

Let us pray that this will become the reality – for those who disagree; for those who are living alternative life styles; for those who seek other solutions rather than criminalization for the abortion issue; for those who feel that all life is sacred, not just “innocent” life; etc.

Everyone has a place in the Church. Every person, without exception, should be able to feel at home, and never rejected. God, who loves all men and women and wishes none to be lost, entrusts us with this mission by appointing us shepherds of his sheep. We can only thank him for the honor and the trust that he has placed in us. Let us therefore strive always to be servants of unity!
Pope Benedict to the French Bishops, August 2008

This article appeared in *U.S. Catholic* on July 29th. The writer is chaplain at the College of New Rochelle and author, with Gaynell Cronin, of *Rituals for Home and Parish* (Paulist, 1996)

Cafeteria Catholics

By Father Jack Rathschmidt, O.F.M. Cap.

On vacation last summer, I quietly joined a small country parish for Sunday Eucharist. Relieved at not having to preside at two or three liturgies, I settled among the worshipers, looking forward to listening, singing, and praying. Trying not to look directly at the priest for fear he would think I was staring, I concentrated on being among God's people, not leading them.

Everything went fine for a while. The music was delightful, the lectors read well, and the priest seemed comfortable in his role. Then he began to preach about "cafeteria Catholics," people who pick and choose what and how they will believe-as they do in cafeteria lines. He suggested real Catholics take it all. They listen to the pope and bishops with the same reverence children offer their parents and accept Rome's authority as binding in matters great and small.

I listened closely for a while, then my mind and spirit began to drift. Hasn't the church consistently encouraged Catholics to recognize a hierarchy of truths, challenging us to differentiate between foundational gospel values like service among the poor from a less important teaching like the existence of limbo? By this time, it was getting hot in that little church, and I wanted to be back in my boat fishing.

But the priest wouldn't quit. I kept telling myself that he was having a bad day. All of us do. Smiling I began to think about the times I was preaching and simply couldn't find a way to end, even though I tried several times. Then, he said it again: "Cafeteria Catholics, unless they are willing to submit to church authority

blindly, have no place in the church." Using my 12-step spirituality, I repeated a familiar axiom to myself: take what you like and leave the rest.

Oh my God, I thought, he's talking about me. Taking what I like and leaving the rest makes me a cafeteria Catholic. Unable to listen any longer, especially to what sounded like an angry and harsh tone, I was doing exactly what he was railing against: picking and choosing what I liked and shutting out the rest. But doesn't everyone do this, I asked myself? Don't Catholics everywhere have a right to resist abuse in all forms, even when it comes from the pulpit? Shouldn't people stop listening to me when I get pompous and judgmental as a presider or a preacher?

Without realizing it, I was getting defensive, wondering whether I should introduce myself after Mass and ask the presider whether I had heard him right, offering him an opportunity to go beyond what I thought he said. Thank God, I came to my senses. You're on vacation, I told myself. Calm down, pray, and do what Catholics everywhere do with increasing regularity: listen politely, and go home. Still, as I stepped into my little boat and rowed myself onto the lake where I hoped to catch a giant bass, the need to defend cafeteria Catholics wouldn't go away.

Now I know that cafeterias get very little respect among sophisticated gourmets. Although they sometimes eat in them because they're rushed, they don't want to dignify them by calling them restaurants. One step up from fast-food joints, cafeterias usually have a long line of vegetables, meats, and salads-none of which seem very appealing. Cafeterias do have a dark side, I have to admit.

At the same time, although often very big and poorly decorated, cafeterias welcome everyone, charge very little for their food, and provide a safe place for people to rest and conversation. The poor, the elderly, the homeless, even large families with small children, all know they can gather there without fear of being evicted. Sounds a lot like many good parishes I know!

Perhaps even more important, it seems to me that the church has been like a cafeteria for 2,000 years. Haven't we always at our best, appreciated our differences without expecting everyone to be the same? We honor Eastern Rite Catholics, whose liturgy and language are so different from ours, and Japanese Catholics, who enter their churches shoeless. We welcome peoples of every culture, race, and political affiliation, and we are even beginning to understand that the sacred stories of the poor are a privileged source of hope and help us understand the Christ who "had no place to lay his head."

We also reverence bishops who tell us that capital punishment is always unjust and a pope who leaves open the door to taking another's life only in very extraordinary circumstances. We acknowledge that some people like me are called to follow the poor Christ as Franciscans, and others are supposed to build

Benedictine monasteries. In other words, we implicitly admit that our goal is not uniformity of belief and practice but unity of faith.

At our best, we stand in awe at the doors of our churches contemplating our incredible diversity, never expecting to understand or fully appreciate all the people with whom we gather. And because we recognize the complexity of all our lives, we are grateful to share faith and worship with one another despite the realization that we will have differences of opinions about many significant religious matters. More important, our collective humanity never tries to reduce the mystery of our shared faith to rigid formulas but celebrates the wonder of our unity in the midst of our differences.

Even a cursory glance through history reminds us that Catholics have always had a cafeteria mentality. We have been fighting like cats and dogs about our differences for centuries, from the meaning of the Incarnation to women's ordination and how Christ is present in the Eucharist.

Despite these sometimes violent struggles about which we often fail to reach full understanding or agreement, we continue to call one another, brother and sister, Catholics.

Last year I was giving a talk at a religious education conference and learned this lesson first hand. Hoping to help catechists understand and appreciate the power and value of our sacred symbols, I asked people what they thought the important gestures of our eucharistic celebration were. One woman eagerly waved her hand. Before I could even recognize her, she blurted out: "When the priest raises the host for our adoration." "Thanks," I said, "A good answer. Someone else?" "When we open our hands to receive the host," another participant suggested. "Right," I said, "anyone else?" hoping that someone would mention the fractioning or breaking of the bread, a gesture that helps us remember that Christ broke his life for us as food and asks us to do the same for one another.

Instead of an answer, someone almost shouted a question. "Do you believe in transubstantiation?" Hesitating for a moment, I responded, "That's a very difficult question. Perhaps we could talk about it after the workshop."

The response was swift. The Catechism believes in transubstantiation. I knew I was trapped. How could I explain, without upsetting the questioner even more, that Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Christ and that transubstantiation is the way theologians have often explained the Real Presence. Flustered now, I suggested again that we needed to speak about the question after the conference.

Then a teenager rescued me. "I'm lost" she said. "I'm not sure it's important, but what's transubstantiation?" Everyone laughed except the person who wanted me to believe in transubstantiation. The young girl's question reminded everyone that

we really are diverse. Not only did she not know what transubstantiation was, our further conversation demonstrated that she really didn't care.

"I know we receive Jesus when we celebrate the Eucharist," she said, "and as long as the children preparing for First Communion know that, I'm happy." Somehow she knew that whether she explained Christ's presence using the notion of transubstantiation or some other explanation, the key to belief was not theological insight but acceptance of the mystery of Christ's presence.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church also helps us learn about the power and value of diversity in the church. While reminding us of our sometimes violent history (#817), it challenges us to delve more deeply into the mystery of faith, acknowledging the simple sanity of proclaiming our unity without demanding uniformity (#819). Nowhere is this clearer than when the catechism reminds us that "the body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members; `In the building up of Christ's body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives different gifts for the welfare of the whole church'" (#791).

In other words, all of us have different gifts that are intended to work together for the good of all. It is not necessary that we compare gifts or have them all to be good Catholics. Neither is it essential that we have absolute agreement about everything the church teaches. While it is undeniable that we need to agree in faith about foundational teachings like the Incarnation, the Trinity, and our shared commitment to justice, there is enormous room for dialogue about how Christ is truly God and human, how God is three persons but only one God, and how best to work for justice. In the end, whenever we forget that we are trying to help people understand, appreciate, and believe in the mystery of God's presence within and among us, we not only add to an unhealthy division in the church, we also risk reducing God to our own constructs. When we do that, we can easily fall into idolatry.

Many adult cafeteria Catholics not only tolerate diversity in the church, they celebrate it. They choose a variety of paths to personal holiness, are excited by the insights of other religious traditions; they not only appreciate the development of doctrine through the centuries, they expect it to continue. Grounded in compassion and never forgetting where they come from, cafeteria Catholics honor other Catholics who can't stand music at Mass, esteem their neighbors who serve on parish councils, and listen politely to poorly crafted homilies because they respect the office of their priests if not their speaking ability. They try never to judge others who think differently from them and listen carefully to all with the expectation that there is much to learn about what it means to be Catholic now and in the future. And together with those with whom they often disagree, they volunteer in soup kitchens and homeless shelters week after week.

While cafeteria Catholics have received very bad press in recent years, often being condemned for actions they never even contemplated, they continue struggling to understand and appreciate the most important and foundational teachings of the church. My experience tells me they are a community of searchers who are proud to call themselves Catholic while freely admitting they are sifting through the vast array of church teaching, trying to discern what most helps them on their own faith journeys. Humbled by their honesty and empowered by their passion, I am proud to join them in the search.

THE TABLET
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Let other lights shine

Andrew Thomas Kania

Early Christian missionaries in India and China worked closely with local cultures to create rites that thrived until the Church insisted there should be only one - the Roman Rite. An understanding that we are poorer for this decision is critical for the future of the Church

A great but little known tragedy occurred within the life of the Catholic Church on 20 June 1599, at Udayamperoor in the southern Indian state of Kerala. On that day at the Synod of Diamper, the Archbishop of Goa, Aleixo de Menezes, set in process the Latinisation of the St Thomas Christians. It was, in short, the deliberate and enforced emasculation of the Christian tradition of India, a church tradition that had its roots in the legacy of St Thomas the Apostle.

Inspired by Counter-Reformation zeal, Menezes' policy is now seen as being one of the darkest chapters in ecclesiastical history - an example of what can occur if the Church does not listen to the historical as well as cultural voice and yearnings of a people, and if the Church becomes so Roman that it loses its catholicity.

In the mind of Menezes, Catholicism was all about a Roman Rite, specifically, a Latin Church, teaching the world the truth of the Gospel. There is, up to a point, nothing inherently wrong in Menezes' assumption - a path to the absolute truth and divine purpose is found within this rite and Church, but only if this rite and Church realises that exactly the same can be said of any other rite and Church within the Catholic communion.

Once this principle is lost, we are no longer a Catholic Church. Rather we become a large, sectarian Christian community, voraciously in search of new members. By the Synod of Diamper, more than 1,500 years of Eastern theology that had developed from the time of "doubting Thomas" was incinerated and lost

forever because of a mindset that could not let the particular into the universal, nor the universal into the particular. The shoes of those fired up by the Council of Trent wiped clear the footprints in the sand of Malabar of those who had followed the imprint of the shoes of a fisherman.

Around the time of the Synod of Diamper, the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci was deeply involved in the evangelisation of the Chinese people. Having mastered classical Chinese, Ricci had embarked on a programme of educating the governing elite in order to convert "from the top down", as Professor Liam Brockey puts it. Along with other Jesuits in China, such as João Soeiro, João da Rocha, Niccolò Longobardo, Lazare Cattaneo and Alessandro Valignano, the missionaries came as much to an understanding of Chinese philosophy as the Chinese with whom they were in contact came to an understanding of Catholicism.

Yet herein lay the problem. Other religious orders within the Catholic Church, such as the Dominicans and the Franciscans, questioned the extent to which the culture of the people being evangelised should be integrated within the Roman Rite that was being offered for their salvation. Whereas the Dominican Domingo Navarrete had much sympathy for the methods and practices of the Jesuit missionaries, the suspicions of Franciscans and Dominicans aroused by Jesuit missionaries dressed as Chinese literati, and by their incorporation of Confucian ideals, led to the "Chinese Rites" controversy - a controversy, as Professor J.S. Cummins highlights, that was eventually to lead to the suppression of the Jesuit order.

A papal bull issued by Clement XI in 1715 followed by a bull issued by Benedict XIV in 1742 forbade ancestor worship as well as key elements of Confucian philosophy. The official response from the Chinese to Pope Clement's bull was a decree by the Kangxi Emperor in 1721 in which he accused the Catholic Church of pettiness and narrow-mindedness. The emperor described Catholicism as being no more developed a religion than Buddhism and Taoism. In his mind, all three were characterised by bigotry.

The emperor declared that Western preachers were then forbidden to enter his empire. More than 200 years later, in 1939, the newly elected Pope Pius XII lifted the bans placed on Chinese Catholics and Catholic missionaries as part of the "Chinese Rites" controversy. But by then two centuries of suspicion and recrimination had settled. The Catholic Church, as at Diamper, had severely faltered once more. A Church that called itself "universal" had proven once more that it was highly myopic.

Too often, great books and great ideas become lost in libraries under a mound of comparative mediocrity. One such great book of the twentieth century is Henri de Lubac's *Catholicism: Christ and the common destiny of man* - a text that to paraphrase G.K. Chesterton's quip on Catholicism, has not been tried and found

wanting, but has not really been understood and implemented. Catholicism has a relevance and a message that could guide the Church well into the new millennium. It could, that is, if the Church would dare to risk the vision of de Lubac. Both great benefit and great risk are inherent in the initiatives that he proposes.

Fundamental to de Lubac's thesis in Catholicism is the basic premise that humanity is a diverse community; diverse not only in terms of race, but also in terms of language, culture and national ambition. This diversity is a source of richness, as every drop of humanity reflects a Creator who has imprinted within the hearts of all men and women, irrespective of the disparity, a "divine character".

As de Lubac writes: "Christ is also all in all, for he encloses all in himself by his sole power, infinite and all wise in its goodness, like the centre to which all lines converge, so that all the creatures of the one God should not be strangers or enemies to each other without common ground whereon to show their friendship and the peace between them."

Diversity, according to de Lubac, enhances the sublime nature of the unity. Humanity comes to understand that what separates is as God given as what unifies, and that what separates also serves the unity. A conscious agreement to a set of beliefs by peoples as racially and culturally distinct as can be empowers the agreed beliefs with a strength that transcends all possible distinction.

The way to the future development of the Church, de Lubac writes, is that the Church comes to understand that we cannot ride roughshod over culture and supplant in the forced vacuum a dogma and hope that this dogma will somehow "take". This in fact will rob the people of a richness that could easily have been incorporated, as far as dogma allows, in the life of the local Church in question. We see in the example offered to us by Sts Cyril and Methodius that it is possible to take the culture of a people into account and embrace this with uncompromised Church teaching.

As de Lubac further writes: "This twofold desire willingly to entertain whatever can be assimilated and to prescribe nothing that is not of faith, although it is acknowledged and systematically employed, is by no means the calculated plan of cunning men in search of a successful method, as has been sometimes suggested."

"It is governed by doctrinal considerations. It is true all the same, as experience proves, that it is the only fully effective way. But it can only be done at the cost of a systematic, persevering effort that love alone makes possible. For it requires of the apostle not only a continual adaptation of self, like St Paul, who, becoming all things to all men, did not speak before the Areopagus as he spoke to his fellow countrymen."

It is therefore critical for the Catholic Church, as it develops in the future, to see where in the course of its history it has not spoken with the same intuition of St Paul to the Greeks, but more as Menezes to the St Thomas Christians. In its great missionary zeal, the Church in the New World incinerated as part of the fire of its apostolic work elements of human and cultural yearnings that had developed over thousands of years, and that would have, if incorporated or established as a new rite, added too, rather than lessened, the wonderful Catholic fabric of the Church.

Nations and peoples such as the Native American, the Australian Aboriginal, the New Zealand Maori or the Canadian Inuit, bring to the Church similar "dreamings" of the pre-Christian peoples of Europe and Asia.

Moreover, it would be of great benefit to the Church of the West to nourish and vivify the Mozarabic, Ambrosian and Celtic traditions, which have too often, like small shrubs in the undergrowth of a tropical rainforest, suffered from the massive canopy of the Latin Church. Let the art, culture, and mystical and spiritual yearnings of peoples find a voice both ecclesiastical and liturgical within the Church, for certainly the Holy Spirit did not cease to breathe life into the Church after the death of the Church Fathers, and the Spirit does not only call for ritual diversity in the East.

All easily said. But a contrary argument and question can be put forward. Where are the great theologians of the past: the Sts Paul, Cyril and Methodius, people of insight that could take culture and embellish it with the Gospel, without losing any of the impact or truth of the gospel message?

De Lubac was right to close his treatise on this subject with a great word of warning. For the call to ritual diversity within the Church - the establishment of new rites, and new sui juris Churches, is one that demands from the architects of such planning a strong sense of dogmatic certitude and faithfulness. A compass is only useful inasmuch as it tells the traveller where a certain direction lies from the place in which they are holding the device. If one does not know where they are dogmatically speaking, all they will do is eventually lead others into a nowhere land.

The architects of future rites within the Church cannot be people who are intolerant of dogma. But, similarly they must be people culturally sensitive, and people of imagination. As de Lubac writes: "It is equally unfitting to speak of liberalism, of tolerating error, or of making the salt of the Gospel savourless. For if Christianity must be shown with all its exigencies, it must also stand out in all its purity ...

"And if it is once understood that the work of conversion consists, fundamentally, not in adapting supernatural truth, in bringing it down to human level, but on the

contrary, in adapting man to it, raising him up to the truth that rules and judges him, we must especially beware, as of blasphemy, of confusing ourselves, its servants, with it ourselves, our tastes, our habits, our prejudices, our passions, our narrow-mindedness and our weaknesses."

It is time for the Catholic Church en masse to move away from a monochrome form of Catholicism, and to understand that the message we hold is not one that has lost any of its salt. We do not need to make the errors of Menezes or the errors of the Church with regard to the work of Matteo Ricci, but acknowledge that although the message we speak is universal, the language and the symbolism by which we convey the message is not.

The call for a re-awakening of catholicity within the Church was also part of the vision of that great Englishman Friedrich von Hügel, when he wrote near the beginning of his seminal work, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, that Christ is too large for any single culture fully to comprehend and therefore "his character and teaching require, for an ever fuller yet never complete understanding, the varying study, and different experiments and applications, embodiments and unrollings of all the races and civilisations, of all the individual and corporate, the simultaneous and successive experiences of the human race to the end of time".

A Kennedy Plumbs Life as a Catholic
In book, RFK daughter explores contradictions
By Michael Paulson, Boston Globe Staff | September 8, 2008
HYANNIS PORT - Catholicism ran deep at the home of Bobby and Ethel Kennedy.

Prayers before and after every meal, when a family trip was beginning, when something got lost. Bible readings after dinner. St. Christopher medals around the neck. St. Francis pictures on the wall. Virgin Mary statues in the corner. Mass schedules by the bedsides. And Mass every Sunday, until Bobby was killed in 1968; then it was daily.

"It was central to my upbringing - I mean, we woke up in the morning, and we were down on our knees, consecrating the day to Lord Jesus," recalls Kerry Kennedy, 49, the seventh of the 11 children of the Kennedy couple. "And then before bed, we'd spend about 20 minutes with the entire family saying prayers together."

But today, like many Catholics, Kennedy has a hard time reconciling her own views with some of the teachings and actions of her church; in fact, she often can't. So Kennedy decided to talk with well-known Americans about their often complicated relationships with the Catholic faith; the result is a revealing book being released tomorrow.

The book, "Being Catholic Now," offers an unusually intimate view of how much being raised Catholic shapes the identity of many prominent Americans, but also how much tension many feel with the institutional church.

"Don't even let me go into Cardinal [Bernard F.] Law and that he has been rewarded with a princely title in Rome," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told Kennedy, referring to the former archbishop of Boston, who resigned over the sex abuse scandal and now oversees a prominent basilica in Rome. "It is just appalling. I cannot deal with that, so I don't."

Bill O'Reilly, the FOX News personality, told Kennedy, "Cardinal Law is a villain. I got him removed from office in Boston. I pounded him relentlessly, because he was not doing what he should have for the protection of children in this country." And Anne Burke, an Illinois Supreme Court justice who was appointed by the American bishops to a board overseeing the church's response to the clergy abuse scandal, was clearly infuriated by her up-close view of the church's upper management.

"It's the culture of the administration of the Catholic Church in the United States that permitted a climate of cover-up to go on for the past 50 years; it's the same culture and it's still out there today," Burke said. "Things have hit rock bottom in the Catholic Church, and it's going to get worse."

But Kennedy finds praise too. Anna Quindlen, the columnist, has many disagreements with the church, but says, "as an instrument of social justice, nobody does it better." Cokie Roberts, the journalist, says, "Catholicism is a place that gives me a solid sense of justice, hope, and love." John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, says, "My faith is always a source of strength for me." And Martin Sheen, the actor, says, "The central mystery of Catholicism is so powerful. It's simple. God becomes human. Go figure."

Kennedy, who was born in Brighton, raised in Virginia, and now lives in New York, said she does not view her book, which includes interviews with conservatives and liberals, as an attack on the church. A human rights lawyer, Kennedy is raising her three daughters in the Catholic faith, attending Mass regularly, and teaching religious education at her parish, and she says the more she realized that other Catholics struggle with their church, the less isolated she felt.

"I was feeling conflicted because my Catholicism is so deeply important to me - it was my sense of connection to the Almighty, to humanity, to my heritage, my upbringing," she said during an interview in Hyannis Port, where she and other members of the Kennedy family have summered for decades. "And my Catholicism informed my view of the world, and the work that I do every day on

social justice issues. And yet, so often when I went to church, I was confronted with words and symbols that were anathema to my values."

Church officials have not yet seen the book, but a spokeswoman for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Sister Mary Ann Walsh, said in response to a description of the book, "A lot of Catholics are having lovers' quarrels with the church."

"It's an institution they love very much, and they care for, and when there's a disagreement, it can become a passionate disagreement, because they care so much," Walsh said. "I find that comforting, that people will sit and argue the points, rather than think it isn't worth discussing. There's more hope if people have an honest intellectual struggle with what the church teaches - that's been the history of the church, that people have struggled to understand our teaching better."

Walsh also said that, on clergy abuse, "we all wish the church had recognized the terrible problem sooner. However, as we're seeing that this problem crosses every group in our society, it's hard to believe that any group can rival the church in the United States when it comes to dealing with it."

And, on gender, Walsh said the church has a theological objection to the ordination of women, but that, beyond the priesthood, "women are at high levels in the church, as much, if not more, as they are in US society."

Many of those Kennedy interviewed praised the Catholic church for imbuing them with a sense of spirituality and community and concern for justice. But Kennedy found multiple recurrent themes among many of the people she interviewed - concern about the role of women in the church, concern about the handling of the abuse scandal, opposition to the church's teaching on birth control, and even frequent unhappy references to the way the specter of hell was used to discipline them when they were children.

Gabriel Byrne, the actor, who described himself as a victim of clergy abuse, recalled a nun holding a match to her finger to demonstrate "how your soul burns for all time." Susan Sarandon, the actress, said, "I was told very early on by the nuns that I had an 'overabundance of original sin.'" Comedian Bill Maher said that when he was 7, "a nun told me I was going to hell because I was leaning on the pew in front of me." And O'Reilly recalled, "The nuns would constantly tell me that I was going to hell."

Kennedy said she is at odds with the church hierarchy over many issues - abortion rights and women's ordination among them. Her views do not make her extraordinary; polls suggest that an overwhelming majority of American Catholics support women's ordination and that American Catholics reflect the general public's split over abortion.

Kennedy is divorced from Andrew Cuomo, but said her divorce has not been an issue for her in Catholicism because she has not remarried; however, she said, she considers the debate over whether politicians who support abortion rights, such as her uncle Senator Edward M. Kennedy, should be allowed to receive Communion "a terrible mistake" by "a few wayward bishops."

But Kennedy also said that in her travels around the world as a human rights advocate, she concluded that in "virtually every country I've gone to, the Catholic church is on the cutting edge of social change."

"I was witnessing the mighty spirit, and the tremendous capacity of this institution which was so much a part of my history, and my family, and my sense of spirituality, and my vision of social justice . . . and then coming back and hearing bishops who were protecting their turf instead of protecting children and playing Three-card Monte with the pedophile priests and blaming it on people who are gay," she said. "So it was important to me to resolve that."