth (Continued on page 18)

BATTLES OF POPE JOHN PAUL II: THE 1920 MIRACLE ON THE VISTULA

CHRISTOPHER STAFFORD, ESQ.

Those that had horses pushed them to charge forward as fast as the stallions' straining muscles would carry them. Over half of the soldiers did not even have shoes. But they too pressed forward in their endeavor to channel all of their force into the heart of the seemingly almighty invading Red Army. The small 20,000 man contingent of Polish reserve troops were ill-equipped with guns from five different countries, rifles from six countries and each requiring absolutely different types of ammunition. It was the first major battle that was influential on the life of the future Pope John Paul II, occurring when he was just barely 3 months old. It was the "*Cud na Wisła*" the Miracle on the Vistula.

The Soviet Army was swallowing up Poland on its march towards setting off the Communist revolution in Berlin and throughout Germany. The ruthless Bolsheviks were within 10 miles of Warsaw, beginning to surround the capital with 20 different divisions. The politicians raced to get out before it was too late, abandoning their capital and their country to the invaders. The foreign embassies all emptied out as all the international representatives fled, except for the ambassador from the Vatican along with the Cardinal Primate of Poland, his bishops and the priests, who were willing to minister to their people to the end. Nevertheless, other countries took it for a fact that Poland was gone.

Unlike during the beginning of World War II, when the Poles were deceived by the false promises of the English and French that if they could hold off the invaders for three weeks reinforcements would arrive, on this occasion, they knew that help was not coming from other countries. The plan was a last ditch attempt and was so risky and improbable that, when the Soviets happened to intercept the plan, they regarded it as a lame Polish attempt at deceiving them and therefore the Soviets ignored the intercepted Polish plan.

The Polish 20,000 said their prayers and charged the Soviet Army. In the opening minutes of August 15th, the Feast of Our Lady, the Polish troops with remarkable speed broke through the lines of a weak point in the Soviet Army. They quickly overtook and destroyed the radio station of Shuvayev's Soviet 4th Army. The pious, but perhaps not militarily genius Polish soldiers, interrupted the sole remaining Soviet radio station frequency with an uninterrupted reading of the Bible in Latin beginning with Genesis. As strange as it seems to us in Southern California to read about this military maneuver, it struck the Russians as even stranger. It was so odd that they must have thought that there was a glitch in the system. It did not occur to them that their communication system was sacked. What was left of the 20,000 troops continued their charge for the highest ranking Russians possible. The Soviets fell into chaos. Entire divisions lost their cohesion, panicked, and fell into retreat. Basically, the "Miracle on the Vistula" ended the Soviet's thrust into Germany and the rest of Europe in pursuit



MIRACLE AT
THE VISTULA

Jerzy Kossak
(1930)

*The same
God, with the
same grace,
also whispers
to us to not be
afraid, as He
whispers to us
ideas of how
to put our
time, talent
and resources
to work for
the good
of society.*

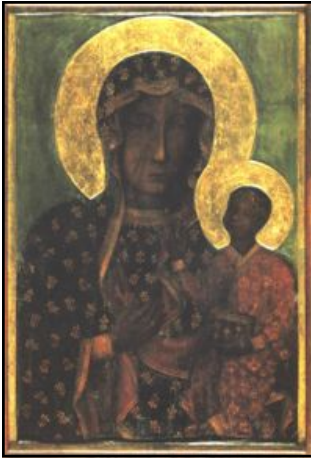
The Battles of Pope John Paul II (Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5) *The Battles of Pope John Paul II*

of their international Communist revolution for almost twenty years.

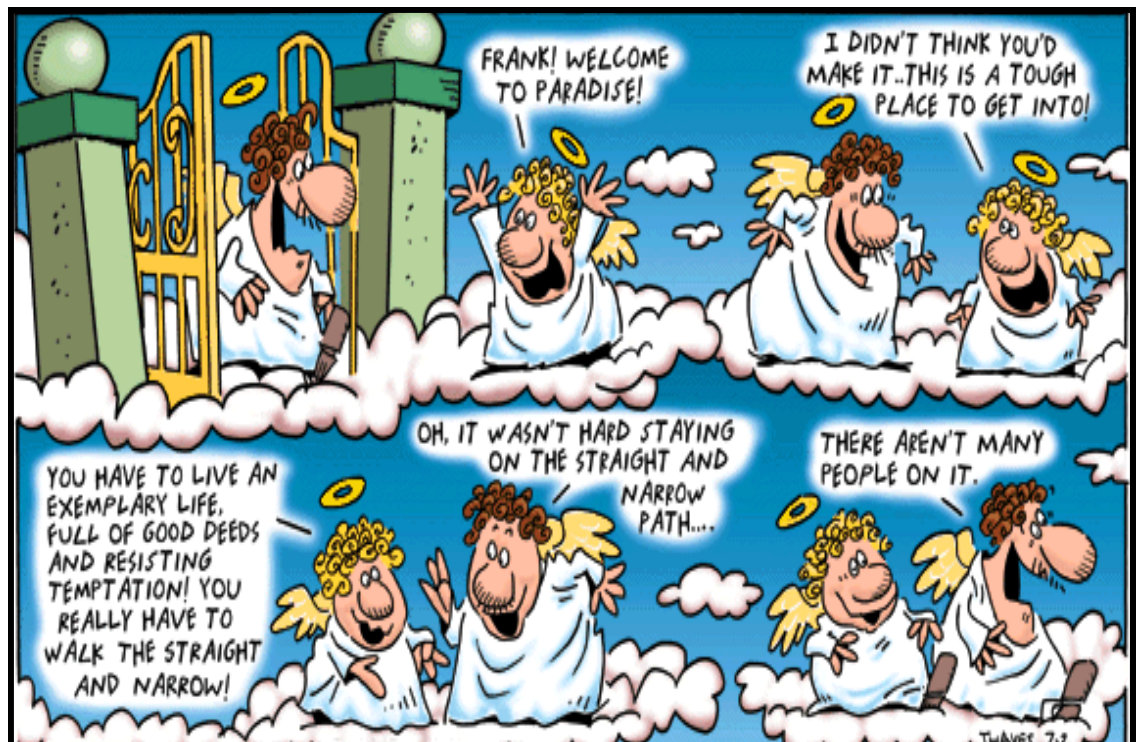
On top of all of the circumstances surrounding how an undermanned and under-armed group of soldiers struck chaos into the seemingly so powerful Soviet army on the Feast of Our Lady, the Polish were also extremely proud of their clergy in the situation. Christ died for the Church (Eph. 5:25) and the Polish saw that their bishops and the clergy were obviously not afraid to do the same in ministering to their people until the end, if necessary. This was important for Karol Wojtyła because when the Nazis occupied Krakow, while young Karol was an underground seminarian, the Polish Cardinal of Krakow maintained that same fearless attitude, which Karol witnessed. When Karol, in turn, later became a bishop, an archbishop, a cardinal and then the Pope, we all know the “Don’t be afraid!” attitude that he took to the table with him in going head-to-head with the oppressive Soviet Union.

As lawyers in Southern California, this is significant for us. While we recognize that none of us have the talents and gifts of a Karol Wojtyła, we nevertheless do have potentially meaningful gifts, talents and resources that we should not be afraid to use. We know that God seeks to work through us for the good of others. In October, at the meeting, we heard Leo Severino, Esq.’s story of courage in pursuit of www.bellathemovie.com. The same God, with the same grace, also whispers to us to not be afraid, as He whispers to us ideas of how to put our time, talent and resources to work for the good of society. †



**BLACK MADONNA
OF CZESTOCHOWA,
POLAND**

FRANK & ERNEST



UNIVERSAL CHURCH, GLOBAL VILLAGE*

FR. JOHN McCLOSKEY

Recently I was honored to be asked to give a talk to members of the Houses of Parliament in London, along with Catholic writers and journalists, on the intriguing topic of "The Catholic Church and the Global Village."

It was easy to gain inspiration as I passed through St. Stephen's Gate and past the Great Hall, where the martyrs St. Thomas More and St. Edmund Campion were condemned to death for their faith. I am happy to report I emerged alive at the end of the talk, even though some of the questions were somewhat challenging.

Naturally, the Church, being the universal institution par excellence, has made understanding globalization a high priority. The Holy Father has made several comments about it in recent years. Judging from the Holy Father's statements, it is clear that the Church recognizes globalization is not going away, short of cataclysmic climate change (The day after tomorrow?) or nuclear world war. Or, I might add, the Second Coming.

The Church's response to the reality of globalization is that "the human person must be the centre of every civil and social order, of every system of technological and economic development." The Holy Father says: "I am motivated by no other concern than to defend human dignity, and by no other authority than the Divine Word." While the institutional Church works through diplomacy, as it has for thousands of years, it is clear that the Church's principal influence on the phenomenon of globalization will come through the free action and influence of its more than a billion Catholics.

Without the influence of Catholicism, the net result of globalization could well be either a quasi-totalitarian world government, inevitably exalting the rich and exploiting the poor, or a chaotic, free-market free-for-all with multinationals competing for market share. Either outcome would most likely strive to impose a sort of secular fundamentalism that would leave no room for religion in its public square.

This could well produce what John Paul II referred to in his encyclical on The Gospel of Life as a "new totalitarianism." Of course, there is another possibility, rather far-fetched, I think, which is a world under the control of a resurgent Islam in its most extreme form.

At this point in history, there are only two global institutions, and one nation-state, that have a realistic claim for hegemony, of different sorts, over the world. One is the United Nations; the other, the Roman Catholic Church. The United States may be a third, but empires come and go, and it is not at all clear the United States will remain the sole world superpower; China and India with their enormous populations are making rapid economic progress.

Let's talk about the United Nations first. The United Nations' claim is based on the vision of its founders after the Second World War and its continuing participation in the proceedings of hundreds of member nation-states. It has proven to be ineffective, at least in part, in settling inter-country disputes, most of which



THE LAST JUDGMENT

Jacob van Campen

(Date Unknown)

Universal Church, Global Village (Continued on page 8)

* First appeared in the July 25-31, 2004 issue of the [National Catholic Register](#).

(Continued from page 7) *Universal Church, Global Village*

have finished in violent conflicts. At the same time, it has proved fairly effective in what may be its best argument for continuance, which is its work of providing relief for disaster- or war-stricken nations.

However, there have been proposals made, at least in the United States, to form another world body, which would be made up of democracies that have seceded from the United Nations. The United Nations' membership is made up largely of de facto or de jure dictatorships, oftentimes making true discussion and viable agreements virtually impossible.

The Belgian Catholic theologian Michel Schooyans is concerned about the U.N. becoming a vehicle for a vision of the world that is atheistic with new-age accents. His fears are justified in the creation of an Earth Charter (to take the place of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights) under study by the U.N. that would promote "the creation of one unique new world religion that would entail right away the prohibition of proselytism on the part of all other religions."

It is clear that there are many people of power interested in greatly increasing the global powers of the United Nations to the detriment of religious freedom, the principle of subsidiarity and the central role of the family. The Catholic Church would stand, perhaps, alone in opposing this concentration of power in a world government that hints at totalitarianism.

Perhaps for that reason, the Church continues its work in the United Nations, above all to give a Catholic voice, as well as to keep an eye on possible attempts at global hegemony via world government, rather than any real hope that, as currently constituted, the United Nations can be effective.

As for the United States, "the real question for the United States is whether they are going to follow the path of Europe into the de-Christianization and continental suicide via contraception, sterilization and abortion, or whether they are going to fight and win current culture wars. Orthodox Christianity is alive and well in the U.S. and growing, yet the country is increasingly polarized. The U.S., like Europe but to a lesser degree, suffers from what noted American thinker Francis Fukuyama describes as the "great disruption."

He says the West has witnessed a disintegration of traditional family structures because of the birth-control pill, introduced in the early 1960s, and the demographic decline of native-born populations in the developed world because of contraception and the consequent need to increase immigration. "The growing cultural diversity those two trends augur raise questions about how pluralistic Western cultures can become without breaking apart." In the U.S., however, the overwhelming bulk of immigration comes from Catholic Latin American countries and from Catholic Asians: Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese. Europe's immigrants are largely Muslims, Turks and Hindi whose religion and culture are certainly not of the West.

Affecting these secular institutions is the enormous power of multinationals that are theoretically governed in part by their shareholders or by the consumers who use their products. In reality, their boards of directors, predominant share-



**ST PETER
PREACHING**

Masolino da Panicale

(1426-27)

Universal Church, Global Village (Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8) *Universal Church, Global Village*

holders or executive officers have powers that are increasingly exempt from national governance. I read recently that of the top 200 economic global entities in terms of net worth, 40 were multinationals, while the rest were nation-states. Many of the 40 multinationals were very high up in the rankings. How they fall under any governance except in a fragmentary way is a serious subject that must be examined. .

There are certainly many factors that account for globalization but most notable has to be the ever-increasing communication among people. Communication over distance started with chariots, horses and roads, moved on to the printing press, telegraph, telephone, radio and television, and now has arrived to the internet and worldwide web and who knows what development will take place next. A Christian can only exult at the possibilities of what the Holy Father has spoken about in his 2001 apostolic letter — *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Beginning of the New Millennium) — when he speaks of the "New Evangelization" and the need for all Christians to "go out into the deep" (*Duc in Altum*) to catch men.

I think that we should look at this reality from a supernatural viewpoint.

Our Lord taught the apostles and us at the end of his earthly life to go out into the whole world and preach the Gospel. Some sort of a healthy globalization helps the spreading of the Good News while protecting the things the Pope insists on: solidarity, the common good, the dignity of the human person. At least it affords the opportunity for all men and women and their families to hear and respond to the Gospel preached to them. A greater interdependence should promote the Christian solidarity of which the Holy Father speaks.

Some years back, I had a conversation with a British Nobel Laureate economist, Robert Mundel, who certainly does not consider himself a Christian. He told me that Catholicism indeed would be the global religion of Christianity on account of its history, with its core dogmatic and moral teachings serving as a sort of Gold Standard for the religious world.

So though the world has shrunk to a global village, the Church's mission and growth will continue to rely on the supernatural means of sacramental grace and prayer which will overflow into a greater service to all, especially those most in need. Indeed, due to globalization and productivity and to the implementation of the teachings of the last great ecumenical Council as seen through the historic pontificate of John Paul II, it may lead the Church to the greatest period of growth, both in numbers and in sanctity, in its history.

Many years ago, as a student, I read a book entitled *Understanding Media* by Catholic convert Marshall McLuhan.

He had converted to the Church as a result of reading G.K. Chesterton's book, "What's Wrong with the World." McLuhan was perhaps the first person to see how quickly the world was coming together principally through the new means of communication. He coined the terms "The Medium is the Message" and "The Global Village."

I believe the Church alone knows what's wrong with the world, and its message will be the best medium or remedy to solve the many problems of the global village in our new century. †



**THE DOME OF
ST PETER**

Michelangelo
(1564)

JOHN 14: 6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."



SCRIPTURAL CORNER

Comment from the Navarre Bible:*

We must pause here...; we can reach God the Father by no other route...; the Divinity could not well be contemplated by us in this world below if it were not united to the sacred humanity of the Savior, whose life and death are the most appropriate, sweet, delicious and profitable subjects which we can choose for our ordinary meditations" (St Francis de sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, part II, chap. 1, 2).

"I am the way": he is the only path linking heaven and earth. "He is speaking to all men, but in a special way he is thinking of people who, like you and me, are determined to take our Christian vocation seriously: he wants God to be forever in our thoughts, on our lips and in everything we do, including our most ordinary and routine actions.

"Jesus is the way. Behind him on this earth of ours he has left the clear outlines of his footprints. They are indelible signs which neither the erosion of time nor the treachery of the evil one have been able to erase" (J. Escriva, Friends of God, 127).

Jesus' words do much more than provide an answer to Thomas' question; he tells us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Being the Truth and the Life is something proper to the Son of God become man, who St John says in the prologue of his Gospel is "full of grace and truth" (1:14). He is the Truth because by coming to this world he shows that God is faithful to his promises, and because he teaches the truth about who God is and tells us that true worship must be "in spirit and truth"(Jn 4:23). He is Life because from all eternity he has divine life with his Father (cf. Jn 1:4), and because he makes us, through grace, sharers in that divine life. This is why the Gospel says: "This is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent" (Jn 17:3). †

*The Navarre Bible, a renowned edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University, consisting of the New Vulgate, the Revised Standard Version and commentaries.

SIMPLE TRUTHS



Fulton J. Sheen

"Many a tree as it stands in the forest looks fair, fine, solid and valuable, but when it is cut down and sawed for use reveals rottenness, cross grain and knots. Social conformity to low standards may give the appearance of goodness, but in the judgment of God the true character is revealed." †

SEEING CLEARLY

MOST REV. CHARLES J. CHAPUT, O.F.M.
ARCHBISHOP OF DENVER

Each year, as we move toward Christmas, a friend of mine puts together a list of his favorite Christmas songs. Every year it's the usual mix of *Silent Night*, *The Shepherds' Carol*, *O Little Town of Bethlehem* - things like that. But every year he also includes Dr. Elmo's great Christmas classic, *Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer*.

The lyrics go like this:

*Grandma got run over by a reindeer,
Walking home from our house, Christmas Eve,
You can say you don't believe in Santa,
But as for me and Grandpa -- we believe.*

I finally asked him why he puts this song on his list. He said, "For the pagans. A little belief is better than none at all."

I haven't been able to get this song out of my head - partly because it's so goofy, but also because it raises a couple of questions. Who really owns Christmas? The pagans? The Christians? Toys-R-Us? The ACLU? Why are we supposed to be happy this month? And what exactly are we celebrating?

Let me answer the questions this way.

The Louvre Museum in Paris holds about 35,000 pieces of art from the 14th to the 20th centuries. And one of the most beautiful collections in the Louvre is the paintings of the Middle Ages. Medieval art is Christian art. One reason for that is obvious. The Church had the influence and the resources to pay for great art. Another reason is that the political leaders of that age shared that same Christian faith. So did the people. And so did the artists. As a result, paintings from the Middle Ages combine beauty, simplicity and faith in a very powerful way.

Most Medieval art tried to do two things: touch the heart with its beauty and teach the mind with its story. It opened a window on the Bible to people who couldn't read. The recurring scenes in Medieval art are events like the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Christ, the Gift of the Magi, the Baptism in the Jordan, the Temptation in the Desert, Judas' Kiss, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

The paintings had power not just because they were ways of teaching the faith. They had power because they connected the human condition with Christian hope and Christian purpose.

We're born, we grow, we suffer, we die. So do the people we love. Do our lives mean anything? And if they do, *what* do they mean? These are the questions that really matter to all of us. They mattered even more urgently to people with shorter life spans 700 years ago. Medieval art is about birth, growth, suffering, death and the hope of new life, all viewed through the person of Jesus Christ. It's about God. But it's also about us as human beings --because Jesus Christ is not only God; he's also human.

When a Medieval artist painted Pilate showing a beaten and bloody Christ to the mob with the words *ecce homo* --"behold the man"- - he spoke to the suffering of every man and woman who viewed the painting. That's the genius of the Gospel and the art it inspires. Christian art is about the dignity of the human person loved and redeemed by God.



ANNUNCIATION

El Greco

(1595—1600)

Christmas is a feast of love, but it's God's love first that makes it possible. Christmas begins our deliverance from sin and death. That's why St. Leo the Great called it the "birthday of joy."

Seeing Clearly (Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11) Seeing Clearly

It's about *meaning*.

Some of you may be thinking, if Medieval art was such a big deal, how come nobody does it anymore? That's a fair question. I have a one-word answer: perspective. It's an interesting word, "perspective." It comes from the Latin verb *perspicere*, which means, "to see clearly."

In art, perspective is the technique of representing three dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface. Medieval painters didn't know how to do this.

Starting in the 14th century, painters began figuring out how to put depth of field in their work. They learned how to create the illusion of a round apple on a flat piece of canvas. It's basically a math problem with horizon lines and vanishing points.

Within a hundred years, every painter used the new perspective techniques in his work. Nobody painted the old way. And very soon nobody looked at or experienced a painting the same way. There was a different perspective. Seven hundred years ago, a painter might take months or years to finish a scene like the Nativity. Seven hundred years later, a teenager of our time can do a three dimensional, photo-realistic image of the same scene in a few hours with a free piece of software called *Blender 3D*.

But their *perspectives* are not at all the same.

The word "perspective" has two different meanings. It's not just a technique in art. It also means our frame of reference. It's our basic way of looking at people, ideas and events. Our perspective not only shapes how we understand the world; it also reveals a lot about what we believe and who we choose to be.

Here's the point. As we finish 2006, we know a lot more than we did 700 years ago. We eat better. We live longer. We have nicer clothes. We own more stuff. But are we happier? Are we wiser? Do our lives have more beauty and harmony and meaning? Are we more humane with each other?

Our perspective on the world has changed in fundamental ways. But is the soul of modern life any deeper or holier? Given the wars and injustices of the last century, we'd better think very carefully before we answer.

I believe that Americans are a blessed people. Most of us believe in God. We go to church at higher rates than any other developed country. We still work hard. We still have a deep love of family and personal integrity. And most of the good things we have, we've labored honestly to earn.

Americans enjoy more freedom, more mobility, better education, better career choices and better medical care than any other country in history. We have more personal wealth. We have more leisure time. We have a society genuinely based on law that at least tries to ensure justice for everybody. And in science, technology, commerce and military power, the United States has no equal.

But Americans also have a growing inequality of wealth, education and opportunity. We face a decline of ideas and public service; growing moral ambiguity; a spirit of entitlement with rights exalted over responsibilities; a cult of personal consumption; and a civic vocabulary that seems to get more brutish and more confused every year.

This last point about our civic vocabulary is important.

The language we use in public discourse matters. Words are like a paintbrush. They're a very powerful tool. They can form or deform the human conscience.

Words like "tolerance" and "consensus" are important democratic working principles. But they aren't Christian virtues, and they should never take priority over other words like charity, justice, faith and truth, either in our personal lives or in our public choices.

Here's another word: *choice*. Choice is usually a good thing. But it's never an end in itself. Choice is worthless - in fact, it's a form of idolatry - if all the choices are meaningless or bad.

Here's another word: *pluralism*. These days pluralism usually serves as a codeword for getting Christians to shut up in the public square out of some misguided sense of courtesy. But pluralism is just a demographic

(Continued from page 12) Seeing Clearly

fact. It's not an ideology. And it's never a valid excuse for being quiet about our key moral convictions.

Here's another word: *community*. Community is more than a collection of persons. Community requires mutual respect, a shared future, and submission to each other's needs based on common beliefs and principles. It's not just an elegant name for an interest group. Talking about the "abortion-rights community" makes as much sense as talking about the "big tobacco community."

Here's another couple of words: *the common good*. The common good does not mean the sum of what most people want right now. The common good is that which constitutes the best source of justice and happiness for a community and its members in the light of truth. The common good is never served by killing the weakest members of a community. It's also not served when the appetites and behaviors of individual members get a license to undermine the life of the wider community.

Finally, let's take one more word: *democracy*. Democracy does *not* mean putting aside our religious and moral beliefs for the sake of public policy. In fact, it demands exactly the opposite. Democracy depends on people of character fighting for their beliefs in the public square - legally, ethically and non-violently, but forcefully and without apology. Democracy is not God. Only God is God. Even democracy stands under the judgment of God and God's truths about human purpose and dignity. The passengers in a car can democratically elect to go in the wrong direction. But they're still just as dead -- with or without a majority opinion -- when they go over a cliff.

The fallout from this confusion in the language of American life can be summed up in five trends: first, the rise of an unhealthy individualism among citizens; second, growing tribal warfare among interest groups; third, more and more cynicism toward public life and service; fourth, a decline in democratic involvement; and fifth, image over substance in public debate, which results in politics as a kind of cynical sound-bite management.

In recent years, some people in both political parties would like to blame the conflicts in American public life on religious believers. The argument goes like this. Religion is so powerful and so personal that whenever it enters public life in an organized way, it divides people. It repels. It polarizes. It oversimplifies complex issues. It creates bitterness. It invites extremism. And finally it violates the spirit of the Constitution by muddling up the separation of Church and state that keeps Americans from sliding into intolerance.

The same argument goes on to claim that, once they're free from the burden of religious interference, mature citizens and leaders can engage in reasoned discourse, putting aside superstition and private obsessions to choose the best course for the widest public. Because the state is above moral and religious tribalism, it can best guarantee the rights of everyone. Therefore a fully secularized public square would be the adulthood of the American Experiment.

That's the hype. Here's the reality.

First of all, key differences exist between public institutions which are non-sectarian, and secularist ideology.

Everybody can live with the former. No Christian in his or her right mind should *want* to live with the latter.

Whenever you hear loud fretting about an irrational fear of an Established Church, somebody's trying to force religious believers and communities out of the public discussion of issues.

Second, the American Experiment -- more than any other modern state -- is the product of religiously shaped concepts and tradition. It can't survive for long without respecting the source of that tradition. A fully secularized public life would mean policy by the powerful for the powerful because no permanent principles can exist in a morally neutral vacuum.

Finally, secularism isn't really morally neutral. It's actively destructive. It undermines community. It attacks the heart of what it means to be human. It rejects the sacred while posturing itself as neutral to the sacred. It ignores the most basic questions of social purpose and personal meaning by writing them off as private idio-

(Continued from page 13) Seeing Clearly

syncretisms. It also just *doesn't work* -- in fact, by its nature it can't work -- as a life-giving principle for society.

And despite its own propaganda, it's *never* been a natural, evolutionary, historical result of human progress.

Certain beliefs have always held Americans together as a people. Christianity and its Jewish roots have always provided the grounding for our most important national principles, like inalienable rights and equality under the law. But as a country, we're losing the Founders' perspective on the meaning of our shared public life. We have wealth and power and free time and choices and toys-- but we no longer see clearly who we are. Material things don't give us meaning. We're in danger of becoming the "men without chests" that C.S. Lewis talked about in *The Abolition of Man* - people sapped of their heart, energy, courage and convictions by the machinery they helped to create. And if we can't find a way to heal that interior emptiness, then as an experiment in the best ideals of human freedom, America will fail.

I began by talking about Christmas. Who owns it? Why are we supposed to be happy? What are we really celebrating?

Good will, joy, peace, harmony, the giving of gifts - these are beautiful and holy things deeply linked to Christmas.

But not to Santa Claus. And especially not to a politically correct, *secular* Santa Claus. Joy is not generic. Good will needs a reason. We don't suddenly become generous because the radio plays *Jingle Bells*.

Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is the messiah of Israel, the only Son of God, the Word of God made flesh. We believe that He was born in poverty in Bethlehem in order to grow and preach God's kingdom, and suffer, die and rise from the dead - all for the sake of our redemption, because God loves us. Christmas is a feast of love, but it's *God's love first* that makes it possible. Christmas begins our deliverance from sin and death. That's why St. Leo the Great called it the "birthday of joy." What begins in the stable ends in our salvation. *That's why* we celebrate Christmas, and it's the best and only reason the human heart needs.

Catholics observe these last few weeks every year before Christmas as the season of Advent. It's a time when the Church asks us to prepare our lives to receive Jesus the child at Christmas, and Jesus the king at the end of time.

How can we best do that? The tradition of the Church tells us by vigil and by prayer.

The season of Advent is a vigil. The word "vigil" means to keep watch during normal sleeping hours, to pay attention when others are sleeping. It comes from a very old Indo- European word "weg", which means "be lively or active."

So to keep vigil or to be vigilant does not mean passive waiting but active, restless waiting, expectant waiting for the Lord. It means paying attention to what is going on in the world around us, and not being asleep. It means acting, living out our mission to be God's agents in the world.

Every truly Christian life is a kind of martyrdom, because what *martyr* means is witness. That's our task - a life of conscious, deliberate witness for Jesus Christ and our Catholic faith, in our families, our friendships, our business dealings and our public actions. When Jesus said, "make disciples of all nations," and "you will be my witnesses,"

He didn't mean the guy down the road. He was speaking to you and to me.

The Advent tradition of the Church is vigil *and* prayer.

There are two places in the New Testament - 1st Corinthians and Revelation - where we find a prayer in the Aramaic language, the Semitic dialect spoken by Jesus. Since this prayer is in Aramaic it must come from the very earliest days of the Church. The prayer is "*Marana tha*" and means "Lord, come!"

St. Augustine tells us that God is indebted to us, not because of anything we have done, but because of

Seeing Clearly (Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14) Seeing Clearly

His promises. God always keeps His promises. So we call on Him to come again.

Our Advent prayer is "Lord, come!"

Lord, come - into our world!

Lord, come - into our lives!

Lord, come -- and purify our longings!

Lord, come - to free us from our compulsions and sins!

Lord, come - into our relationships!

Lord, come - into our work!

Lord, come - into our sufferings!

And into the darkness of our troubled world.

We speak these words - "Marana-than - with a real and confident urgency, not only for ourselves and our personal lives, but also for our Church and our nation.

Earlier I mentioned the power of perspective in painting, and the power of perspective in our lives. I hope the meaning of that word stays with you in the coming days of Advent -- *perspicere*, "to see clearly."

Twelve months ago, on Christmas Day, Pope Benedict XVI published his first encyclical. He called it *Deus Caritas Est*- "God is love." Here's a line from it that I want to share with you as I close: "The Christian program - the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus -- is 'a heart which sees.' This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly" (31, b).

Being faithful to your spouse and family; defending the unborn child; helping the poor; visiting the sick; respecting the immigrant; protecting the dignity and meaning of marriage; working for justice; leading with character - this is the Christian program, the result of hearts which see.

What I ask God to give to you and to me, to our nation and to our Church this Christmas, is the one gift that really does matter: hearts that see, and see clearly.

God grant all of us a blessed Advent and a joyful Christmas. †

PRAYER PETITIONS

*Heavenly Father, I offer you this day
all that I shall think, do or say,
uniting it with what was done
by Jesus Christ, your only Son. Amen*

*If you have a special need for prayer, please
let us know so by emailing your request to
alanphar@firstam.com*

- ◆ Ryan McEachon (special intention)
- ◆ Heather Flynn USAFA (special intention)
- ◆ John Flynn IV USNA (special intention)
 - ◆ Kathy Todd (cancer)
 - ◆ Ellie Shonefelt & Her Children
 - ◆ David Macdonald (illness)
 - ◆ Eric & Marie Bessem
 - ◆ Julia Nelson (serious illness)
 - ◆ Sean Nelson (illness)
 - ◆ Scott Smith (illness)
- ◆ Ron Gable (special intention) †



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ANSWERING HIS CALL



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

I was driving home from a meeting this evening about 5, stuck in traffic on Colorado Blvd., and the car started to choke and splutter and die - I barely managed to coast, cursing, into a gas station, glad only that I would not be blocking traffic and would have a somewhat warm spot to wait for the tow truck. It wouldn't even turn over. Before I could make the call, I saw a woman walking out of the "quickie mart" building, and it looked like she slipped on some ice and fell into a Gas pump, so I got out to see if she was okay.

When I got there, it looked more like she had been overcome by sobs than that she had fallen; she was a young woman who looked really haggard with dark circles under her eyes. She dropped something as I helped her up, and I picked it up to give it to her. It was a nickel.

At that moment, everything came into focus for me: the crying woman, the ancient Suburban crammed full of stuff with 3 kids in the back (1 in a car seat), and the gas pump reading \$4.95.

I asked her if she was okay and if she needed help, and she just kept saying "don't want my kids to see me crying," so we stood on the other side of the pump from her car. She said she was driving to California and that things were very hard for her right now. So I asked, "And you were praying?" That made her back away from me a little, but I assured her I was not a crazy person and said, "He heard you, and He sent me."

I took out my card and swiped it through the card reader on the pump so she could fill up her car completely, and while it was fueling, walked to the next door McDonald's and bought 2 big bags of food, some gift certificates for more, and a big cup of coffee. She gave the food to the kids in the Car, who attacked it like wolves, and we stood by the pump eating fries and talking a little.

She told me her name, and that she lived in Kansas City. Her boyfriend left 2 months ago and she had not been able to make ends meet. She knew she wouldn't have money to pay rent Jan 1, and finally in desperation had finally called her parents, with whom she had not spoken in about 5 years. They lived in California and said she could come live with them and try to get on her feet there.

So she packed up everything she owned in the car. She told the kids they were going to California for Christmas, but not that they were going to live there.

I gave her my gloves, a little hug and said a quick prayer with her for safety on the road. As I was walking over to my car, she said, "So, are you like an angel or something?"

This definitely made me cry. I said, "Sweetie, at this time of year angels are really busy, so sometimes God uses regular people."

It was so incredible to be a part of someone else's miracle. And of course, you guessed it, when I got in my car it started right away and got me home with no problem. I'll put it in the shop tomorrow to check, but I suspect the mechanic won't find anything wrong.

Sometimes the angels fly close enough to you that you can hear the flutter of their wings...

Psalm 55:22 "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." ✠



MORE ON THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY

Aware that his words would echo throughout England, throughout Europe, and throughout subsequent history, Sir Thomas More now brought into full play all of the rhetorical power and legal expertise that a lifetime of training had placed at his disposal. Challenging the very ground on which Audley and the rest of the judges intended to condemn him, he said:

Inasmuch, my lord, as this indictment is grounded upon an Act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and His Holy Church, the supreme government of which, or of any part thereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual preeminence by the mouth of our Savior Himself, personally present upon the earth, only to St. Peter and his successors, bishops of the same See, by special prerogative guaranteed, it is therefore in law among Christian men insufficient to charge any Christian man.

To prove his claim, he explained that “this realm, being but one member and small part of the Church, might not make a particular law [that was] disagreeable with the general law of Christ’s Universal Catholic Church any more than the city of London, being but one poor member in respect of the whole realm, might make a law against an Act of Parliament to bind the whole realm.”

Specifically, Moore showed that provisions in the Act of Succession and the Act of Treasons went against many other “laws and statutes of our own land” that had not been repealed. Preeminent among these was the Magna Carta, the first clause of which states that “the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished and its liberties unimpaired.” After citing other such laws, More then cited scriptural texts proving that no layman could be head of the Church.

At this point Audley broke in to dispute his argument. How could More, alone, presume to challenge so stubbornly what “all the bishops, universities, and best learned of this realm” had agreed to support?

The response More now gave was one he had made several times before, but never with such rhetorical and dramatic force.

If the number of bishops and universities should be so material as your lordship seems to think, then I see little cause, my lord, why that should make any change in my conscience. For I have no doubt that, though not in this realm, but of all those well learned bishops and virtuous men that are yet alive throughout Christendom, they are not fewer who are of my mind therein. But if I should speak of those who are already dead, of whom many are now holy saints in heaven I am very sure it is the far greater part of them who, all the while they lived, thought in this case the way that I think now. And therefore am I not bound, my lord, to conform my conscience to the council of one realm against the General Council of Christendom.



THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS MORE



Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem*



*Latin for "To turn truth into laughter"

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

Santa was very cross. It was Christmas Eve and NOTHING was going right.

Mrs. Claus had burned all the cookies. The elves were complaining about not getting paid for the overtime they had while making the toys. The reindeer had been drinking all afternoon and were dead drunk. To make matters worse, they had taken the sleigh out for a spin earlier in the day and had crashed it into a tree.

Santa was furious. "I can't believe it! I've got to deliver millions of presents all over the world in just a few hours - all of my reindeer are drunk, the elves are on strike and I don't even have a Christmas tree!

I sent that stupid Little Angel out HOURS ago to find a tree and he isn't even back yet! What am I going to do?"

Just then, the Little Angel opened the front door and stepped in from the snowy night, dragging a Christmas tree. He says "Yo, fat man! Where do you want me to stick the tree this year?"

And thus the tradition of angels atop the Christmas trees came to pass..... ✚



(Continued from page 4) **Trusting the Church for the Truth**

on their clear meaning. St. Peter professed the truth in the hope of salvation. He did not say first, "I am a sinner in need of a savior," but "Depart from me, I am a sinful man." First came the objective fact, the holiness of God and His truth, and only then the gift of salvation. Protestantism "poisons the well" by beginning with a doubt as to whether man can know any truth at all, and then resolving it with a "leap of faith" which cannot and must not be explained rationally. Catholicism assumes man's orientation toward the truth as part of his nature and presumes that the evidence, the testimony of the prophets and saints, their miracles and teachings, is sufficient to justify accepting the gift of faith which is offered to all by "the light which enlighteneth every man coming into the world." For those who need proof of the Christian faith by miracles, or insist on proof without miracles, St. Thomas Aquinas has this masterful, serene, and very Catholic advice:

"It is a well-known fact, related in pagan histories, that the whole world worshipped idols and persecuted the faith of Christ; yet now behold...the wise, the noble, the rich and the powerful have been converted at the words of a few simple poor men who preached Christ. Now was this a miracle or not? If it was, then you have what you asked for, a miracle. If you say that it was not a miracle, then I say you could not have a greater miracle than the conversion of the whole world without miracles, and we need to seek no further."

This miracle happens every day, all over the world. Ultimately, this is all any of us needs to know about the Catholic Church." ✚

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 10 February 2006*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Presbyterate,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to meet the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the end of its Plenary Meeting, a Congregation over which I had the joy to preside for more than 20 years through the mandate of my Predecessor, the venerable Pope John Paul II.

Your faces also make me think of all those who collaborated with the Dicastery in those years: I remember them all with gratitude and affection. Indeed, I cannot but recall with a certain emotion the very intense and fruitful period which I spent with the Congregation, whose task is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals in the entire Catholic Church (cf. *Pastor Bonus*, n. 48)

Faith has a fundamental importance in the life of the Church, because the gift that God makes of himself in Revelation is fundamental and God's gift of himself is accepted through faith.

Here the importance of your Congregation comes to the fore. Through its service to the whole Church and to the Bishops in particular, as teachers of the faith and pastors, it is precisely called in a spirit of collegiality to encourage and to recall the centrality of the Catholic faith in its authentic expression.

Whenever, moreover, the perception of this centrality weakens, the fabric of ecclesial life loses its original brightness and wears thin: it degenerates into sterile activism or is reduced to political expediency with a worldly flavor.

If, instead, the truth of the faith is placed simply and decisively at the heart of Christian existence, human life is innovated and revived by a love that knows no rest or bounds, as I also had the opportunity to recall in my recent Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*.

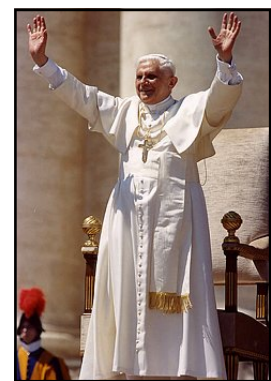
Charity, like love that renews all things, moves from God's Heart to the Heart of Jesus Christ, and through his Spirit across the world. This love is born from the encounter with Christ in faith: "*Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction*" (*Deus caritas est*, n. 1).

Jesus Christ is the Personified Truth who attracts the world to himself. The light that shines out from Jesus is the splendor of the truth. Every other truth is a fragment of the Truth that he is, and refers to him.

Jesus is the Pole Star of human freedom: without him it loses its sense of direction, for without the knowledge of the truth, freedom degenerates, becomes isolated and is reduced to sterile arbitration. With him, freedom is rediscovered, it is recog-



**FROM
PETER'S
SUCCESSOR,
POPE
BENEDICT XVI**



(Continued from page 19) Papal Message

nized to have been created for our good and is expressed in charitable actions and behavior.

Therefore, Jesus gives men and women total familiarity with the truth and continuously invites them to live in it. It is truth offered as a reality that restores the human being and at the same time surpasses him and towers above him, as a Mystery that embraces and at the same time exceeds the impulse of his intelligence.

And nothing succeeds as well as love for the truth in impelling the human mind towards unexplored horizons. Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of the truth, draws to himself the heart of each person, enlarges it and fills it with joy. Indeed, truth alone can take possession of the mind and make it rejoice to the full.

It is this joy that increases the dimensions of the human heart, lifting it anew from the narrowness of selfishness and rendering it capable of authentic love. It is the experience of this joy that moves and attracts the human person to free adoration, not to servile prostration but to bow with heartfelt respect before the Truth he has encountered.

Thus, service to the faith, which is a witness to the One who is the entire Truth, is also a service to joy, and this is the joy that Christ desires to spread in the world: it is the joy of faith in him, of truth that is communicated through him, of salvation that comes from him! It is this joy we feel in our hearts when we kneel with faith to worship Jesus!

This love for truth also inspires and directs the Christian approach to the contemporary world and the evangelizing commitment of the Church, topics which you have taken time to discuss at your Plenary Assembly.

The Church welcomes with joy the authentic breakthroughs of human knowledge and recognizes that evangelization also demands a proper grasp of the horizons and the challenges that modern knowledge is unfolding. In fact, the great progress of scientific knowledge that we saw during the last century has helped us understand the mystery of creation better and has profoundly marked the awareness of all peoples.

However, scientific advances have sometimes been so rapid as to make it very difficult to discern whether they are compatible with the truths about man and the world that God has revealed. At times, certain assertions of scientific knowledge have even been opposed to these truths. This may have given rise to a certain confusion among the faithful and may also have made the proclamation and acceptance of the Gospel difficult.

Consequently, every study that aims to deepen the knowledge of the truths discovered by reason is vitally important, in the certainty that there is no "competition of any kind between reason and faith" (*Fides et Ratio*, n. 17).

We must have no fears about facing this challenge: Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of all creation and of all history. The believer knows well that "all things were created through him and for him... and in him all things hold together" (Col 1: 16, 17).

By continually deepening our knowledge of Christ, the centre of the cosmos and of history, we can show the men and women of our time that faith in him is important for humanity's future: indeed, it is the accomplishment of all that is authentically human. Only in this perspective will we be able to give convincing answers to the per-



**CHRIST BEFORE
PILATE**

Tintoretto
(1566-67)

Papal Message (Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 20) Papal Message

son who is searching.

This commitment is crucially important for the proclamation and transmission of the faith in the contemporary world. Today, in fact, the task of evangelizing is an urgent priority and demands equal commitment.

The dialogue between faith and reason, religion and science, does not only make it possible to show people of our time the reasonableness of faith in God as effectively and convincingly as possible, but also to demonstrate that the definitive fulfillment of every authentic human aspiration rests in Jesus Christ. In this regard, a serious evangelizing effort cannot ignore the questions that arise also from today's scientific and philosophical discoveries.

The desire for the truth is part of human nature itself. The whole of creation is an immense invitation to seek those responses that open human reason to the great response that it has always sought and awaited: "The truth of Christian Revelation, found in Jesus of Nazareth, enables all men and women to embrace the 'mystery' of their own life. As absolute truth, it summons human beings to be open to the transcendent, while respecting both their autonomy as creatures and their freedom. At this point, the relationship between freedom and truth is complete, and we understand the full meaning of the Lord's words: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (Jn 8: 32)" (*Fides et Ratio*, n. 15).

In this the Congregation finds the motive for its commitment and the horizon of its service. Your service to the fullness of the faith is a service to the truth, hence, to joy, a joy that rises from the depths of the heart, that flows from those abysses of love that Christ opened with his Heart pierced on the Cross and that his Spirit pours out into the world with inexhaustible generosity. From this point of view, your doctrinal ministry can appropriately be defined as "pastoral".

Your service, in fact, is a service to the full diffusion of God's light in the world! May the light of faith, expressed in its fullness and integrity, always illumine your work and be the "star" that guides you and helps you to direct human hearts to Christ!

This is the weighty but fascinating task incumbent upon the Successor of Peter in his mission in which you are called to collaborate. Thank you for your work and for your service!

With these sentiments I impart my Blessing to you all. ✚

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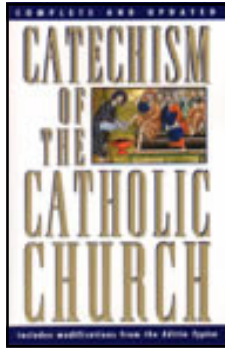
THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PART THREE: LIFE IN CHRIST

SECTION TWO: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

CHAPTER TWO: YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

ARTICLE 8: EIGHTH COMMANDMENT



CATECHISM CORNER



**THE DENYING
OF PETER
(DETAIL)**

Jan Miense Molenaer
(1636)

II. TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

2471 Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that he "has come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." The Christian is not to "be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord." [266] In situations that require witness to the faith, the Christian must profess it without equivocation, after the example of St. Paul before his judges. We must keep "a clear conscience toward God and toward men."

2472 The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as *witnesses of the Gospel* and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known.

All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they have put on in Baptism and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at Confirmation.

2473 *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God."

2474 The Church has painstakingly collected the records of those who persevered to the end in witnessing to their faith. These are the acts of the Martyrs. They form the archives of truth written in letters of blood:

Neither the pleasures of the world nor the kingdoms of this age will be of any use to me. It is better for me to die [in order to unite myself] to Christ Jesus than to reign over the ends of the earth. I seek him who died for us; I desire him who rose for us. My birth is approaching. . .

I bless you for having judged me worthy from this day and this hour to be counted among your martyrs.... You have kept your promise, God of faithfulness and truth. For this reason and for everything, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. Through him, who is with you and the Holy Spirit, may glory be given to you, now and in the ages to come. Amen.

.....

IV. RESPECT FOR THE TRUTH

2488 *The right to the communication of the truth is not unconditional.* Everyone must conform his life to the Gospel precept of fraternal love. This requires us in concrete situations to judge whether or not it is appropriate to reveal the truth to someone who asks for it.

2489 Charity and respect for the truth should dictate the response *to every request for information or communication.* The good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good are sufficient reasons for being silent about what ought not be known or for making use of a discreet language. The duty to avoid scandal often commands strict discretion. No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it.

2490 *The secret of the sacrament of reconciliation is sacred,* and cannot be violated under any pretext. "The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore, it is a crime for a confessor in any way to betray a penitent by word or in any other manner or for any reason."

2491 *Professional secrets* - for example, those of political office holders, soldiers, physicians, and lawyers - or confidential information given under the seal of secrecy must be kept, save in exceptional cases where keeping the secret is bound to cause very grave harm to the one who confided it, to the one who received it or to a third party, and where the very grave harm can be avoided only by divulging the truth. Even if not confided under the seal of secrecy, private information prejudicial to another is not to be divulged without a grave and proportionate reason. ☩

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