

This second installment for August begins with two very challenging articles by Fr. Tom Doyle. They are followed by a response to the second article by Tony Equale. I am grateful to Joe Hassan for passing these along.

By the way, if you don't have the time or the drive to get through all of these articles, please make certain that you scroll down to "A Little Child Shall Lead Them" by Bishop Spong.

THE POPE'S VISITS:
A REFLECTION ON WAITING
Thomas Doyle

This past Monday I testified at a trial. ...

The trials are a nightmare for the victims and their families. They are expensive as well. The lawyers who represent the diocese get paid one way or the other. The lawyers for the victims are on contingency. The church lawyers' fees come from the donations of the people. If the jury gives a big award, some people will get bent out of shape and complain about how much the payments to the victims cost the diocese. They really ought to complain about the payments to the lawyers, which are totally unnecessary.

I learned during a break that the little guy in the black outfit sitting at the corner of the defense table was the bishop. I also learned that neither he nor any of his predecessors had ever reached out to any of the victims. Throughout the day as I sat on the stand and answered questions I looked at the victim on my left and the bishop on my right. What was wrong with that picture? Simple! The bishop was in the wrong place. He should have been sitting next to the victim offering support, sympathy, kindness and hope. Instead he was on the other side, probably worrying that the testimony was not making his diocese look too good.

... So.....what does all of this have to do with the pope? Plenty! Benedict XVI made a big splash in the U.S. and in Australia with all of his remarks about clergy sex abuse and with the personal encounters he had with a small group of victims in each country. A lot of people announced that the Pope, the Vatican and the hierarchy have finally "gotten it." After all, Pope John Paul II not only did nothing, but in the few statements he made he tried to shift the blame to anyone and anything from where it ought to be.

Not so with Benedict. First, he fired the notorious Marcel Maciel Degollado, the founder of the cult-like outfit called the Legion(aries) of Christ. Then he came to the US and said he was ashamed at the way things had gone. He also said similar things in Australia. He may feel personally ashamed and scandalized but that doesn't mean a thing unless he does something and thus far he has done nothing. That's where this trial comes in. In spite of the pope's appearance of compassion it has not rubbed off on the bishops. The trial I was at should have been stopped before it started. The bishop should have picked up on the pope's words and shown concern for the victims instead of himself and his bureaucracy and his diocese's money.

The pope should have taken action but he didn't. The major fallacy with the hierarchy and the pope is that they think that their words always make things happen. They think that a statement or a gesture or even a liturgy such as a healing Mass, are all they have to do. Even thinking in that way is a gross insult to those hurt by the church. People are sick to death of the highly nuanced statements that keep coming out of the public relations departments of the Church because they are not only empty. They are dishonest and an insult to the intelligence and integrity of decent and honest men and women.

The pope could have:

1. Issued an order to all bishops to stop all legal actions and start treating the victims with care and compassion instead of treating them like the enemy.
2. Ordered the bishops to stop building cathedrals and monuments to themselves and use

the funds for programs to help victims and their families.

3. Invited a few hundred victims to the Vatican at his expense to meet with him and the other Vatican big shots so as to find out first hand just how horrendous this whole nightmare has been.
4. Publicly fired some of the more notorious cardinals starting with Cardinals George, Egan, Mahony, Pell and Levada. Once the top guys are gone then start on the next level, namely the bishops.
5. Stopped persecuting theologians and scholars who are trying to figure out some of the blatant contradictions on Church teaching and practice, starting with celibacy and the whole bizarre theology of human sexuality.
6. Sent sizeable personal donations to SNAP, NAPSAC and ROAD TO RECOVERY.

I think we all know that all of the above have no chance of happening. Perhaps the most realistic thing we can hope for is an awakening by isolated bishops here and there. We can also continue to hope that lay Catholics, who persist in looking at the hierarchical system through rose-colored glasses, will start to grow up, get past their denial and see reality for what it is. ...

DISHONORING MY REGIMENT

A Response and Reflection by Thomas Doyle

<http://reform-network.net/?p=1919>

I became part of the "regiment" as a Dominican priest in May, 1970. I first became aware of the reality of sexual abuse of minors by priests before I was ordained through rumors and stories about certain priests in the Order who "liked altar boys." I never knew that "liking altar boys" went far beyond touching until after I was ordained. I learned the disgusting extent of "liking altar boys" in 1984 when I was working at the Vatican embassy and first became involved with the whole issue of clergy sex abuse. That was when I was asked to manage the file of Gilbert Gauthé, the notorious priest from Lafayette LA. My direct involvement increased with each month and each year and continues today.

Let me start out by offering my conclusion. The "regiment" truly is dishonored. It is dishonored in part by the thousands of priests who have raped and abused innocent boys, girls, men and women and in doing so have ravaged their souls and the souls of those who loved them. But the regiment is dishonored even more by the bishops, archbishops, cardinals and popes, who have enabled, covered up, lied, manipulated, ignored and responded in anything but a Christian manner. They have really dishonored the regiment because they have knowingly turned their backs on that which the regiment is really all about, namely following the example of Christ. They can't fall back on the excuse that they suffer from a sexual disorder or are impaired by substance abuse. Their impairment is a moral impairment and there is no excuse for that. Two recent examples: the first I will cite is the total lack of hierarchical integrity in Chicago! Cardinal George is a criminal and a traitor to the regiment - but will the members of the regiment who are so concerned about its honor step up and call him on it? No! Why not? Fear, timidity, irrelevant respect for the office? Pick one. They are all irrelevant to the facts. The second example is the famed Msgr. Wally Harris in New York. The hero of Harlem was interviewed by the John Jay Study people and complained about the number of false accusations - all the while knowing he was guilty himself.

The regiment has also been dishonored by the thousands of priests who knew that others were abusing children and did nothing. It is dishonored by the thousands who looked the other way and failed to speak out in support of the victims. It is dishonored by the many priests who stood by in silence while their bishops ran roughshod over victims, lying to them, lying to the public and lying to the clergy because of

their obsession with their image and their power.

The regiment is dishonored by those priests who have spoken out but only to voice their self-centered concern about priests' rights and the tarnished image of the priesthood brought on by "a few." It is dishonored by those who have complained about the bishops' lack of concern for priests, manifested in the provisions of the Dallas Charter and their on-going lopsided response but who have never complained about the bishops' dishonest, unchristian and criminal response to reports of the denial of the victims' rights. The regiment is dishonored by the priests who whine and complain about the shame brought on them by the minority of abusers. The shame is not only from them but from the silence and complacency of the majority.

The regiment is dishonored by those priests and bishops who keep trying to shift the blame to anyone but themselves with idiotic claims such as that of Madison's Bishop Morlino who recently announced that the whole problem was caused because people didn't obey the 1968 anti-birth control encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

I'd like to share some of my own experiences which have led to these conclusions. When I first became involved in this issue in 1984 I was shocked to learn that former priest Gil Gauthe had raped dozens of children but I was even more shocked, scandalized and confused as I quickly learned that the US Catholic Conference and the bishops who knew about the abuse were only concerned about covering it up. When cover up was impossible due to the lawsuit filed and the criminal charges against Gauthe that came as a consequence, the response from the leadership of the Bishops' Conference was as if this was a nuisance that would go away much more quickly if I stopped pushing it. A couple priests on the embassy staff told me that it would be best if I back off because "we don't air our dirty laundry in public."

The Gauthe case and the others that came to light back then did not go away. I don't remember anyone at the time showing any concern for the victims with the exception of Fr. Mike Peterson. No one from the Bishops' Conference or from the embassy staff ever mentioned the victims. All they worried about was containing the problem and managing the negative publicity.

After I left the embassy, I was approached by the media several times. I spoke honestly and shared as much as I knew. I was criticized by priests because I opened up the brotherhood to dishonor as one put it. I still recall being at a Canon Law convention in Florida in the late eighties. Just prior to it I had given an interview that was widely quoted. At the convention I was attacked by several priests and was accused of betraying the brotherhood. Not one priest asked about the truth of the matter and no one was concerned about the problem itself or about the victims - they were only concerned about the bad publicity for the "regiment."

In spring of 1986 I had organized an all day seminar in the Chicago area. Presenters included psychologists and attorneys who would provide information on responding to the problem and to the victims. We invited bishops and chancery officials from around the U.S. Not long before the event Cardinal Bernardin called me and urged me to cancel the event because he felt it would draw undue attention to the problem and would "sensationalize" it, to use his words. I refused. We held the seminar to a full house but not one priest from Chicago attended. Why? Because the Cardinal had let the word out that it was to be boycotted. Best to let the problem get worse rather than dishonor the Chicago branch of the regiment.

In 1992 I attended the first major gathering of victims in Chicago, the Vocal (later LinkUp) conference. I met three priests who were there because they had been ministering to victims. All three had spoken about the evil of clergy sex abuse from their pulpits and all three had been silenced and disciplined by their bishops for drawing undue attention to what one bishop referred to as a "minor problem." I might add that since then there have been annual gatherings of victims sponsored by the two main support groups, LinkUp and SNAP. The clergy have never flocked to these gatherings to show their concern or support for victims. True, a few brave men always show up, but never more than a few. Only one bishop has ever attended and stood in solidarity and support of the victims, Bishop Tom Gumbleton. Where were the others?

In 1988 Bishop A.J. Quinn of Cleveland wrote to my former boss, the Vatican ambassador or nuncio as he

is called, and complained about me. He was upset that I was magnifying the problem by speaking to the media. He told the nuncio in his letter that the "pedophile nuisance" would soon go away. To his credit the Vatican ambassador, Cardinal Laghi, sent me a copy of the letter and told me that he did not agree with Quinn's statements.

Between 1984 and 2002 I do not recall a single instance where a priest or a group of priests spoke out publicly in support of victims other than the outstanding speech Andy Greeley gave at the 1992 conference mentioned above. I do not know of any who have publicly criticized the way bishops were responding. I don't know of any priests' senate ever saying anything publicly. The Canon Law Society of America had a couple seminars about the issue but has never done anything worthwhile other than express concern over priests' rights. Nothing about victims or victims' rights!

I recall when I was on active duty with the Air Force being called by a priest who worked at the Archdiocese for the Military Services. He advised me to stop speaking to the press and also told me that the archbishop was considering issuing me an order to stop testifying on behalf of victims. He assured me that they were concerned about the problem but that there was a better way to handle it. My response.....don't waste your time and effort because I am not going to stop.

Many priests have told me over the years that if the church had only followed Canon Law we would not be in this mess. Nonsense! Canon Law is what the bishops want it to be. It has never been effective in protecting the rights of lay people. It has been totally useless in bringing justice to victims. It's not that the canon law system lacks the provisions for action. But law has to be applied to mean anything and the people in charge of making Canon Law work are the bishops. Need more be said?

After 2002 things changed and people were speaking out all over. For the first time the National Federation of Priests' Councils, an independent group, started making noises. They were concerned about priests' rights in light of the Dallas Charter and the zero tolerance policy of the bishops. They had never said anything before this and expressed concern only about themselves and not about victims. They still have done nothing to help the victims.

Since 1988 I have reviewed several hundred priest-personnel files. In my work as a consultant and expert witness in civil cases and grand jury investigations I have also reviewed several hundred depositions taken from cardinals, bishops and priests. Many of these are available for all to see on several websites. In most of these depositions when asked about their knowledge of sexual abuse by accused clerics, the deponents either could not remember or they simply denied the abuse. While there were certainly cases when these clerics did not in fact have any direct or indirect knowledge, in most it was known from other sources that they did know about the abuse in question. How can one explain the denials and the memory lapses? My conclusion was that these clerical deponents either suffered from some form of cognitive disorder, or brain damage in plain English, or they were lying. Either way, these clerical deponents could have assisted in the search for the truth and supported the victims. They did not. They covered for the abusers even under oath. They chose to bring dishonor to the regiment.

The Knights of Columbus take great pride in their loyalty to the Church and to the bishops. They regularly show their support for priests and announce their love for the Church. They shell out barrels of money to the Vatican, to bishops, to seminaries and to other causes in support of priests. The Knights of Columbus have totally missed the boat. They have supported priests and bishops in their moral bankruptcy and in their destruction of the bodies and souls of the victims of abuse. They have said and done nothing to support the victims. Remember the words of Jesus: "If you do this to the least of my brothers you do it to me." It looks as if the Knights and the bishops they protect have somehow missed that verse.

In the early days Andy Greeley spoke out publicly in support of victims. Over the years several priests have reached out to victims and survivors and some have even stuck their necks out, going public with their criticism. They were punished by their bishops and usually hammered or isolated by their "brother" priests. Since 2002 I have become aware of a small number of heroic priests who have placed their Christian commitment before the "brotherhood" or the image of the regiment and in so doing this small band of brothers has brought honor to the regiment. I'd like to name a few because these are the men who really

live what Christian pastorship is all about: Ken Lasch, Bob Hoatson, Bruce Teague, Dave Hitch, John Bambrick, Gary Hayes, Jim Scahill, Tom Gumbleton, Geoff Robinson, Pat Powers, Pat Collins, Ron Coyne, Don Cozzens, Walter Cuenin, Bob Bowers.....to name some but not all. Some quietly support and others provide direct pastoral care. Ken Lasch and Bob Hoatson, through Road to Recovery, have provided more pastoral care to victims in one day than all the bishops combined in 20 years. There are others whose names I cannot recall right now.

There are also the 58 priests from Boston who signed the letter asking Bernard Law to step down. In the clerical world, where priests are often treated like indentured servants, that was an incredibly brave act.

There are priests who complain about the many false accusations and the lack of legal representation and due process for accused priests. In the first place there are very few false accusations - 10 that I know of out of thousands of cases. Those who make this charge have produced no credible evidence beyond rumor and hearsay. There is however truth to the complaint that there is little effective canonical-legal representation for accused priests - just like there has NEVER been any canonical-legal representation or due process for the victims of clergy abuse. Why is this so? Because the bishops do not believe in objective due process for anyone but themselves.

Perhaps the most sickening charges use the words "Catholic-bashing, priest-bashing or anticlericalism." If there is shame attached to being a priest today it's because the priests and bishops have brought it on themselves. If any group is responsible for anti-Catholic sentiment it's the bishops. Their self-serving response to the victims of abuse is about as anti-Catholic as one can get. If being a good and orthodox Catholic means essentially being a good and faithful Christian, then the bishops are the largest single group of dissenters and unorthodox heretics in the Catholic Church. They have sacrificed charity for image and institutional power. They have redefined orthodoxy to mean mindless obedience to their obsession with themselves and their power.

There is nothing magical or mystical about the priesthood that justifies any special treatment in the face of committed crimes. If we look at the gospels we find nothing that even remotely justifies setting priests on a pedestal or granting them "above-the-law" status. On the contrary there is abundant evidence that Jesus showed plenty of anger towards the churchmen of his time because they had lost their way and abused the people whom they were supposed to serve. There is ample scriptural evidence to justify a priesthood that would devote itself to the care of the marginalized, forgotten, abused and rejected. In our era the marginalized have been made so by the very clergy who have been ordained to protect them. Why then does it seem that the hierarchy and so many of the priests are so adamant in defending a priesthood that looks and acts more like a latter-day aristocracy in an anachronistic monarchy?

Perhaps one reason is that priests are formed from the beginning into a clerical culture that teaches them that God wants a "regiment" that is set apart and special. Perhaps yet another reason is that priests are formed in a culture that rewards docility, unquestioning obedience, intellectual mediocrity and total loyalty to the papacy and hierarchy while it dismisses and even punishes originality, creativity, independence or loyalty to one's conscience.

I have heard more than one diocesan priest describe his state as "economic servitude" while complaining that the bishop held him in total captivity with the power to suspend his salary, health benefits, retirement, residence and ability to work. It is pathetic but true that fear is major component in convincing many priests to stay loyal to the brotherhood.

In spite of what appears to be a very bleak picture, I believe it is unfair and inaccurate to write off the entire priesthood as uncaring, weak or dishonest. In my travels I have either met or heard about many men whose essential loyalty is to the mission and ministry of Christ and not to the adulation of the papacy or the hierarchy. They serve unselfishly and often among those whom they serve are the victims and survivors of sexual or spiritual abuse inflicted by priests or bishops.

On the other hand it is dishonest and destructive to try to minimize the incredible damage that has been

done by dismissing it, saying it is the result of a minuscule number of "bad apples." The actual numbers are certainly not minuscule. Far more shameful is that fact that the number of bishops who have lied, covered up and enabled is not a minority but the majority. Priests and bishops have to wake up and face reality. There has been immense dishonor and shame brought to the "regiment" because the "regiment" has been subjected to self-delusion. Its members, at least some of them, have actually believed they were part of some sort of elite fraternity and in so doing have lost sight of the fact that it's not a "regiment" at all but a group of men whose calling is not to be "special" but to be compassionate reminders of the compassionate Christ.

One final shot and it's at the nuns who have arrogantly and stupidly tried to frame sexual abuse as a "male" or "clergy" problem. Sex abuse by nuns has been covered more deeply and has been more difficult for the general public to swallow - but it is a major element of the overall nightmare. The dishonor to their regiment and the ruination of countless boys and girls, men and women brought about because of the physical, emotional and sexual abuse by women religious has been just as horrific as that perpetrated by the clerics. The nuns' major organization, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, has responded to the victims with just as much arrogant and imperious disregard as have the bishops. The nuns have shown themselves to be just as clericalized as their male counterparts. They have brought just as much dishonor to their regiment as the clerics have to theirs.

Together the priests, bishops, nuns and brothers who have sexually abused minors and adults and those from these ranks who have looked the other way, denied, lied, covered up, revictimized and enabled constitute a disgusting, sorry mess that has brought great dishonor not only to their respective regiments but to the Body of Christ.

Tom,

While I agree with virtually everything you say in this piece, and stand in great admiration of the contributions you have made through the years to confronting this situation, I continue to be amazed that the 500 pound gorilla in the room still goes unnoticed.

Granted, every organization tries to protect its reputation, especially in matters that pertain to the very core of its work ... in the case of the Church its moral integrity and credibility. And every organization tends to protect its leaders even while throwing defenseless underlings to the proverbial lions. But most organizations' self-definitions depend on institutional foundations and ideological underpinnings that are, however respected and revered, human. Even the great USA can only call its founders "great men" who were not gods, nor infallible but were also slaveholders and sexual exploiters of their slaves. The reputation and moral credibility of the US depends upon not upon its founders but rather its sustained moral behavior, putting into practice the ideals of those great but fallible men.

Not so the Church. The Church claims its founder was God himself in person, who in the act of establishment created immutable hierarchical structures grounded in the sole and exclusive authority of the monarchical episcopate and the infallible papacy. The men who "cover-up" abuses under these circumstances can easily be understood (and excused by many) to be motivated by more than self-interest and the maintenance of personal power. It is the very work of "God" in the world, mediated through the sacramental rituals exercised exclusively by priests whose credibility is on the block here. You

cannot simply accuse these bishops of venality, corruption of power or career self-interest. Many did what they did because they felt they were protecting the divine instrument of salvation for the whole world.

How can you simply disregard the power and weight of such an ideological factor? The protection of priests follows along the same lines. These men (are you still one of them?) have been *theologically defined* as sealed with a special seal that is “fixed” on their souls for all eternity. This seal allegedly gives them the exclusive power to bring “God” from heaven to earth in the eucharistic host. No other human being can do this ... according to the perennial, infallible magisterium. In such a theological context how can you possibly say, as you do, “there is nothing magical or mystical about the priesthood that justifies any special treatment in the face of committed crimes.” ? I beg to differ. It is precisely the magical and mystical definition of priesthood that justifies and even urges true believers, like bishops and fellow priests, like the docile laity like the Knights of Columbus, to provide special treatment to priests even in the face of committed crimes.

Calls for reform that do not recognize the deep and untouchable sources of institutional divinization that feed the resulting plague are themselves part of the self-deception. Calls for reform go nowhere. And they go nowhere because every exit from the dungeon of self-glorification has been blocked by an angel brandishing a flaming sword of dogma. You say of the bishops, “their impairment is a moral impairment and there is no excuse for that.” I would challenge that and say the church has a theological impairment, and in the face of it calls for reform are hopeless. To reform itself, the Church must first arrive at a different definition from the one that it has claimed for itself. Every call you make for moral response presupposes we are dealing with *human beings* who feel free to make whatever changes are necessary for the restoration of complete human integrity and the prevention of future abuse. And correlatively, every accusation you make presupposes that their failure to do so is simply attributable to self-interest and crass protection of privilege and power. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church, neither is necessarily true, and I contend, most probably not. In the first, they feel they are *not free* because the church is not a human institution that can be changed by human beings for human purposes; and in the second they feel they are protecting interests and structures that go well beyond their own selfish needs, or the “selfish” needs of the victims. The bishops may be selfish besides, but they first of all feel they are protecting the sacramental life of the Church by protecting the reputation of the sacramental priesthood.

Much has to be reformed. But when boils of such virulence and resistance to treatment arise to the surface, it is myopic to continue to recommend simply pricking them and slapping on a band-aid. The infection is obviously coming from deep within the organism. “By their fruits you will know them.” The reform must reach the source of the disease.

You say that priests should understand that their only mandate is to imitate Christ. I believe the Church must realize that following Christ first means becoming, as he did, fully and powerlessly human.

Tony Equale

The following article deals with some of the obstacles to real reform in our Church. Always grateful to Fr. Greeley for his perceptive analysis, and to Commonweal for printing it.

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Signs of Life

A Sociologist Looks Ahead

Andrew M. Greeley

By way of setting the assumptions: Don't expect real reform in the Catholic Church until the Roman curia is brought under control of local bishops. Vatican II was the most successful reform council in Catholic history-until the world's bishops left Rome and the curia took control again. Now we hear that the council didn't change a thing but was merely an exercise in continuity.

Unfortunately, the leadership that should have guided the energies released by the council elected to suppress them, and the Spirit has been forced to rely on the lower clergy and the laity to restructure the church. None of us will live to see an authentic post-Vatican II church emerge.

In many parts of the world, Catholic seminaries are nearly empty, parochial schools are closing, churches are locked during the day, and rectories, convents, and novitiates are vacant. Ideologues, representing no one but themselves, fight over the ruins. Still, there are signs of the times on the horizon, no bigger than the size of a man's hand, that suggest enormous vitality in Catholicism and give grounds for hope. Some of these signs are validated by data, others by strong impressions, and others by unobtrusive measures. Most will be dismissed as meaningless by partisans of both the Left and the Right.

There are a lot more Catholics in the United States than anyone has been able to count, perhaps 15 million more than current estimates. There are no reliable data about the size of the Mexican-American population of the United States, legal and illegal. Thirty million would be a low estimate, and

most are Catholic. While the Catholic Church loses some to Evangelical churches (especially when they display statues of Guadalupe), at least 75 percent of these immigrants remain Catholic. They are, for the most part, devout family people for whom religion and family are connected in an intimate way. "We believe," a Latina graduate student told me, "that God is part of our family, and that when we have a celebration in the family, God comes and rejoices with us." Not only are Latinos a new source of energy in Catholicism; they bring a dimension of joy that is difficult for anglicized Celts like me to attain. They are not a new obligation for ministry but a sacrament of joy the church desperately needs.

The identity of American Catholics is rooted in the Catholic imaginative and narrative tradition. Dean R. Hoge of Catholic University has asked Catholic laity what they consider the essential components of their heritage. Responses to his "cafeteria" of possible identity items-and they remained invariant across age and locales-emphasized the Resurrection, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, God in the sacraments, concern for the poor, and Mary the mother of Jesus. These essentials have remained unchanged for about a thousand years. So the news couldn't be much better, because these are the vessels of faith, the raw materials of theological reflection, the first fruits of the Catholic analogical imagination.

In the forty years since *Humanae vitae*, the birth-control encyclical, Catholics have learned to be Catholic on their own terms. When *Humanae vitae* appeared in 1968, some thought dissenting Catholics would either have to leave the church or stop practicing artificial birth control. Two generations later, it's clear a majority of married Catholics maintain their love for the church while continuing to practice birth control. They do so by appealing to a God whom they believe understands married love. Despite constant denunciations from those in authority, and even suggestions from some that these so-called cafeteria Catholics should simply leave the church, such married Catholics stubbornly refuse to do so.

After forty years, the crisis does not seem likely to go away. There is not a country in the world (including Poland) where the majority of Catholics accept the church's sexual ethic. As Margaret Daw, an Australian sociologist, has said, Catholics practice a "rationality of symbol." They may not accept everything the pope teaches, but they still identify with him as representing the church and cheer him during papal visits. This is good news in the sense that the crisis has not torn the church apart. Neither side will

change its position. The leadership is not prepared to excommunicate the dissenters, and the dissidents are not ready to decamp. How long can this crisis last? After forty years, is it still a crisis? In her *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Social Change* (Princeton University Press), Melissa Wilde has suggested that it might take another council to salvage the wisdom of traditional Catholic sexual teaching-for which the writings of the past two popes on the spousal image of God might provide a frame.

Catholics have become more tolerant of homosexuals. In 1973, the first year of the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey, 76 percent of Protestants and 71 percent of Catholics asserted that homosexual sex was always wrong. In 2007, the percentages had declined to 65 percent and 47 percent, respectively. Much of this change, like most change of attitudes, is not the result of individuals changing their minds but of cohort replacement-younger respondents replace those who have died. Thus, in the cohort born before 1910, 86 percent thought that homosexual sex was always wrong, while in the cohort born after 1980, the rate has fallen to 38 percent.

Volunteer movements, strong among Catholics, touch on the essence of Catholicism: serving the least of one's brothers and sisters. In parishes with an intelligent, emotionally secure pastor, volunteers abound-ministers of welcome (ushers), ministers to the sick, lectors, cantors, Eucharistic ministers, youth ministers, CCD teachers, sports ministers, parish and financial council members, school-board members, and parish trustees-there are scores of parishioners eager to assume responsibility for needed activities. In my parish in Tucson, there are seventy-five organizations cheerfully keeping the ship afloat. We have a mission in Haiti where young people spend their summer vacations building houses, teaching kids, visiting the elderly, and trying to bridge ethnic divisions. But too many parishes are innocent of this frantic activity. The pastor does not want anyone messing with his administration of the parish. And too many bishops have weak benches-not enough men who are prepared to minister to the tidal waves of eager laity.

Popular devotions, some scorned by liturgists, remain strong. The Sorrowful Mother novena and Sunday-afternoon Benediction have not survived, but adoration chapels, festivals in honor of the Eucharist (especially Corpus Christi processions), and devotion to Mary have. The mother of Jesus has managed to escape the silly sentimentality of the old Mariology and the one-

dimensional ideology of radical feminists. Small wonder. Any symbol that suggests God loves us like a mother cannot but appeal. Latinos are adding their popular devotions. Guadalupe will simply not go away. Neither will other popular devotions. The artificial conflict between liturgy and devotions is a construct the Catholic people will never accept. Devotions are not superstitious. They remystify the world through the insight that grace is everywhere.

Last Holy Saturday I wandered over to Barrio Libre in Tucson, to the chapel of St. Martin De Pores, to participate in the Pascua Yaqui Passion Play. That particular part of the play included Judas being blown up by a barge of firecrackers. At first, some of this Lent-long play may hardly appear Catholic. In fact, it is certainly Catholic, despite the mix of folk religion. We should welcome such phenomena and respect the serious intentions and artistic sensibility of those involved.

Easter and Christmas attendance has replaced Sunday Mass as an identifying norm of Catholic behavior. Half our regular parish attendees show up in church a couple of times a month. The other half are enthusiastically present at the two major feast days. They don't believe that they will go to hell for all eternity for missing a Sunday Mass. If asked why they don't go more often, the answer is obvious: They don't get anything out of it. The sermons are terrible, the music is horrible, and it takes too long. Yet the Eucharist remains important in their lives.

Despite the church's lack of interest in teenagers and young people, the enthusiasm of young Catholics in some of the new movements is a remarkable, if underappreciated, phenomenon. By "new movements" I do not mean Opus Dei or the Legionaries of Christ but groups that have grown up around some of the religious orders, such as the Jesuit Volunteers, the Vincentian Volunteers, the Claretian Volunteers, Amate House, and Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program. When I was a much younger priest, I tried to nurture enthusiasm among the young, without much success. Their families did not want such enthusiasm to interfere with their children's careers. I have been impressed by ACE and the discipline and skill I have seen in its members. At one alumni meeting last summer, I witnessed a great sense of enthusiasm. By combining intense educational and spiritual formation with a shared common life, ACE teams create an elan that is both exciting and demanding. When ACERs finish their two-year stint, 75 percent continue to teach, half of them in Catholic schools. I

attended an hour-long seminar with ACE graduate students who were doing research on Catholic education. Similarly, in the Arizona desert last year we had two ACE teams working in impoverished communities (the only places ACE serves). Now there is a demand for more.

Friendship networks among Catholics are strong manifestations of Catholic community. In my current study of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I have discovered that 44 percent of Catholics say their five best friends are also Catholic, an almost tribal manifestation of community. There is evidence of this phenomenon in other dioceses. Being Catholic correlates positively with loyalty to the church, Mass attendance, refusal to leave, sympathy for the clergy and respect for leaders, agreement that Catholics should listen to papal teaching on the war, activity in the parish and other measures of affiliation, and financial contributions. Before developing this data, I wasn't aware of such community networks, and I'm not sure many priests are aware of them even now. Yet these are enormously important resources. This is where all the volunteers come from.

Many fallen-away Catholics are merely waiting for invitations to return. My research in the Archdiocese of Chicago suggests there are some four hundred thousand "fallen away" Catholics. About half have left because of a mixed marriage. The other half have left because of the "other" issues—authority, sex, or a conflicted family background. Nearly half admit to occasional thoughts about returning, and 17 percent say that they think of it "sometimes" or "often." Thus, there are roughly sixty-eight thousand "fallen-aways" in Cook and Lake Counties who might be open to invitations to return, and sixteen thousand who could be just waiting for an invitation. I know of no organized effort in Chicago to reclaim these lost sheep. In my parish in Tucson, the monsignor has been running a series for Alienated Catholics Anonymous for almost two decades. He presides over three series a year, and estimates that perhaps six hundred people have "come home to stay" since the program began. Some have become active parishioners—volunteers, in other words.

Barrio Libre, ACE, Alienated Catholics Anonymous, Guadalupe, the analogical imagination, cheers for the pope—these will never recreate the orderly, disciplined immigrant church into which I was ordained. But they suggest that something new and exciting is aborning. I look back on my eight decades with hope and, yes, delight.

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I don't know the source of the following article. I will add that information if someone brings it to my attention.

Rome: Ixnay on the 'Yahweh'

Last Friday, the US bishops received their second summer communique from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, this one dated 29 June.

Bottom line: the Tetragrammaton -- the Hebrew notation for the name of God -- is now forbidden to be 'used or pronounced' in worship.

Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli of Paterson, N.J., chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, announced the new Vatican 'directives on the use of 'the name of God' in the sacred liturgy' in an Aug. 8 letter to his fellow bishops.

He said the directives would not 'force any changes to official liturgical texts' or to the bishops' current missal translation project but would likely have 'some impact on the use of particular pieces of liturgical music in our country as well as in the composition of variable texts such as the general intercessions for the celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments.'

John Limb, publisher of OCP in Portland, Ore., said the most popular hymn in the OCP repertoire that would be affected was Dan Schutte's 'You Are Near,' which begins, 'Yahweh, I know you are near.'

He estimated that only 'a handful' of other OCP hymns use the word 'Yahweh,' although a search of the OCP Web site turned up about a dozen examples of songs that included the word.

OCP is a nonprofit publisher of liturgical music and worship resources.

Limb said the company would be contacting composers to 'ask them to try to come up with alternate language' for their hymns. But he said hymnals for 2009 had already been printed, so the affected hymns would not include the new wording for at least another year.

Even when the new hymnals are out, 'it may take time for people to get used to singing something different,' he added in an Aug. 11 telephone interview with Catholic News Service.

At Chicago-based GIA Publications, another major Catholic publisher of hymnals, no major revisions will be necessary, because of the company's longtime editorial policy against use of the word 'Yahweh.'...

Bishop Serratelli said the Vatican decision also would provide 'an opportunity to offer catechesis for the faithful as an encouragement to show reverence for the name of God in daily life, emphasizing the power of language as an act of devotion and worship.'

His letter to bishops came with a two-page letter from the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, dated June 29 and addressed to episcopal conferences around the world.

'By directive of the Holy Father, in accord with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, this congregation ... deems it convenient to communicate to the bishops' conferences ... as regards the translation and the pronunciation, in a liturgical setting, of the divine name signified in the sacred Tetragrammaton,' said the letter signed by Cardinal Francis Arinze and Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, congregation prefect and secretary, respectively.

The Tetragrammaton is YHWH, the four consonants of the ancient Hebrew name for God.

'As an expression of the infinite greatness and majesty of God, it was held to be unpronounceable and hence was replaced during the reading of sacred Scripture by means of the use of an alternate name: 'Adonai,' which means 'Lord,'" the Vatican letter said. Similarly, Greek translations of the Bible used the word 'Kyrios' and Latin scholars translated it to 'Dominus'; both also mean Lord.

'Avoiding pronouncing the Tetragrammaton of the name of God on the part of the church has therefore its own grounds,' the letter said. 'Apart from a motive of a purely philological order, there is also that of remaining faithful to the church's tradition, from the beginning, that the sacred Tetragrammaton was never pronounced in the Christian context nor translated into any of the languages into which the Bible was translated.'

The two Vatican officials noted that 'Liturgiam Authenticam,' the congregation's 2001 document on liturgical translations, stated that 'the name of almighty God expressed by the Hebrew Tetragrammaton and rendered in Latin by the word 'Dominus,' is to be rendered into any given vernacular by a word equivalent in meaning.

The following article was written even before Senator Joe Biden was selected as the Democratic Vice Presidential candidate.

Hendricks: Kansas bishops say a vote for pro-choice Dems is a vote for 'evil'
<http://primebuzz.kcstar.com/?q=node/13672>

While they don't come right out and say it as plainly as the headline above does, the four bishops in Kansas made it pretty plain what they believe are the civic duties of their

fellow Roman Catholics this election season.

Duty No. 1, vote. 'Voting is a moral act,' the bishops said in a letter reprinted in the Aug. 10 bulletin of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Lenexa.

Duty No. 2: Vote pro-life, but only as it pertains to abortion and stem-cell research. Life issues like the death penalty and war are debatable. But not gay marriage and so-called mercy killing.

If you've ever wondered how the church justifies such distinctions (hair splitting is another term for it), here in their own words is the explanation from bishops Ronald Gilmore of Dodge City, Paul Coakley of Salina, Michael Jackels of Wichita and Joseph Naumann, archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas:

'In some moral matters, the use of reason allows for a legitimate diversity in our prudential judgments. Catholic voters may differ, for example, on what constitutes the best immigration policy, how to provide universal health care, or affordable housing. Catholics may even have differing judgments on the state's use of the death penalty or the decision to wage a just war.

' The morality of such questions lies not in what is done (the moral object), but in the motive and circumstances. Therefore, because these prudential judgments do not involve a direct choice of something evil and take into consideration various goods, it is possible for Catholic voters to arrive at different, even opposing judgments...'

Sometimes forgiveness takes a long time. Sr. Camille suggests we begin the journey – for our own good and for the sake of the Gospel.

Mercy Toward Our Fathers

Difficult as it may be, forgiving priests guilty of abuse could be the key to healing.

By Camille D'Arienzo | AUGUST 18, 2008

On a frigid night last January, Joseph R. Maher, a successful businessman and president of Opus Bono Sacerdotii, spoke at a parish on Long Island in New York. Opus Bono's mission is to provide help for priests who have been expelled from ministry because of accusations of sexual abuse. In the audience were priests, abuse victims and members of Voice of the Faithful. Although the opening prayer called for healing and reconciliation, the tension in the room militated against both.

In his talk, Maher argued that a large number of accused priests are innocent and that, abandoned by bishops and laity, they are denied the resources to clear their names. He spoke also of the need to give culpable priests opportunities to reform and return to active ministry. And he said that many victims who claim abuse are merely seeking financial gain, and argued against the suspension of statutes of limitation in cases of sexual molestation.

Although every one of Maher's points had some validity, his failure to nuance them incited the audience. One after another, individuals came to the microphone to voice criticism of Maher's insensitivity. What began as a good-faith attempt to bring together people concerned about both victims and accused priests concluded by exposing what one person in attendance termed "the still open wound on the soul of the church." The discussion reached its nadir when one woman declared, 'For such men no healing is possible.' What does such a statement imply about the power of Christ's redemptive love? Has the church, from top

to bottom, determined that those who have sexually abused minors are outside of the circle of those whom God can forgive? Is there no grace left for them?

Healing the Wounded

Sexual abuse of minors is widespread; in addition to abuse by priests, many more have been abused by relatives and family friends. What healing can compassionate believers bring to the wounded? Forgiveness, a key to healing, can be hard. Few betrayed and battered men and women can extend an easy absolution. Many find religious language offensive. For those whose anger and pain are still too overwhelming to consider forgiveness, a giant step might be, in the words of a therapist, to pray for the grace to want to forgive. There is no question that victims must be appropriately cared for as long as they require it. Settlement money can buy helpful therapy. Systems must be put in place to deal with specific accusations, and all must remain vigilant to prevent today's children from suffering abuse. Yet while these practices have widespread support, there is little talk of forgiveness of the abuser as part of the formula that contributes to healing.

One hesitates to approach the suffering created by sexual molestation, especially by clergymen, as one hesitates upon entering a surgical ward. We dare not touch the pain. We choose, instead, to leave it to the professionals. Unfortunately, the professionals may not always provide wise counsel. Consider therapists who advise against broaching the topic of forgiveness for fear of increasing the victim's rage and impeding recovery, or attorneys who forbid contact with the victim because they do not want to risk a lawsuit, or church leaders who fear any wrong step will trigger an explosive media blitz that will further diminish their effectiveness as witnesses to the Gospel.

In this atmosphere, especially when it includes episcopal cover-up, it is not surprising that victims are unwilling to forgive their abusers. Their resistance is understandable. This hurt is not abstract; it is wedded to anger and rooted in pain, injustice, abandonment and a sense of betrayal. Among its long-term damaging effects is the possibility that, if left to fester, it can become a debilitating way of life. To remain immersed in suffering is to extend its power, even drawing loved ones into the circle of pain. Tragically, the children of the abused can be infected by their parents' anger and obsession, leading to their own loss of innocence.

The Hard Work of Forgiveness

Holding onto anger has been likened to taking a sip of poison every day - not enough to kill, but more than enough to debilitate. Certainly some time must pass before the palliative value of forgiveness can be raised. The question is, how much time? There is no single answer. For some, forgiveness is the work of a lifetime; others manage to forgive more quickly, helped by people with the requisite sensitivity and wisdom.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it rule out punishment appropriate to criminal behavior. The Rev. Richard P. McBrien writes: 'To be forgiven from a sin does not carry with it pardon for a crime or a guaranteed return to one's former employment. A murderer who repents and confesses may be restored to the state of grace, but not to freedom.' Each murder case is judged in terms of mitigating factors, and different sentences are imposed.

Should we not also consider mitigating factors in cases of sexual abuse? Is it reasonable to exclude permanently all the guilty from ministry, to treat a one-time offender the same as a serial predator? Certainly some offenders need to be imprisoned or supervised so that they do not harm again. Some expelled priests find themselves pariahs, abandoned and isolated; in this state, a sense of despair may tempt them to seek victims again. Yet others, earnestly repentant, healed through therapy and support systems, pose no further threat and hold a proven record of dedicated priestly service. Ought we to judge any human being by the worst thing he has done, as if it were the only thing he has done? Can any of us endure that scrutiny?

The late Rabbi Abraham Heschel said that while it is important to consider all sides of destructive and broken relationships, it is essential to include God's perspective as well. God's own relentless pursuit of each sinner and saint finds expression in the father of the prodigal son, or the lover in Francis Thompson's poem 'The Hound of Heaven'; God longs only for the sinner's repentance and homecoming.

Looking to Maya Angelou

Persons sexually abused as children might take some direction from the poet Maya Angelou. She was raped when she was 7 years old. So brutal was the violation that she was hospitalized. From her bed of pain and shame she spoke the rapist's name. Arrested and released, he was later found kicked to death. Because she had uttered his name, the child blamed herself for her abuser's death. Like others before and after her, she felt culpable, if not for the rape, then for its consequences. As a result, she refused to speak for five years. In her self-imposed solitude she became an avid reader, drinking in the wisdom of the ages from Shakespeare to Langston Hughes. Sitting silently in church, she would concentrate on the inflections preachers used to convey their passion. When she was ready to resume speaking, she had much to say and the tools with which to say it. Since then, she has embraced this formula for self-healing: One who has suffered a great evil must name it, learn from it, forgive it and move forward with courage and focus on the future. Forgiveness had no power to change her past, but it had enormous power to mold her future. Many years ago during a television show on evil, Bill Moyers said: 'Victims of evil must cope with the ugly graffiti that is scribbled on the walls of their psyche. Can they forgive the evildoers? Should they?' An answer can be found in the wisdom of the Quakers, who remind us that 'forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves.'

Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M., is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

Bishop Spong was asked for his reaction to Sally Quinn's reception of Communion at Tim Russert's funeral.

A Little Child Shall Lead Them The Meaning of the Eucharist Bishop Spong

Several weeks ago, I was asked by the Washington Post to comment on a minor brouhaha in the heart of America's news establishment. The dean and best known face in American television news, Tim Russert, had died suddenly and, at age 58, prematurely of a heart attack. Shock gripped the news industry and their obvious grief was processed quite publicly with long segments on his very creative life on every network. America had lost perhaps its finest interpreter of our common life. Those who had read Tim Russert's autobiography, *Big Russ and Me*, knew quite well of his family's deep roots in Roman Catholicism. The funeral was held in Holy Trinity Catholic Church in the Georgetown section of the District of Columbia and was obviously a must attend event for both the media and political stars. Senators Obama and McCain were present and at the request of the Russert family were seated side by side. Most of television news' best known talking heads were in the congregation. The funeral service was a Requiem Mass with the homily delivered by the winsome Cardinal Archbishop emeritus of Washington, Theodore McCarrick. That part was easy for the entire congregation, Catholic or otherwise, to understand and in which all could participate. All went well until the mass moved into the invitation to the faithful to come forward to receive communion.

Who are the faithful in a public service? Is this a Catholic rite or a public rite? Sally Quinn, a prominent print media and television personality, as well as the wife of Ben Bradlee, the retired editor of the Washington Post, the same Ben Bradlee who presided over the Watergate story, joined the procession of mourners and received the sacrament.

She is not a Roman Catholic. Raised religiously in an interdenominational military chapel environment, Sally Quinn is today a seeker after truth, not an advocate for it. She had, however, discussed religion in general and communion in particular with her friend Tim Russert. As their conversations deepened, over the years Russert began to call her 'Sister Sal' and to say that he was 'winning her over!' She is, however, not Catholic nor does she have any known religious commitment. I suspect that there were many at that service who were not Roman Catholic and some like Sally Quinn of no religious connection, who received communion at that service, drawn by their ties to Tim more than anything else. They could hide, however, in the anonymity of the assembly in a way that Sally Quinn could not. Her participation in this Catholic mass was noted and she became a subject of a minor dispute.

The Roman Catholic Church has long reserved the privilege of receiving the sacrament for those who are both knowledgeable about and submissive to the authority of that Church. No non-Roman Catholic qualifies. In recent years this policy has been used to punish Catholic politicians who did not support that Church's position on public issues such as abortion. During the 2004 presidential campaign several bishops said that they would exclude Senator John Kerry from communion. To use the 'Table of the Lord' as a place to enforce ecclesiastical discipline is a strange tactic that very few non-Roman Catholics either understand or appreciate. Indeed, it makes little sense unless one accepts the premise of the Roman Catholic Church that there is only one true religion, namely Christianity, and there is only one true version of Christianity, namely the Roman Catholic Church. That concept defines the Eucharist as 'the meal for God's people,' but it limits the definition of God's people to those who are obedient Roman Catholics.

Quite obviously I do not subscribe to those ideas, so in my response to the Post I defined the Christian Eucharist as God's Table, not the possession of any particular Church, and suggested that neither Sally Quinn nor anyone else was to be excluded from God's Table. I quoted a poster that I had once seen on the wall of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Morristown, New Jersey, that proclaimed 'The only prerequisite to receiving communion in this church is that you be hungry!' I suggested that this was one congregation that had finally gotten the meaning of the Christian Communion service right.

This issue came up for me in a new, deeply personal and compelling way about two weeks later when my wife and I were worshiping in one of our favorite churches, St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Fairlee, Vermont. This small rural parish hardly ever has more than 50 people in attendance, but is served by an amazingly competent, sensitive and understanding priest named John Morris. We attend this church three or four times a year because we have five-year-old twin grandchildren who live six or eight miles away. For a variety of reasons, the mother of the twins, our daughter-in-law Julieann, has had rather negative reactions to her own religious upbringing in the Roman Catholic Church. Its attempt to control through guilt, its unwillingness to reach out to her when she needed its help in a series of crises in her young life, its attitude toward women's issues, its recent history of priestly child abuse and its unwillingness to stop protecting priestly molesters in high places have left her so disillusioned with the church of her youth that she wants

no part of it or of any church. Our son Brian, who was raised in the Church, has also found little meaning in religion in his adult life. So this couple is among the rising unchurched majority in our increasingly secular society. They have no objections, however, if we take the twins to church with us, and this church in Fairlee is so child friendly that the children enjoy it and we, their grandparents, enjoy having them with us.

The first time we took them to church they were only three. It was to a service devised by this able priest especially for children. Katherine, who is quite dignified and ladylike, sat quietly, sometimes coloring with crayons we had brought, remembering earlier experiences with other grandchildren. Colin, however, who at that time was a robust, testosterone-laden typical three-year-old boy who would rather drive his tricycle into a fire hydrant than around it, did not know the meaning of sitting still. As soon as he escaped my grasp, he dashed up to the altar rail and began to climb it. Before I could reach him, he was over the top and fell head first down onto the floor of the sanctuary. The sounds he emitted did not remind anyone of one of the hymns of the church! John Morris was completely at ease and accepting of this disturbance. 'A children's service,' he said, 'must embrace the behavior of children.' I remembered then something someone told me years ago, 'If the church allows the noises of children to be heard in the church then perhaps someday the church's noises will be heard in the children.'

When the crying stopped and the head had been sufficiently rubbed by a comforting grandmother, the time came for the children to receive the sacrament, the bread and wine of the Eucharist. I do not know how well Katherine and Colin understood this action, but we all got in line together to walk up to the altar rail. We received the bread, dipped it gently into the wine and put it in our mouths. Then we returned to our pew. That is, all of us but Colin returned. Instead he went back to the communion rail, having decided he wanted 'seconds.' Once again, this gentle priest fed him. As a result of experiences like these over a couple of years, these two children have begun to feel comfortable in this church and going to church with Grandma and Grandpa has become a regular anticipated feature when we visit.

We went up very recently to join in the twins' 'graduation' from Kindergarten on Friday and Brian's 40th birthday celebration on Saturday. It was shortly after the Tim Russert funeral. We stayed over for Sunday so that we could visit St. Martin's again with our grandchildren. For the first time and to our great delight, Julieann agreed to go to church with us. Except for a funeral I suspect this was the first time she had been in a church since her wedding seven years ago. This Sunday morning it was not a children's service and Colin was especially restless, so after a relatively short time, he went with his grandmother down to the nursery, where toys and coloring occupied him. Katherine made it a little longer, but the sermon proved too much for her endurance. (It was in fact quite brilliant, on the parable of the wheat and the tares which must grow together. John Morris said, 'You cannot declare those whom you do not like to be 'tares' that can be set aside and not engaged.' He added, 'This is what the Archbishop of Canterbury has done by not inviting Gene Robinson, our openly gay bishop of New Hampshire to the Lambeth Conference. He has defined Bishop Robinson as a 'weed' with which we do not have to deal.')

With great effort Katherine managed to sit with me until the sermon's end and then

I took her down to the nursery to join her brother and grandmother. When it was time to receive communion, my wife brought both of them back into the church and we joined the line to go to the altar. Julieann was not yet ready to take this step. Just coming back to church that day was quite enough for her so she stayed in the pew. Colin did not understand why his mother was left behind and urged her forward. 'Come on, Momma,' he said in a voice that everyone heard. She remained seated, however, and Colin and Katherine went to the altar with their grandparents to receive by intinction, the bread and the wine. My wife, Katherine and I consumed our dipped communion wafer, but Colin did not. He rather took a bite out of his. I did note that his bite consumed the part of the wafer that had been dipped into the wine! Then with resolute purpose he returned to his seat and fed his mother with the other half of his communion bread. I watched though emotional and tear filled eyes, as Julieann received her first communion in years from the hands of her five-year-old son. Colin doesn't know much about theology or ecclesiastical policy, but he does understand that no one is excluded from the Lord's table, especially those who, like his mother, have been hurt by ecclesiastical figures who want to limit God's welcome at God's table in the name of their version of 'true religion.'

As Jesus once said, 'A little child shall lead them.'

Have we decided to create a “little flock” by expelling all those who disagree with us?
How is this justified by anything that Jesus said or did?

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The little flock Ted Schmidt, Editor

Jesus went searching for the sheep that was lost. We all have a place in the big tent of Catholicism. A tiny perfectly orthodox society we are not. Catholics struggling to be Christian need room to talk to each other, argue with each other and most importantly to engage the world with each other. In the end we will need John XXIII's "medicine of mercy" more than brother Ratzinger's constant hectoring.

Now that Pope Benedict has left Australia it might be helpful to briefly tease out his oft-quoted ruminations of the "Church of the little flock."

In interviews which go back decades, Pope Benedict reiterates that the future of the Church will be smaller, maybe "a mustard seed where it will exist in small seemingly insignificant groups". These groups, of course, will be utterly loyal to anything which comes out of Rome. A necessary culling will be the order of the day, say like the 300,000 Catholics driven out by the archbishop of Cologne, Joachim Meissner. "Chaff and wheat must be separated," the then Cardinal Ratzinger said to journalist Peter Seewald in 1985. While few expect Benedict XVI to mount a massive proscription of dissident Catholics, the probability is that the docile bishops promoted in the past 25 years will, by their increasingly irrelevant navel gazings and authoritarian centralization, drive progressives out.

The "little flock" concept seems a polar opposite to James Joyce's definition of Catholicism as "Here comes everybody" and Jesus' very own injunction to ignore the 99 and go seeking the lost one.

In a brilliant small book written after Vatican II, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, Herder, 1971, Karl Rahner had this to say about "the little flock":

"When we speak of ourselves today as the beginning of a little flock', we first remove a misunderstanding. 'Little flock' does not mean a ghetto or a sect, since these are defined by a mentality: a mentality which the church can afford in the future even less than today. A sectarian or ghetto mentality is propagated among us -- not under this label, but under the pretext that we are becoming Christ's little flock which has to profess the folly of faith and of the cross. Any deviation must be fought with the utmost severity in the name of true faith and authentic Christianity."

"If we talk of the 'little flock' in order to defend our cosy traditionalism and stale pseudo-orthodoxy, in fear of the mentality of modern society; if we tacitly consent to the departure of restless, questioning people from the church so that we can return to our repose and orderly life, and everything becomes as it was before, we are propagating, not the attitude proper to Christ's little flock, but a petty sectarian mentality. This is dangerous because it shows up, not under its true name but in an appeal to orthodoxy, church-loyalty and strict, Rome-dictated morality."

It seems to me that the great Rahner was prescient in his analysis of the reactionary fear which was beginning to set in after the revolutionary Council.

Jesus was in a big tent

The "cosy traditionalism and stale orthodoxy" which are in vogue today are thin gruel for a pilgrim Church marching through history. This narrow view of the Church is alienating too many of the Catholic faithful who long for something like John XXIII's magnanimous and invitational "medicine of mercy". We need a pope, not of the little flock but the big tent. Benedict, "ganz schwarz", as he was dubbed in his native Germany ("way too dark"), with his abstract, ethereal theology hardly ever filtered through life, has simply shown up at the wrong time.

There are other popes Benedict might emulate at this time. In 1964 Pope Paul VI wrote a brilliant encyclical on dialogue. His main points are still worth taking very seriously:

The dialogue of salvation did not physically force anyone to accept it; it was a tremendous appeal of love which, although placing a vast responsibility on those toward whom it was directed, nevertheless left them free to respond to it or to reject it.

But it seems to us that the relationship of the Church to the world, without precluding other legitimate forms of expression, can be represented better in a dialogue,

79. This type of relationship indicates a proposal of courteous esteem, of understanding and of goodness on the part of the one who inaugurates the dialogue; it excludes the a priori condemnation, the offensive and time-worn polemic and emptiness of useless conversation. If this approach does not aim at effecting the immediate conversion of the interlocutor, inasmuch as it respects both his dignity and his freedom, nevertheless it does aim at helping him, and tries to dispose him for a fuller sharing of sentiments and convictions.

85. And before speaking, it is necessary to listen, not only to a man's voice, but to his heart. A man must first be understood; and, where he merits it, agreed with. In the very act of trying to make ourselves pastors, fathers and teachers of men, we must make ourselves their brothers. The spirit of dialogue is friendship and, even more, is service. All this we must remember

and strive to put into practice according to the example and commandment that Christ left to Us.

It is difficult to see much of this dialogue in Joseph Ratzinger.

Leo XIII (1878-1903) could be a second teacher to the present pope. He acknowledged that his pontificate was successful because: "I was never afraid to appoint as bishop somebody who disagreed with me."

There was something extremely disquieting about Cardinal Ratzinger's clinical evisceration of so many creative theologians who disagreed with him. Do we really think these men do not love the Church as he does? Does not the fact that so many had their reputations trashed, their health endangered bother this Mozart-loving enforcer? Do we really believe that the God of Mystery can be so limited to the univocal voice of brother Ratzinger? Many of us share the respected theologian from Chicago, Fr David Tracy's view that "Cardinal Ratzinger seems to be conducting a campaign to impose a particular theology upon the universal Church and upon all theologians. It won't work."

No it won't work, because in the words of another great churchman of years ago, J.B. Phillips, "Your God is too small." The God of Life, the God of History and that God's Holy Spirit who "blows where it wills" (John 3:8) is no captive of the Catholic Church. That Spirit is working through universal justice movements and the humanization of the world. These are the "signs of the times" which the Church needs to attend to, one less Catholic and more catholic, another pilgrim for justice and agent for God's reign.

We do not need a little flock "purified of anthropological, sociological or horizontal accents" but a Church like its Jewish founder, who emptied himself for God and God's project. This is the only Church which makes any sense and one Joseph Ratzinger believed in when he said in 1962: "The meaning of prophecy is the protest against the self-righteousness of the institutions. God throughout history has not been on the side of the institutions but on that of the suffering and the persecuted."

Happy Anniversary!

Contraception ban remains bitter pill

By Robert McClory

July 27, 2008

Forty years ago last week, Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, condemning the birth control pill and all other forms of artificial contraception.

So, four decades later: Did Paul get it right or wrong?

Right, say the encyclical's throng of proponents (just [Google](#) *Humanae Vitae* and scroll on forever). The pope predicted a lowering of moral standards, a rise in infidelity and promiscuity, a lessening of respect for women and government-enforced limitations on population. All these things have come to pass, and the pope's supporters see contraception at the center of them all.

Wrong, say the numbers who have left the church since 1968 (so that one in every 10 Americans is now a former Catholic, according to a Pew survey this year) and the majority of believers (more than 75 percent, according to the 2005 Catholic Identity Study) who remain in the church yet reject the encyclical. The proclamation was, they insist, a disaster.

Speaking of *Humanae Vitae*, Chicago's [Cardinal Francis George](#) acknowledged gloomily, 'We have the beginning of the dissolution of the teaching authority of the church.'

That raises an issue that gets too little attention in the debate. The ban on all forms of contraception always and everywhere not only failed to solve the problems inherent in the sexual revolution, it prevented the church from having any voice in ongoing discussion among reasonable people of faith (or no faith) concerning responses to the revolution.

The revolution would have happened if the pope had said nothing, or even if the birth control pill had never been invented. It was well on its way with both its assets and its liabilities by 1968. To make contraception the only major cause is to place too heavy a responsibility on one very visible factor. Paul VI thought he might turn back the tide or un-grease the slippery slope with strong words, but they proved too strong.

In traditional Catholic morality, the nature of a human act, the intention and the circumstances must be all considered in weighing its rightness or wrongness.

But as Pope Paul presented his case, intention and circumstances are irrelevant. The nature of contraception is so heinous, so intrinsically evil that alleviating circumstance and good intention don't count.

We can all acknowledge that contraception is on a different level from, say, killing a human being. Yet killing is an act that may not be determined good or bad until we know intention and circumstances. The placing of absolute judgment on contraception itself—by pill, condom or whatever—raises the bar to a level that seems to many responsible and thoughtful people to be irresponsible.

Killing is not always wrong. But contraception always is?

To cite a not-uncommon case from Africa and elsewhere, may a man infected with HIV use a contraceptive device to prevent infecting his wife? No, he may not, says church teaching.

May a couple who already have seven children and live in a blighted, overpopulated region practice contraception to curb the likely death by starvation of an eighth child? No, they may not. They can choose abstinence or try natural family planning and hope for the best.

Closer to home, may a couple in Chicago beset with financial or health problems temporarily rely on contraception until they are in better shape for a family? Absolutely not!

The problem with Humanae Vitae is rigidity. The pontiff was correct in seeing what strange fruits the revolution would produce, but his cure was as bad or worse than the disease.

He could have acted differently. He could have said that the world is facing an unprecedented challenge in human history that requires careful study and expert inquiry. He could have said that selfish, non-generative lifestyles are not acceptable, that thoughtless contraception cheapens sex, that circumstances count very much and that people have an obligation to weigh carefully what they do.

He could even have praised the values of natural family planning. He could have become a respected conversant among national and world bodies seeking credible answers. But because of the absolute ban, popes, bishops and theologians have had little to offer except a repeated no, no, never!

Church leadership left the table 40 years ago, painting itself into this corner.

Within the church itself the saddest byproduct is what has been happening to its membership. Many parents of the 1960s retained an overall confidence in the church while dissenting on the contraception issue. Their children widened the sense of separation, and the grandchildren may not even realize there ever was a religious institution that had wisdom and a sense of real community to share.

That fruit of Humanae Vitae is for many the most bitter.

Robert McClory of [Northwestern University](#) is a former Catholic priest and author of 'As It Was in the Beginning: The Coming Democratization of the Catholic Church.'

r-mcclory@northwestern.edu