

# faith

PROMOTING A NEW SYNTHESIS  
OF FAITH AND REASON

May and June 2014  
Volume 46 Number 3  
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## Special Edition: Synod of Bishops on the Family 2014

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Editorial

### Faithful Heralds of the Joy of the Gospel of Marriage

Archbishop Samuel J Aquila

### The Synod and Artificial Contraception: Time to Teach *Humanae Vitae*

Janet Smith

### The Synod and Marriage: The Deeper Issues

Sherif Girgis

### A Shepherd Speaks: A Pastoral Letter to Catholic Families

Bishop James D Conley

William Oddie gives a Catholic response to the rise of Sharia law

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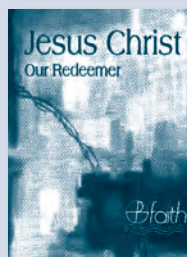
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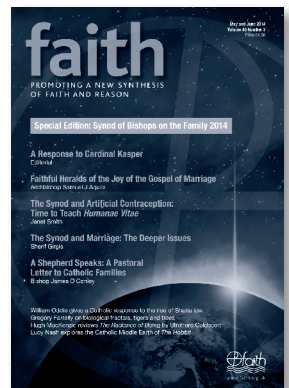


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His Holiness Pope Francis has convened an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, to be held in the Vatican from 5 to 19 October 2014, on the theme “The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation”.

This edition of *Faith* magazine is largely dedicated to exploring, explaining and expounding an orthodox Catholic vision of the family. We believe it to be a beautiful proposition that is intellectually coherent, entirely liveable and increasingly necessary in our contemporary society. We hope the reader finds the contents contained within to be both engaging and enlightening. *Our Lady, Queen of the Family, pray for us.*



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**Executive editor** David Kerr, c/o 106 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42 8ER, editor@faith.org.uk

**Editorial Board** David Barrett, Stephen Brown, Timothy Finigan, Andrea Fraile, Roger Nesbitt, Christina Read, Dominic Rolls, Luiz Ruscillo.

**Book Reviews** Andrew Nash, Faith Book Reviews, PO Box 617, Abingdon, OX14 9HA, andrew.j.nash@gmail.com

**Advertising Manager** Scott Deeley, c/o Holy Cross, 11 Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh EH5 3AH, advertising@faith.org.uk

**Subscriptions and Faith-Keyway Trust Publications Office** Sr Roseann Reddy, 104 Albert Road, Glasgow G42 8DR, subscriptions@faith.org.uk

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May and June 2014  
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# A Response to Cardinal Kasper

## Editorial

**Cardinal Walter Kasper is proposing that the Synod of Bishops on the Family consider relaxing the Catholic Church's discipline on who can present themselves for Holy Communion. While no doubt motivated by genuine compassion, the influential German cleric's suggestion would have far-reaching and destructive ramifications for the Church's understanding of marriage and for the common good of society.**

In his address at the recent consistory Cardinal Kasper remarked that "between the doctrine of the Church on marriage and the family and the lived convictions of many Christians an abyss has been created". Based upon this observation, the cardinal makes two proposals: a more generous widening of the procedures for investigating the nullity of marriages and, invoking the criteria of mercy, a dispensation to allow, in certain cases, the divorced and remarried to receive Holy Communion.

Our culture doesn't value permanence. It does not share the fundamental Catholic convictions about sacramental marriage: an exclusive, lifelong union of man and woman that is open to new life, a faithful and unbreakable bond mirroring God's love for humanity and, specifically, Christ's love for the Church. Hence, it is quite probable that at the present time there is a much higher incidence of invalidity in marriages than was previously the case. Canon lawyers would argue that what is needed is a better application of the existing provisions of canon law rather than some sort of watering down of the present dispensation that would risk encouraging laxity and creating injustices. We leave this question to the experts.

Cardinal Kasper's second proposal has a number of flaws born of weak scholarship. He argues there is a historic precedent for the toleration of divorce and remarriage. He bases this assertion on the work of the Italian patristic scholar Giovanni Cereti, whose research is now over 30 years old. Cereti's thesis was that the fourth-century Council of Nicea had tolerated divorce and remarriage. Even at the time of its publication such claims were totally discredited. Canon 8 of the Council of Nicea, whose interpretation constitutes the heart of Cereti's argument, does indeed condemn those who do not permit a second marriage. However, it was directed against an extremist sect that refused the possibility of remarriage even after the death of the first spouse. It said nothing about those whose first spouses were still living. The unchanging tradition of the Church is clear: the sacramental bond of marriage is indissoluble. It has always been a case of "till death do us part". Anyone who opposes this teaching sets themselves against Christ: "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Lk 16:18).

Moreover, invoking mercy as a kind of Trojan horse that might open the gates to the possibility of divorce and remarriage is problematic. Our faith in God's mercy is itself founded on God's fidelity to his covenant with us. As St Paul teaches us: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13). The marriage covenant between two

spouses is the living image of this faithful love of God. The fidelity, the indissolubility, of the marriage bond between two spouses is precisely that earthly reality which most powerfully points us towards God's faithful love. This is marriage's sacramental meaning. It is because God is faithful that we can count on his mercy. To set mercy in opposition to the indissoluble bond of marriage is to set mercy against fidelity, and for someone who believes in the God of Jesus Christ that entails an irresolvable internal contradiction.

*"The fidelity of the marriage bond is the earthly reality which most powerfully points us towards God's faithful love"*

Not only are Cardinal Kasper's conclusions flawed but his starting point also needs to be questioned. In the Italian original of his text the "abyss" he describes is between Church teaching and "*le convinzioni vissute*" of many Christians. It might not be idiomatic English, but literally that means "*the lived convictions*". Here the question needs to be raised: are these really "convictions"? They are lived realities in many cases, certainly, but "convictions"? One of the extraordinary graces of the priesthood is the privileged degree of access it gives into the interior depths of the lives of the faithful. Many priests would attest that those who are on the receiving end of family breakdown frequently live in one way but are convinced – that is, their "convictions" lie – in quite another direction. Often a priest will encounter a mother (and it is so often mothers who are literally left "holding the baby") who is on, perhaps, her third or even fourth partner and who is overwhelmed by the circumstances of her life. Ask her, though, and she certainly doesn't want this life for her children. She aspires to something higher, better and more beautiful for them. This aspiration is an implicit recognition of Christ's teaching that married love should be for life.

That said, Cardinal Kasper has done the Church a service because the observation that there is an "abyss" between what the Church teaches and how so many of her children actually live is demonstrably true. What, then, is to be done about this "abyss"?

One option might be for the Church to close the gap by embracing the values of the world. In this way the Church might make herself more "relevant". The Church might jettison anything too challenging in her Scriptures and Tradition and simply accommodate herself to modernity. She could then become a vaguely benevolent NGO operating according to the

**“Recent pontificates have shown the galvanising effect of coherent, challenging catechesis. Such teaching must be imparted at a local level too”**

nebulous and malleable principles often labelled “gospel values”. This has been tried. It is called liberal Protestantism. It has not brought the affluent West flocking back to these ecclesial communities. In fact, such Christian bodies have largely become an irrelevance. This strategy has not worked in the past. It will not work now for the Catholic Church. Vastly more important than its lack of efficacy, however, would be its unfaithfulness to Christ. The Church cannot countenance this. One thinks immediately of that episode in Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel. Jesus has given his teaching on the Eucharist and the response of the crowd is: “This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?” (v. 60). Peter responds on behalf of the Twelve, that is on behalf of the new people of God, on behalf of the Church, and for all time: “Lord, to who shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know you are the Holy one of God” (vv. 67-9).

The problem is not with the teaching of the Church, but might it be with the way the Church has taught in recent decades? It is one thing for the Successor of Peter to travel the world and teach the truths of the faith in a prophetic way. In recent pontificates, and especially at World Youth Days from Denver to Sydney and Rio de Janeiro, we have seen the galvanising effect that coherent and challenging catechesis can have on the faithful. Such teaching, however, must also be taught at a local level. Certainly in the United Kingdom we can no longer presume that the ordinary parish structure is sufficient to

credibly communicate the life-giving truth of Christ’s teaching on sex and marriage. The spiritual temperature outside the Church has plunged to arctic levels and the flame of faith flickering in the hearts of the faithful needs more shelter than our weakened parish structures can provide.

There are so many initiatives that could be undertaken. How many resources does any given diocese devote to supporting marriage and family life? Could we be more generous (and more demanding) in our provision of marriage preparation? Could we do more to support those who are already married? In spiritual ways, for example, with days of recollection, weekend retreats, or in other practical ways. Church-run youth clubs and crèches offer cheap babysitting and are a real boon for parents. Could we be more energetic in how we catechise on marriage and the family in our schools?

In these months running up to the synod on marriage and the family we can either spend our time performing mental summersaults, casuistically trying to get around the more inconvenient of the Church’s teaching, or we can give ourselves over to heartfelt examination of conscience. We can ask ourselves: what efforts have we made, what measures have we taken, to live and make known the Church’s teaching on marriage and the family? Only the latter course will lead us to the “message of eternal life” given us by “the Holy One of God.” ☕

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# Faithful Heralds of the Joy of the Gospel of Marriage

By Archbishop Samuel J Aquila of Denver

Ahead of October's Synod of Bishops on the Family, Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver writes exclusively for *Faith* magazine on the key issues his brother bishops may wish to reflect upon during their deliberations in Rome later this year.

This coming October Pope Francis will convene an extraordinary synod dedicated to the “pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelisation”. Interestingly, the Holy Father used his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, to speak about the joy the gospel brings him and to provide a sort of programme that should guide the synod. He wrote: “I want to emphasise that what I am trying to express here has a programmatic significance and important consequences.”<sup>1</sup> In light of these words, the participants at the synod will have to face the great pastoral challenge of being faithful heralds of the joy of the gospel of marriage.

The joy of the gospel of marriage springs from charity:<sup>2</sup> the same charity that compels bishops<sup>3</sup> to faithfully proclaim the good news of marriage revealed in Christ; the same charity that is inseparable from the Truth, who frees the human person and reveals to him what it means to be human.<sup>4</sup> Only in Jesus does every human being discover what it means to be truly human, to be made for God and to live in relationship with God, to have true happiness.

In his dialogue with the Pharisees about the legality of divorce,<sup>5</sup> Jesus offers a precious departure point for the synod participants. As John Paul II taught, Christ avoids the Pharisees’ trap and does not fall into their casuistry, which ends up opposing God’s law in the name of pastoral love and mercy for the human person.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Jesus appeals to the truth about marriage revealed by God “from the beginning” and brought to fulfilment in the New Law. This truth is not man-made. The truth about the human person is a reality that is discovered, acknowledged and received. It is a truth to be conformed to. Furthermore, for the faithful herald of the gospel, this truth about marriage and family is the most pastoral and merciful path. This truth is *evangelium* because it saves the human person<sup>7</sup> and brings about the joy that Jesus desires for every disciple.<sup>8</sup>

In his apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis explained that he wanted “to listen to everyone and not simply those who would tell him what he would like to hear”.<sup>9</sup> This is exactly what he has done by using the synod’s preparatory document to seek input from a broad range of the faithful. Predictably, the secular media has responded by reporting on the disparity in the responses between what the Church teaches and what people believe.

Some sectors of the people of God have said that, in their view, the gospel of marriage proclaimed by Christ is impracticable and, consequently, non-pastoral; that it conveys no joy to them; that it is passé and archaic; in sum, that it is not good news at all. Considering these opinions, are we to manufacture a pseudo-truth about marriage in the name of

being “pastoral” and change the teaching of the Church received from Christ and the tradition? I do not think so.

Listening attentively to these opinions as bishops, we should draw the correct conclusion. In my view, these opinions expressed by the people of God should compel bishops to declare a profound *mea maxima culpa*. They point to our failure as pastors, teachers and spiritual fathers. We have not succeeded in proclaiming the joy of the gospel of marriage to our people.

Perhaps we have not been able to place this gospel in its proper context, namely the adequate anthropology revealed by Christ and so well explained by John Paul II. Perhaps we have wrongly assumed “that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel”.<sup>10</sup> In examining our consciences, we should ask ourselves whether or not we have fallen, or are about to fall, into the Pharisees’ rationalisations, which Christ said were rooted in a hardness of heart. Let us repent!

When I was Bishop of Fargo I mandated that a full course of natural family planning, along with the theology of the body, be taught to couples preparing for marriage. Many of the couples were resistant to the change at first. However, as they participated, their hearts changed and they became open and receptive to the teaching. A letter I received from a young woman captured the change of heart that occurred.

She wrote: “At first I was angry that I had to take the course on natural family planning along with the theology of the body. But now, Bishop, while I am deeply grateful for what I have learned, I am angry, and I ask you, ‘why was I not taught this much earlier, in high school?’ I would have been saved much hurt and heartache in college if I had been taught this earlier and not listened to the voice of the world. My younger sister is still in high school and I am going to teach her what I have learned so she does not make the same mistakes I did.” After receiving the letter I mandated that Theology of the Body for Teens be taught and promoted in Fargo’s Catholic high school and in all religious education programmes.

Hence, the solution is not to adopt a pseudo-truth about marriage or a falsely pastoral approach permeated with the casuistry of the Pharisees. Instead, the solution is fidelity to the only Truth that really saves the human person: Jesus Christ! What we need to do is to relate the truth about marriage and the family to the heart of its gospel; that is, to the Father’s plan expressed already in the original unity between Adam and Eve, prior to the fall and original sin, and to the joy that belongs to the ethos of redemption and the New Law. From the perspective of God’s saving grace and restorative mercy, the

## **"If pastoral solutions are not grounded in what God has revealed about marriage, they will not lead to real freedom and happiness"**

truth about marriage revealed by Christ is practicable and most pastoral.

However, mercy cannot be confused with tolerating an evil. A person is merciful when, being affected by the sorrow and misery of another as if it were their own, they endeavour to dispel such misery.<sup>11</sup> This is exactly what Christ does in the Gospel. He does not merely tolerate our wickedness. He is merciful. Through his suffering he conquers sin and dispels our misery.<sup>12</sup> In his mercy, Jesus frees us from sin and enables us to live in the freedom of God's children.<sup>13</sup> But it is important to understand that the freedom of God's children is lived in harmony with the truth; it does not seek to subordinate truth to itself.<sup>14</sup> This truth includes, obviously, the truth about marriage revealed in Christ. If pastoral solutions to the contemporary challenges to marriage are not grounded in what God has revealed about marriage, they will not lead to real freedom and happiness. They will not be seen as genuine, practicable responses.

Some have argued that pastorally the Church should leave marriage and all sexual matters up to the conscience of the person. However, in a world formed by relativism, conscience is not well understood, and often becomes a case of listening to "my voice" rather than "the voice of God". Furthermore, the voice of the evil one can draw us away from the truth. Conscience, in fact, is not infallible and can be erroneous.<sup>15</sup>

Vatican II makes clear "that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth".<sup>16</sup> This is why the human person has a right and an obligation to listen to the gospel of marriage revealed in the beginning and brought to fulfilment in Christ. For that very reason, bishops have an obligation to form the consciences of God's people. Thus formed, consciences will truly be attentive to God's voice.<sup>17</sup> Hence, listening carefully to the opinions presented in the surveys done and sent to Rome, one may conclude that we, as bishops, have not formed our people's conscience.


Let us ask for God's grace and mercy in preparation for the synod. Let us teach by example. Let us remember the words we pronounce at the ordination of priests: "Let them meditate on your law day and night, so that they may believe what they have read, and teach what they have believed, and practise what they have taught." Allowing ourselves to be transformed by these words once again, we will have the authority of those who live what they preach. We will teach as good teachers who resemble Christ, the Teacher.<sup>18</sup> Then, we will effectively proclaim the joy of the good news of marriage and the family, asking married people to be open to conversion and to God's grace and mercy.

As a young seminarian I read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book *The Cost of Discipleship*. His distinction between "cheap" grace

and "costly" grace changed my heart about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This "costly" grace of discipleship brings with it a mercy that separates sin from the sinner. Indeed, Christ condemns sin. Yet, he loves the sinner and restores his innocence. For instance, although the adulterous woman's sin was condemned by Jesus, she was not.<sup>19</sup> Instead, she was loved with God's regenerative mercy that truly freed her from the power of sin and death.

Something similar happened to the Samaritan woman who encountered Christ. Jesus made clear to her that he knew she had had five husbands, and that the one with whom she was living now was not her husband.<sup>20</sup> Christ did not compromise the truth for the sake of being "pastoral", nor did the woman try to deny the truth of her situation. Jesus neither fell into the mindset of the Pharisees nor opposed God's law to show her love and mercy. The Samaritan woman was affected by this truthful and merciful encounter with Christ. Thus, she became an evangeliser, who asked others to come and see someone who told her, with truth and mercy, everything she had done.<sup>21</sup>

This is the kind of pastoral approach that we should adopt for this synod on the family. We should imitate God, whose works are always justice, truth and mercy.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Pope Francis clearly states that the joyful proclamation of the Good News, which includes marriage, is "to communicate more effectively the truth of the Gospel in a specific context, without renouncing the truth."<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, applying the heart of the gospel to the contemporary challenges to marriage and the family must be founded on restoring men and women to true friendship with God by immersing them in the truths he has revealed. As Christ said: "You are my friends if you do what I command you."<sup>24</sup> As bishops, we must be faithful to Jesus's mandate: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."<sup>25</sup> We must be compelled by a charity that rejoices in the truth<sup>26</sup> and continues to hand on the received teaching no matter the cost. In doing so, we will adequately prepare for this year's synod by becoming faithful heralds of the joy of the gospel of marriage. 

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 28, a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 5:14.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jn 8:32; *Gaudium et Spes*, 22; *Caritas in Veritate*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mt 19:3-9.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 1:2.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Rm 1:16.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 15:11.

<sup>9</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 34.

<sup>11</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 21, a. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 5:21.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Rm 8:21.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jn 8:32.

<sup>15</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1790-1794.

<sup>16</sup> *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2, emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1795-1798.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mt 23:8.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jn 8:11.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jn 4:17-18.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Jn 4:29.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 21, a. 4.

<sup>23</sup> EG, 45, emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Jn 15:14.

<sup>25</sup> Mt 28:19.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 13:6.

# The Synod and Artificial Contraception: Time to Teach *Humanae Vitae* By Janet Smith

**Professor Janet Smith says that any evidence of widespread unfaithfulness towards the Church's teaching on artificial contraception is not a valid expression of a "sensus fidelium" but an urgent reminder of the need for more effective catechesis.**

The questionnaire distributed by the Pontifical Council on the Family for the Synod on the Family to be held later this year asked whether or not Catholics are living by the Church's teaching on sexuality. As I filled out the questionnaire, time and again I answered: "No, they are not, but they have never been taught these teachings," or many others for that matter. Since *Humanae Vitae* was issued in 1968, it can be argued that no other teaching has presented Catholics with a bigger obstacle to embracing the faith of the Church wholeheartedly.

How sad it is that few people have ever encountered a robust defence of the Church's teaching. A brief but nonetheless forceful explanation can be found in *Humanae Vitae* itself. An extended, biblically based defence can be found in John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* (enthusiasm for this defence is very high in the United States).

The Church's teaching on sexuality seems puzzling to many people whose understanding has been clouded by the corruption of a culture that practises and glorifies sex without commitment or even deep feeling, a culture in which the most lucrative internet business is pornography.

The Church understands sexuality to be an inestimable gift from God, one that allows a man and a woman in a very personal, profound, spiritual and physical way, to express their deep desire to unite with another and to live out the essential human need to love and be loved.

God himself is a lover and in fact is Love itself. It is natural for love to overflow. Indeed, the whole universe is the result of an explosion of love. Spouses are meant to image the love of God; they are meant to be committed, unconditional lovers whose love overflows into new life. New life is, of course, not always possible because of infertility but the spousal relationship is the kind of relationship that is designed to foster love and life. God created the whole universe as a support system for human beings, beings he has destined for eternal unity with him. He chose to involve spouses in his creative, loving, fruitful enterprise. John Paul II spoke of spouses as being "co-creators" with God; they assist God in bringing forth new human souls.

John Paul II developed a Christian anthropology that demonstrates that it requires both male and female for the image of God to be represented because God is a union of loving persons. The body itself has a "spousal meaning" and shows that human beings are other-directed, that we are meant to be self-giving and fruitful. Human beings must be loving persons, who image the complete self-giving love of the Trinity.

The marital act speaks a "language". It speaks the language of complete self-giving. It says to another: "I find you

overwhelmingly attractive; I have chosen you apart from all others; I commit my whole life to you; I want to enjoy a powerfully pleasurable and bonding experience with you, and I am willing to be a parent with you." Contraceptive sex cannot speak the language of love; it does not convey the life-time bonding message that "I am willing to bring about another you; I am willing to spend the whole of my life with you." Even those who don't want a bond with each other realise that having a child with another creates a great bond. Everyone knows the difference between saying to another with one's sexual acts, "I am willing to be a parent with you," and the message spoken by contracepted sexual intercourse: "I want to experience a great pleasure with you (but not children, no!)." The first is affirming in an unparalleled way; the second is all too often exploitative. Again, this is a vision of marriage and sexuality that nearly seems to have been forgotten by the modern age.

Acts that are not in accord with human nature, with God's plans, predictably have bad consequences. One method of helping people be open to the Church's teaching is to alert them to the bad consequences that contraception has for individuals, for the culture and even the environment.

The case is quite easily made that contraception has greatly contributed to the increased incidence of abortion and single parenthood. After all, contraception tremendously facilitates sex between partners who have no intention of having a baby. Since all contraceptives have a fairly high failure rate, an unwanted pregnancy is often the result. At present about one out in four babies conceived in the United States are aborted, and 42 per cent of babies are born to a single mother. Moreover, many forms of contraception occasionally work as abortifacients, by preventing the implantation of the newly conceived human being in his or her mother's uterus. Contraception also facilitates cohabitation, which has proved to be a very bad preparation for marriage. Approximately half of all marriages contracted today are likely to end in divorce.

Who can calculate the harm done to individuals who are in and out of sexual relationships and in and out of marriage? Who can calculate the harm done to babies born out of wedlock, to children affected by divorce? More than 80 per cent of children who experience long-term poverty come from broken or unmarried families. More and more women are becoming painfully aware of the negative health consequences of the chemical contraceptives (see, for instance, Holly Grigg-Spall's *Sweetening the Pill*). The health risks of the chemical contraceptives have been known for a very long time and include weight gain, migraines, depression, and even death from blood clots. Oestrogen-progestogen oral contraceptives are Group 1 carcinogens, a category shared by cigarettes and asbestos.



## “Women who have been exposed to the Church’s teaching have found that it is compatible with their faith and enriches their lives”

Moreover, contraceptives negatively affect the natural “chemistry” between males and females. Males and females exchange hormones called “pheromones” and these are the cause of the chemical attraction between them. These hormones are received through the olfactory nerves. Many women testify that one of the things that most attract them to a man is the way that he “smells”. Some studies show that males and females who are more biologically compatible – that is, those who are more likely to be able to reproduce with each other – are more attracted to each other.

But hormones also affect our judgement and responses in other ways. Women who are on chemical contraceptives have squashed the influence of their normal fertile hormones. Chemical contraceptives work by putting a woman in a state of pseudo pregnancy. Researchers who invented the chemical contraceptives realised that they could “deceive” a woman’s body into “thinking” that pregnancy had begun by giving it synthetic forms of the hormones that are present when a woman is pregnant. One problem is that women respond to men differently when they are pregnant, or using a chemical contraceptive.

“A recent study has shown that 37 per cent of women aged 18 to 34 who attend Mass weekly and have been to confession within the past year completely accept the Church’s teaching on family planning”

And men respond to women differently. Men produce more testosterone when they are around women who are having fertile cycles. One study showed that males who were in the presence of female fertile hormones found the pictures of ordinary women more attractive than pictures of super models. How strange that women are deliberately repressing their most natural means of attracting male attention.

Chemical contraceptives also reduce the amount of testosterone that a female produces – and for females, as well as males, testosterone is the source of sexual desire. Thus, women on chemical contraceptives find their sexual desire is reduced; and possibly, when they come off chemical contraceptives, it may never return to the level it reached before they began using such contraceptives.


So we see that women are choosing their mates, not under the influence of their own more reliable fertile hormones but on alien synthetic hormones. When they come off the chemical contraceptives, they may find that they have a higher sex drive, but that they may not be much interested in the man they are with! Contraceptives obviously have a negative effect on the delicate ecological system of a woman’s fertility. The oestrogens in contraceptives also have a lethal effect on some elements of the larger environment; they have been shown to destroy the fertility of some groups of fish, for instance.

Spouses who truly appreciate the gift of fertility understand that when they are not prepared to accept the gift of a child, they should abstain from sex when a pregnancy is possible; that is, they use a method of natural family planning (NFP). Many studies and testimonies affirm the benefits of using NFP, even the benefits of what is difficult about abstaining. Wives feel more treasured and revered by their husbands, who would not subject them to the dangers of contraceptives. Males appreciate the esteem earned from their wives and benefit from greater self-esteem.

Couples invariably speak of an improvement in communication that comes with the use of NFP and better communication always strengthens marriages. The biggest selling point for NFP is that NFP couples almost never divorce. Young people hate divorce; they desperately want their marriages to last. Refraining from sexual intercourse before marriage and using NFP within marriage are two of the best ways to “divorce-proof” a marriage.

Some have argued that since 98 per cent of Catholics (who have been sexually active) have used contraception (according to statistics in the US), the sense of the faithful (the *sensus fidelium*) is that the use of contraception is not incompatible with the Christian faith. That seems to be the position of the bishops of Germany. But if Catholics have never been taught the Church’s teaching, isn’t it more likely that they have been formed more by the culture that surrounds them than by their Church? One of the first to articulate the principle that the receptivity of the faithful to a teaching – those who practise the faith – is an indicator of the truth of a teaching was John Henry Newman. Yet he promoted the practice of consulting the *sensus fidelium* in respect to an undecided doctrine, not one the Church has constantly taught.

Would Catholics accept the Church’s teaching on contraception, if they were taught it? We have some evidence that a sizeable portion might. A recent study, “What Catholic Women Think About Faith, Conscience, and Contraception” (see [whatcatholicwomenthink.com](http://whatcatholicwomenthink.com)), has shown that 37 per cent of women aged 18 to 34 who attend Mass weekly and have been to confession within the past year completely accept the Church’s teaching on family planning. Somewhere, somehow, those women have been exposed to the Church’s teaching and have found that it is compatible with their faith and enriches their lives.

Cardinal Caffarra of Bologna has recently forcefully said that Catholics deserve to be exposed to a robust defence of the Church’s teaching on sexuality. It would certainly help stem the tide of human misery caused by sexual confusion if the Synod would urge bishops, pastors, theologians, and laypeople to embrace *Humanae Vitae*. 

Janet E Smith is a professor of moral theology and the Fr Michael J McGivney chair of life issues at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan.

# The Synod and Marriage: The Deeper Issues *By Sherif Girgis*

**With numerous western countries now redefining marriage, October's Synod of Bishops will have to grapple with a fundamental question: what exactly is marriage? Drawing upon both faith and reason, Sherif Girgis attempts to answer that question.**

This October, Pope Francis will convene a synod of bishops to discuss marriage and family. Any good fruit from it will stem from the truths about marriage planted deep in the deposit of faith.

But not only in the faith. For the natural moral law contains the same truths. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes clear: "The natural law, present in the heart of each man and established by reason, is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all men" (1956). And it includes the moral law of sex and marriage.

Indeed, the great thinkers of ancient Greece began to develop a tradition of moral philosophy long before Christ came to earth. They came so close to Hebrew and Christian moral insights that some early Church Fathers wondered whether some Greeks had received private divine revelations; a contemporary secularist historian of ancient philosophy once wrote that almost the same sex ethic was espoused by Plato and Paul VI. Drawing on these Greek origins, Christian thinkers through the centuries have written on natural law, developing its insights to this day.

On marriage and everything else, the moral law is not meant to limit us; it guides us in the way of truth and love. Far from being arbitrary, it reflects the truth about the human person and in that way helps build communion. To break it is to invite confusion and division, as we can see from the natural law vision of the family.

The synod preparatory document asks: what vision of the human person lies behind that natural-law understanding of marriage?

Let's begin with the human person. We are not spirits in bodily costumes: as persons, we are our living bodies, in two varieties: male and female. For this reason, spousal love – which seeks total union with the beloved – calls for a union of bodies as well as of hearts and minds.

But what makes for bodily union? It isn't emotion alone or pleasure alone – platonic bonds can give us that. Rather, it requires bodily co-operation towards a single bodily end. After all, you are personally "one flesh", one body, by the fact that your physical systems co-operate towards a single end: your life. A "one-flesh" union is also possible between two adults in one specific way.

In the marital act, a man and woman are co-ordinated towards a single bodily end: new life. In this way, the life-giving act becomes the love-making act – a seal of their

committed union of heart and mind by a true bodily union. In fact, marriage is uniquely deepened by family life precisely because the act that makes marital love is also the kind that makes new life. This all-encompassing union, and its orientation towards bringing new human beings to maturity, requires an all-encompassing commitment: permanent and exclusive.

So many features of marriage – its commitments to permanence and exclusivity, its openness to life, its unitive value – are grounded in our bodies, as male and female. But, as polls indicate, many Catholics today (and many more outside the faith) doubt that embodiment and sex (or gender) matters much in marriage. They ask: isn't it enough that two people are in love? Yet those who ask this question should ask a few more.

Why, for instance, should a union set apart by deep emotional fulfilment be pledged to permanence – as opposed to lasting only as long as the sense of fulfilment does? Why should marriage be a union of two, if three can be united emotionally? Why should the spouses "forsake all others" if a sexually "open" union enhances emotional fulfilment? Why should the bond be sexual at all, if its promise lies in its emotional satisfactions?

These questions make it clear that the moral truths about marriage, available to reason and faith alike, form a very tight web indeed. To pull out a thread is to unravel the whole. That is why the bishops must affirm that consummated covenantal marriage is indissoluble. For one thing, this is a definitive teaching of the Church. We cannot deny that, like the Church's whole marital ethic, it has been a great burden on a great many. But Our Lord foresaw that and spoke of it with maximum clarity, as he did of the Eucharist and other "hard sayings".

*"Many Catholics ask: isn't it enough that two people are in love? Those who ask this question should ask a few more"*

Besides, embracing remarriage would be a concession to the spirit of the age that the pain of unmet desire for sexual companionship is too great for God really to want anyone to have to bear. And that concession, as we have seen, would eclipse the Church's whole vision of marriage and family – a vision that ultimately serves the needs of children, the internal requirements of marital love, and the dignity of every person in her or his bodily integrity. Not to mention that, in the context of the West's current turmoil

**“Our most basic identity is not as single, married or divorced; as gay or straight – but as a son or daughter of God, made in his image, and destined for the glory of his kingdom”**


over marriage, making such a concession in the case of remarried but not of gay couples would be capricious.

The Synod’s task, then, will be to offer pastoral solutions to those suffering from loneliness, or from broken hearts and homes – solutions that illuminate rather than obscure the values to which their hardship gives radiant, poignant witness.

Those values are natural, but not only natural. Some of the ancients knew that to honour marriage was to affirm the goodness of the body, of embodied love and new human life. But we know, as they could not, that honouring the natural law of marriage can lead us, by grace, to the eternal banquet where all are made “one flesh” – one body, one spirit, in Christ.

By so reminding us that marriage is ultimately a temporary sign of that union with Christ which lasts for ever, the Gospel gives us the most hopeful of all perspectives on

marital hardships. For it tells us that celibacy or single service, as well as marriage, points to our ultimate union in heaven – marriage to its comprehensiveness, and the former to its all-inclusiveness. It tells us that there is no “normal” vocation for those who can, with contingency plans for those who can’t or have “failed”, but unique calls to each one of us, willed in love from the foundation of the world and offering us a way of bearing fruit at every moment, however tragic.

And it tells us, finally, that everyone’s most basic identity is not as single, married or divorced; as gay or straight; as member of this or that family or household – but as son or daughter of God, made in his image, destined for his household, and for the glory of his kingdom. 

*Sherif Girgis is a law student at Yale and a doctoral student in philosophy at Princeton. He is also co-author of “What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense” published by Encounter Books.*

“At a time when some scientists are reviving the old idea that science and faith are incompatible – and some Christians seem to be playing into their hands – this programme is a sign of hope and new possibilities. We need to bring these vital areas of life into a creative and constructive dialogue, and here we have resources to do just that. I commend this whole programme with enthusiasm.”  
Bishop Tom Wright, DD, Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, University of St Andrews



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# A Shepherd Speaks: A Pastoral Letter to Catholic Families

*By Bishop James D Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska*

On 25 March, Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska, issued a pastoral letter to Catholic families and healthcare workers. It addressed the issue of married life and artificial contraception, describing how the latter undermines “the language of love” and calling for a new appreciation of natural family planning.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Twenty years ago, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta stood before the President of the United States, before senators and congressmen, before justices of the United States Supreme Court. She spoke about her work among the world's poor. She spoke about justice and compassion. Most importantly, she spoke about love.

“Love”, she told them, “has to hurt. I must be willing to give whatever it takes not to harm other people and, in fact, to do good to them. This requires that I be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me and I bring injustice, not peace, to those around me.”<sup>1</sup>

Sacrifice is the language of love. Love is spoken in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who poured out his life for us on the cross. Love is spoken in the sacrifice of the Christian life, sharing in Christ's life, death and resurrection. And love is spoken in the sacrifice of parents, and pastors, and friends.

We live in a world short on love. Today, love is too often understood as romantic sentimentality rather than unbreakable commitment. But sentimentality is unsatisfying. Material things, and comfort, and pleasure bring only fleeting happiness. The truth is that we are all searching for real love, because we are all searching for meaning.

Real love is about sacrifice, and redemption, and hope. Real love is at the heart of a rich, full life. We are made for real love. And all that we do – in our lives, in our careers and especially in our families – should be rooted in our capacity for real, difficult, unfailing love.

But today, in a world short on love, we're left without peace, and without joy.

In my priesthood, I have stood in front of abortion clinics to offer help to women experiencing unwanted pregnancies; I have prayed with the neglected elderly; and I have buried young victims of violence. I have seen the isolation, the injustice and the sadness that comes from a world short on love. Mother Teresa believed, as do I, that much of the world's unhappiness and injustice begins with a disregard for the miracle of life created in the wombs of mothers. Today, our culture rejects love when it rejects the gift of new life, through the use of contraception

Mother Teresa said that “in destroying the power of giving life, through contraception, a husband or wife...destroys the gift of love”.

Husbands and wives are made to freely offer themselves as gifts to one another in friendship, and to share in the life-giving love of God.

He created marriage to be unifying and procreative – to join husband and wife inseparably in the mission of love, and to bring forth from that love something new.

Contraception robs the freedom for those possibilities.

God made us to love and to be loved. He made us to delight in the power of sexual love to bring forth new human beings, children of God, created with immortal souls. Our Church has always taught that rejecting the gift of children erodes the love between husband and wife: it distorts the unitive and procreative nature of marriage. The use of contraception gravely and seriously disrupts the sacrificial, holy and loving meaning of marriage itself.

The Church continues to call Catholic couples to unity and procreativity. Marriage is a call to greatness, to loving as God loves – freely, creatively and generously. God himself is a community of love: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christian marriage is an invitation to imitate, and to know, and to share in the joyful freedom of God's love, an echo of the Holy Trinity.

In 1991, my predecessor Bishop Glennon P Flavin wrote that “there can be no true happiness in your lives unless God is very much a part of your marriage covenant. To expect to find happiness in sin is to look for good in evil... To keep God in your married life, to trust in his wisdom and love, and to obey his laws... will deepen your love for each other and will bring to you that inner peace of mind and heart which is the reward of a good conscience.”<sup>2</sup>

God is present in every marriage, and present during every marital embrace. He created sexuality so that males and females could mirror the Trinity: forming, in their sexual union, the life-long bonds of family. God chose to make spouses co-operators with him in creating new human lives, destined for eternity. Those who use contraception diminish their power to unite and they give up the opportunity to co-operate with God in the creation of life.

As Bishop of Lincoln, I repeat the words of Bishop Flavin. Dear married men and women: I exhort you to reject the use of contraception in your marriage. I challenge you to be open to God's loving plan for your life. I invite you to share in the gift of God's life-giving love. I fervently believe that in God's plan you will rediscover real love for your spouse and your

**“I must be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me and I bring injustice, not peace, to those around me.” (Mother Teresa)**

children, for God, and for the Church. I know that in this openness to life you will find the rich adventure for which you were made.

Our culture often teaches us that children are more a burden than a gift – that families impede our freedom and diminish our finances. We live in a world where large families are the objects of spectacle and derision, instead of the ordinary consequence of a loving marriage entrusted to God’s providence. But children should not be feared as a threat or a burden, but rather seen as a sign of hope for the future.

In 1995, Blessed John Paul II wrote that our culture suffers from a “hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and ... [from] a self-centred concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfilment.”<sup>3</sup> Generous, life-giving spousal love is the antidote to hedonism and immaturity: parents gladly give up frivolous pursuits and selfishness for the intensely more meaningful work of loving and educating their children.

**“Contraception impedes our share in God’s creative love. And thus it impedes our joy”**

In the Diocese of Lincoln, I am grateful for the example of hundreds of families who have opened themselves freely and generously to children. Some have been given large families; and some have not. And, of course, a few suffer the very difficult, hidden cross of infertility or low fertility. The mystery of God’s plan for our lives is incomprehensible. But the joy of these families, whether or not they bear many children, disproves the claims of the contraceptive mentality.

Dear brothers and sisters, Blessed John Paul II reminded us that “man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God”.<sup>4</sup> The sexual intimacy of marriage, the most intimate kind of human friendship, is a pathway to sharing in God’s own life. It is a pathway to the fullness of our own human life; it is a means of participating in the incredible love of God. Contraception impedes our share in God’s creative love. And thus it impedes our joy.

The joy of families living in accord with God’s plan animates and enriches our community with a spirit of vitality and enthusiasm. The example of your friends and neighbours demonstrates that while children require sacrifice, they are also the source of joy, meaning and peace. Who does not understand the great gift of a loving family?

Yes, being lovingly open to children requires sacrifice. But sacrifice is the harbinger of true joy. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to be open to joy.

Of course, there are some true and legitimate reasons why, at certain times, families may discern being called to the

sacrifice of delaying children. For families with serious mental, physical or emotional health problems, or who are experiencing dire financial troubles, bearing children might best be delayed. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that couples must have “just” reasons to delay childbearing. For couples facing difficulties of various kinds, the Church recommends natural family planning: a method for making choices about engaging in fruitful sexual relations.

Natural family planning (NFP) does not destroy the power to give life: instead, it challenges couples to discern prayerfully when to engage in life-giving sexual acts. It is an integrated, organic and holistic approach to fertility care.

NFP is a reliable and trustworthy way to regulate fertility, it is easy to learn, and it can be a source of unity for couples. To be sure, using NFP requires sacrifice and patience. But sacrifice and patience are not obstacles to love: they are a part of love itself. Used correctly, NFP forms gentle, generous husbands, and selfless, patient wives. It can become a school of virtuous and holy love.

Those who confine sexual intimacy to the infertile times of the month are not engaging in contraceptive practices. They do not attempt to make a potentially fertile act infertile. They sacrificially abstain during the fertile time precisely because they respect fertility. They do not want to violate it; they do not want to treat the gift of fertility as a burden.

In some relatively rare instances, NFP is used by couples with a contraceptive mentality. Too often couples can choose to abstain from fertility by default, or out of fear of the consequences of new life. I encourage all couples who use NFP to be very open with each other concerning the reasons they think it right to limit their family size; to take their thoughts to God and to pray for his guidance. Do we let fear, anxiety or worry determine the size of our families? Do we entrust ourselves to the Lord, whose generosity provides for all of our needs?

“Perfect love”, scripture teaches, “casts out fear.”<sup>5</sup>

Dear friends, I exhort you to openness in married life. I exhort you to trust in God’s abundant providence.

I would like to address in a special way Catholic physicians, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals. The noble aim of your profession is to aid men and women as they live according to God’s perfect plan. Bishop Flavin wrote that, as professionals, “you are in a position to be God’s instruments in manifesting his truth and his love”.<sup>6</sup>

No Catholic healthcare provider, in good conscience, should engage in the practice of medicine by undermining the gift of fertility. There is no legitimate medical reason to aid in the acts of contraception or sterilisation. No Catholic physician can honestly argue otherwise.

# A Shepherd Speaks: A Pastoral Letter to Catholic Families

## continued

Healthcare is the art of healing. Contraception and sterilisation may never be considered healthcare. Contraception and sterilisation denigrate and degrade the body's very purpose. Fertility is an ordinary function of health and human flourishing and an extraordinary participation in God's creative love. Contraception and sterilisation stifle the natural and the supernatural processes of marriage and cause grave harm. They treat fertility as though it were a terrible inconvenience, or even a physical defect that needs to be treated.

Contraception attempts to prevent life from the beginning, and when that fails some contraception destroys newly created life. Many contraceptives work by preventing the implantation of an embryonic human being in the uterus of his or her mother.

“Fertility is an ordinary function of health and human flourishing and an extraordinary participation in God's creative love”

Contraception is generally regarded by the medical community as the ordinary standard of care for women. The Church's teachings are often regarded as being opposed to the health and well-being of women. But apart from the moral and spiritual dangers of contraception, there are also grave physical risks to the use of most chemical contraceptives. Current medical literature overwhelmingly confirms that contraception puts women at risk of serious health problems, which doctors should consider very carefully.

Some women have health conditions that are better endured when treated by hormonal contraceptives. But the effects of contraception often mask the underlying conditions that endanger women's health. Today, there are safe, natural means of correcting hormonal imbalances and solving the conditions that are often treated by contraception.

Contraception is an unhealthy standard of care. All doctors can do better. Catholic physicians are called to help their patients and their colleagues learn the truth about the dangers of contraception and sterilisation. The good example of a physician who refuses to prescribe contraceptives and perform sterilisations or a pharmacist who refuses to distribute contraceptives in spite of antagonism, financial loss or professional pressure is an opportunity to participate in the suffering of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for the Catholic physicians and pharmacists who evangelise their patients and colleagues through a commitment to the truth.

Tragically, a majority of people in our culture, and even in our Church, have used contraception. Much of the responsibility for that lies in the fact that too few have ever been exposed to clear and consistent teaching on the subject. But the

natural consequences of our culture's contraceptive mentality are clear. Mother Teresa reflected that “once living love is destroyed by contraception, abortion follows very easily”.<sup>7</sup> She was right. Cultural attitudes that reject the gift of life lead very easily to social acceptance of abortion, of no-fault divorce, and of fatherless families. For 50 years, America has accepted the use of contraception, and the consequences have been dire.

Dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to read the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, by Pope Paul VI, with your spouse, or in your parish. Consider also *Married Love and the Gift of Life*, written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.


Dear brother priests, I encourage you to preach about the dangers of contraception, and to visit families in your parish about this issue.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you have used or prescribed contraception, the merciful love of God awaits. Healing is possible, in the sacrament of penance. If you have used or supported contraception, I pray that you will stop, and that you will avail yourself of God's tender mercy by making a good heartfelt confession.

Today, openness to children is rarely celebrated, rarely understood, and rarely supported. To many, the Church's teachings on life seem oppressive or old-fashioned. Many believe that the Church asks too great a sacrifice.

But sacrifice is the language of love. And in sacrifice, we speak the language of God himself. I am calling you, dear brothers and sisters, to encounter Christ in your love for one another. I am calling you to rich and abundant family life. I am calling you to rejoice in the love, and the sacrifice, for which you were made. I am calling your family to share in the creative, active love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I pray that, in true sacrifice, each of you will know perfect joy.

Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Annunciation, the Holy Family, and in the love of Jesus Christ. 

James D Conley

Bishop of Lincoln

25 March 25 2014

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. National Prayer Breakfast, 1994.

<sup>2</sup>Glennon P Flavin, Pastoral Letter to Catholic Couples and Physicians. 26 September 1991

<sup>3</sup>Blessed John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*, 13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid 2.

<sup>5</sup>1 John 4:18

<sup>6</sup>Bishop Flavin.

<sup>7</sup>Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. National Prayer Breakfast, 1994.



# In Their Own Words: The Early Church and Marriage

In recent months there has been much discussion as to what the first Christians believed about marriage and the discipline of the sacraments. *Faith* magazine thought it would be helpful to allow some of those influential voices of the Early Church to speak for themselves.

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

*Jesus Christ, Gospel of St Luke 16:18*

“According to our Teacher, just as they are sinners who contract a second marriage, even though it be in accord with human law, so also are they sinners who look with lustful desire at a woman. He repudiates not only one who actually commits adultery, but even one who wishes to do so; for not only our actions are manifest to God, but even our thoughts.”

*Justin Martyr, AD 151*

“Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. ... Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive.”

*Paul, Letter to the Romans 7:2–3*

“That Scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union, is expressly contained in the law.”

*Clement of Alexandria, AD 208*

“What then shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this disposition [adultery]? Let him divorce her, and let the husband remain single. But if he divorce his wife and marry another, he too commits adultery.”

*Hermas, AD 80*

“Just as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seem to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry her who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Saviour, he commits adultery with her.”

*Origen, AD 248*

“Likewise, women who have left their husbands for no prior cause, and have joined themselves with others, may not even at death receive Communion.”

*Canon 8, Council of Elvira, AD 300*

“Do not tell me about the violence of the ravisher, about the persuasiveness of a mother, about the authority of a father, about the influence of relatives, about the intrigues and insolence of servants, or about household [financial] losses. So long as a husband lives, be he adulterer, be he sodomite, be he addicted to every kind of vice, if she left him on account of his crimes, he is her husband still and she may not take another.”

*Jerome, AD 396*

“No one is permitted to know a woman other than his wife. The marital right is given you for this reason: lest you fall into the snare and sin with a strange woman. ‘If you are bound to a wife do not seek a divorce’; for you are not permitted, while your wife lives, to marry another.”

*Ambrose of Milan, AD 387*

“Neither can it rightly be held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others.”

*Augustine of Hippo, AD 419*

“The practice is observed by all of regarding as an adulteress a woman who marries a second time while her husband yet lives, and permission to do penance is not granted her until one of them is dead.”

*Pope Innocent I, AD 408*



# Cutting Edge

## Science and Religion News



By Dr Gregory Farrelly

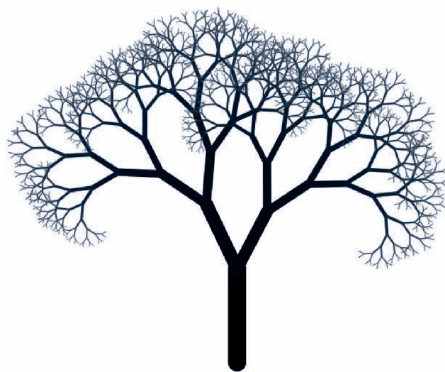
### Biological Fractals, Tigers and Trees

Researchers from the University of Maryland and the University of Padua have proposed<sup>1</sup> that plants and animals evolved in parallel, driven by the problem of how to use energy efficiently. They have considered a biological formula known as Kleiber's Law; this states that an organism's basal metabolic rate (the rate at which it consumes energy at rest) is roughly proportional to its mass raised to the power (exponent) of three-quarters:  $q_0 \propto M^{3/4}$ . A "law" is a strong statement in the natural sciences as it claims to be universally true, a consequence of some underlying symmetry or mathematical property of nature.

In 1999, a team led by Geoffrey West from Los Alamos National Laboratory suggested the reason for this law lies in fractals – mathematical, self-replicating patterns such as the one shown above. West explained that fractal-like shapes are good at maximising surface area, which permits nutrients to be absorbed more efficiently.

Almost all organisms exhibit scaling exponents very close to 3/4 for metabolic rate and to 1/4 for biological times and dimensions (eg lifespan, cardiac cycle, aorta length, tree height). The fractal geometry in effect adds an extra (fourth) dimension to the familiar three dimensions of space, accounting for these mathematical exponents. Even in organisms without apparent "fractality" in their internal forms, Kleiber's law seems to hold. The more recent researchers state that "the earliest plants and animals had simple and quite different bodies, but natural selection has acted on the two groups so the geometries of modern trees and animals are, remarkably, displaying equivalent energy efficiencies. They are both equally fit. And that is what Kleiber's Law is showing us."<sup>2</sup>

The Maryland-Padua team consider a tree and a tiger. The tree has the easier task – to convert sunlight to energy and




move it within a body that is essentially stationary. The tree has evolved a branching (fractal) shape with many surfaces, its leaves, to make this task as efficient as possible. The surface area and the volume of space it occupies are nearly the same numerically. Here, the tree's nutrients flow at a constant speed, regardless of its size, conforming to Kleiber's Law. The tiger needs fuel, but "burning" that fuel generates heat that must be dissipated. Because the tiger's surface area is proportionally smaller than its volume and mass, surface cooling is not efficient enough. As animals get larger in size, their metabolism must increase at a slower rate than their volume. If the surface area were all that mattered, an animal's metabolism would increase as its size increased, at the rate  $q_0 \propto M^{2/3}$  (two-thirds being the exponent in the surface area to volume relationship:  $S \propto V^{2/3}$ ), yet Kleiber's Law, instead, is obeyed even here, ie  $q_0 \propto M^{3/4}$ . The research team have solved this apparent contradiction not with fractals but with the velocity of blood flow, which is proportional to  $M^{1/12}$ . In this view, animals adjust the flow of nutrients and heat as their mass changes to maintain the greatest possible energy efficiency. "That is why animals need a pump – a heart – and trees do not."<sup>3</sup>

This solution implies "convergent evolution", the independent evolution of similar features in different species, considered in an earlier edition of this column.<sup>4</sup> Here, evolution is driven by the underlying physics and mathematics. Faith readers will recognise the link between the mathematical structure of

the physical universe and the Unity-Law of Control and Direction, the metaphysical principle of being and becoming that prompts the questions: Whence comes such a "law" of the universe? And what "being" can cause all other being to exist and hold it in being? This being cannot itself be material since it would then be subject to the contingent laws of being and becoming, typical of the material world. Ultimate being, the ultimate "cause" in Aristotelian philosophy, must therefore be immaterial. This "spiritual" being is, of course, God.

This philosophical and theological view is quite distinct from Intelligent Design arguments. In the Faith vision, phenomena such as Kleiber's law are evidence of the underlying, ordered, mathematical nature of physical reality, rather than special designs or interventions by the Creator. In this perspective, the physical sciences themselves are evidence for the causality and dependence inherent within matter. It is they that enable a coherent metaphysics to be developed that implies the existence of a spiritual creator and sustainer of the universe – whom we know as God.

### The Universe: Merely Mathematics?

In a recent book, *Our Mathematical Universe: My Quest for the Ultimate Nature of Reality*, Max Tegmark, a physics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, argues that the idea of equivalence means that the universe *is* a mathematical structure rather than a reality merely describable by mathematics. The false argumentation, convincing to the average reader no doubt, shows the need for physicists to be trained in philosophy and the need for philosophers (and theologians) to be aware of current trends in physics. 

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Feb. 17, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Faith Magazine* Jul/Aug 2012.



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# Book Reviews

## A Noble Project

*The Radiance of Being: Dimensions of Cosmic Christianity* by Stratford Caldecott, Angelico Press, 304pp, £10.95

Part One of this synthetically reworked collection of essays is introduced with some words of EI Watkin from 1947. The quotation captures the noble project of the book in this way: "The old Catholic religion-culture of Europe is dead ... the inheritance of classical culture ... has been destroyed, overwhelmed by a vast influx of new knowledge, by the scientific mass civilisation of the modern world. ... The abiding and immutable truth of metaphysics and revealed religion must be reclad in new garments woven by a scientific and historical knowledge incomparably vaster than was ever before possessed by man." This book makes an impressive contribution towards meeting this challenge.

It is a grand and unique attempt to synthesise modern science with the history and philosophy of science of neo-scholastics such as Etienne Gilson, the metaphysics and theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, the mysticism of Eckhart, and Henri de Lubac's retrieval of the pre-Augustinian tripartite (body-soul-spirit) anthropology. Caldecott convincingly shows where the broadly neo-scholastic metaphysical template of the real distinction of essence and existence is going. It is naturally, if unfortunately for this writer, a different direction from that of the major contemporary developments in post-Popperian scientific realism. But

in Part I Caldecott does interestingly incorporate some modern reflections upon quantum mechanics, the concept of infinity, and epigenetics among others. He is appropriately widely read in both science and theology, and demonstrates a great ability succinctly to summarise salient points.

This is an important and helpful book for the Catholic community as it struggles to respond appropriately to the challenge outlined by Watkin – and by Ronald Knox two years earlier in 1945 (see the first part of his *God and the Atom*, summarised in *Faith Magazine* Nov/Dec 2012). For this reason I would engage now in more detail with his presentation of a prominent philosophical tradition from the point of view of the different one presented by the *Faith* movement.

## Searching for a Coherent Anthropology

Caldecott has in fact turned his astute eye upon the *Faith* movement's Unity-Law idea, giving it a thought-provoking place within his survey of Catholic attempts to synthesise modern science and religion. His fairly accurate overview contains an important criticism, namely that the "new synthesis makes the human soul an exception to the process of evolution, but without explaining how this does not render the whole account incoherent" (p51).

Making the human soul coherent has of course been a real challenge for second millennium Catholic philosophy in general. For, as Caldecott highlights, the Catholic tendency, from Thomas Aquinas through to the contemporary *Catechism* (one might also add St Augustine and the 14th-century papal Encyclical *Benedictus Deus*) has been to emphasise that the human soul is not physical, but rather spiritual, in the image of God's divine nature, and directly created at conception. Today this teaching is rarely regarded as easy to defend coherently, and even more rarely does it have an essential place in catechetical schemes, or in defences of human dignity, freedom

and immortality. Readers of this magazine (and of our "Reasons for Believing" pamphlet *What Makes Man Unique?*) will know that we, somewhat uniquely, do regard it as a crucial doctrine which desperately needs an updated defence.

Caldecott's push for anthropological coherence involves placing man on just another "ontological level" of the metaphysical hierarchy he proposes. This is a special level in as much as it is open to the very life of God. He associates this with the "spirit" dimension of the "Renaissance-Platonic" view of the human person as body-soul-spirit, as retrieved by de Lubac. The book acknowledges that "there is still much confusion" in this anthropological tradition (p208). Thus it downplays the traditional ontological duality of physical and spiritual, and interprets the magisterial affirmation by *Humanae Generis* (1950) of the soul's direct creation as being "open to a conveniently wide range of interpretations" (p43).

The *Faith* movement's push for such coherence involves affirming, in a neo-Augustinian manner, the dynamic relationship of spiritual mind (whether of the absolute God or of the human soul in his image) with the objects of its knowing, as a metaphysical first principle. As such being-known-by-mind is a relationship constitutive and causative of a creaturely thing. It is foundational to the Unity Law as it applies across the whole of the created cosmos, across the explicitly acknowledged, discontinuous but complementary existence of matter and spirit. It is only in this sense that the soul is an "exception to the process of evolution".

For the complementarity of spiritual mind (eg human soul) and physical matter (eg human body) is foundational to all cosmic existence. And we argue that the direct creation of the spiritual soul falls directly under the principles of the Unity Law, which also govern evolution (see above mentioned pamphlet and elsewhere).

## “Caldecott has turned his astute eye upon the *Faith* movement’s Unity-Law idea, giving it a thought-provoking place in his survey of Catholic attempts to synthesise modern science and religion”

### Metaphysical Starting Points

For the Unity-Law vision the dynamic of “being known by distinct spiritual mind” is foundational to the existence and essence of creatures (and perhaps of the Triune Creator). This is our metaphysical starting point, validated by the core of all human experience of being a mind-matter composite engaging with our material environment.

Caldecott’s metaphysical starting point is in line with the scholastic tradition. It assumes that the “essential” realm of “horizontal causation” is founded in the “vertical causation” of the act of existence. This *actus essendi* transcends the definitive intelligibility of created things. For Aquinas it grounds creaturely existence in the absolute creator and sustainer of all, which Aristotle in his analysis of essence and causation did not need. Even Aquinas’s enhancement of Aristotle’s foundational/“primary” “final cause” and his attempt to apply it to God was still not enough to affirm God as creator and sustainer of every bit of cosmic existence. This is because the other causes (formal, efficient and material) were intelligibly distinct from finality, and conferred definitive intelligibility on things. For this writer the resultant confusion of agent causation (from spiritual mind) with physical teleology (ie from physical matter) has been a big problem for scholastic thought.

This is contrary to our vision, in which anything’s (analogical) existence is directly dependent upon a creative mind; this dependence is thus intrinsic to its essence, that is to its definitive intelligibility. Aristotelian final causation is for us just an aspect of the matter-energy hierarchy of unities, while agent causation is an equally existential and intelligible grounding of all.

As ever Caldecott cuts to the heart of his metaphysical subject matter, affirming of the traditional Catholic vision of the existential: “Only within this vertical dimension does it make sense to seek for God, and for a divine

influence upon the unfolding of evolution. Any other attempt to combine religion and science will lead to a process God so identified with all creation that he loses all transcendence” (p49). He calls the scholastic existential principle “the depth dimension of being”.

### Our Difference From Animals

At this point Caldecott traces for us a couple of very tricky manoeuvres within neo-scholasticism. First, this depth, this “interior” dimension, of every creature is proposed as the principle of the human observer’s consciousness and of science in its “contemplative” fullness. This attempts to make the soul-spirit distinction piggy-back upon the “real” distinction of essence and existence; to maintain not only man’s *essential* transcendence from the creator but the *existential* possibility of him becoming one with God. In this book it leads to this affirmation: “This is the uncreated and unfallen element in man which makes it possible for him to be united with God in his own ground. It is the source of his freedom and identity from which he is exiled by sin” (p278). The “unfallen” reminds one of the semi-Pelagian affirmation opposed by Augustine, but one needs to remember that de Lubac tried to rescue some aspect of this heretical anthropology. For us the term “uncreated” contains a bigger possible Trojan horse.

Yet it seems that the “spirit” of man is Caldecott’s only qualitative distinction of man from animals. At the very end of the philosophy of science in Part I of this book Caldecott simply affirms, without adducing evidence or argument, the crucial importance of such an “intrinsic difference”. We are told that the personhood of man is “a unique individual with a unique destiny” (p95). The answer to this seems to come in the reflections upon the *revelation* of the divine nature (Part II) and of the “uncreated ... element in man” (Part III). Like Professor David Jones’ *The Soul of the Embryo*, man’s distinction from animals, in this contemporary Catholic

synthesis of science and religion, can only be shown by revelation. They are at least surely right not to fall back on the Catholic proofs of the soul from abstract knowledge adduced before the arrival of modern science.

### Science: A Special Type of Observation?

Second, the metaphysical depth dimension, which is meant to transcend essence, is for numerous neo-scholastics the principle of contingency as well as of final and formal causation. This is the root of a philosophy of science from Gilson to Caldecott (possibly including Pope Benedict XVI in his Bundestag address) which argues that modern science methodologically excludes formality and teleology from consideration. This reduction of the nature of modern scientific methodology is hard to maintain in the light of most contemporary philosophy of science, as Stephen Barr for instance has shown in this magazine. Caldecott does highlight (p38) C.S. Lewis’s urgent call, in the *Abolition of Man*, for a “new natural philosophy”, which appears to lend him some support, while also, this writer would say, adding some significant qualification.

### Conclusions

The metaphysics that has been sketched is claimed to give a Trinitarian and sacramental pattern to cosmic reality. Yet it extends across many “ontological levels”. An image of God himself can be the way in which mathematics has depicted infinity as “always passing beyond itself”. Thus the world which “has some real existence of its own, an *infinity in its own degree*, by virtue of its participation in God’s *actus purus*” “can achieve in [God] an eternal existence” (pp23-4). Indeed God himself is always surpassing himself. As per Balthasar, God is always “surprising himself”. This is the dynamic of Gift which infuses all reality (p111). In a very Transcendental Thomist conclusion we are told that “the world is in God ... subsisting in God”.



## Book Reviews continued

In the *Faith* movement we believe we can make creation appear more coherently a unity if we see its fundamental being as being known by the absolute mind of God. This is the only way intelligibly to maintain radical contingency of creature and radical transcendence of Creator without falling into the pantheism that seems to await so much contemporary development of the essence-existence distinction. It is a metaphysics that is more obviously supportive of Church doctrine, and more fully supported by the contemporary philosophy behind the success of the scientific method.

This book clearly shows the inevitable trajectory of a metaphysics that posits a radical metaphysical priority of existentiality over essential intelligibility, of being over being known, of existence over mind. It always means having to bolt on the concept of mind, and losing an intelligibly clear distinction between the being of the creature and the being of the absolute. It is time we allowed this foundation to be realigned, and to recover the Augustinian emphasis.

**Hugh MacKenzie**

*A second volume in this project by Stratford Caldecott, Not As the World Gives, will be published this year.*

### Catholic Middle Earth

*A Hobbit Journey by Matthew Dickerson, Brazos Press, 260pp, £10.99*

*The Power of the Ring by Stratford Caldecott, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 238pp, £10.68*

*The Lord of the Rings* is one of the most popular novels of the 20th century. It has sold over 150 million copies, been translated into dozens of languages and reached an even wider audience with the film trilogy. It generates great loyalty among its readers, many of whom discover the book in adolescence and are inspired by the nobility, heroism and beauty

with which, unusually in modern literature, the book is charged. Tolkien's popularity is at once a blessing and a curse for critics. The line between scholar and fan, always somewhat tricky to navigate in literary criticism, is well and truly blurred, and the problem is exacerbated by a desire on the part of his admirers to defend him from the snobbery of some in the academic world who, distracted by his popularity (and influenced perhaps by some of his less impressive successors in the fantasy genre), still echo the opinion of Edmund Wilson, one of Tolkien's early critics, who thought the books were no more than "juvenile trash".

Tolkien's unfinished, sprawling corpus of work is so vast, so rich in detail, so full of wide-ranging moral and philosophical issues, drawing on so many different sources, that the possibilities for discussion are endless. The temptation for any lover of Middle Earth is to write a book which becomes "Everything I Ever Wanted to Say about Tolkien". These two books by Matthew Dickerson and Stratford Caldecott demonstrate respectively how to fall into, and how to avoid, this trap.

Both books are revised editions of originals. Dickerson is reworking his previous book, *Following Gandalf: Epic Battles and Moral Victory in 'The Lord of the Rings'*, and Caldecott is updating and expanding his earlier edition entitled *Secret Fire*. The difference in approach and style between the two writers is apparent from the very beginning.

In *A Hobbit Journey*, the reader has to plough through 17 pages of a rather diffuse introduction before Dickerson explicitly states the purpose of his book, and even then it is somewhat vague: it will explore the question "What can we learn from hobbits and from their vision of the Good Life, and how does that apply to our own present situation?" (p17). This is not a critical question but one which treats *LOTR* as moral teaching material. In

contrast, Caldecott states in the first line of his preface: "The book is about Tolkien's spirituality, by which I mean his religious awareness and experience, the things he believed about life and death and ultimate truth" (p xi). He makes it clear that his book is part of the wider body of scholarly criticism: "Secondary works, like this one, are written to help others to understand the writer and his background" (p xi).

Judging by the title of Dickerson's previous edition, his older book was more focused, with an emphasis on the role of war in the trilogy. The first four chapters of the new edition retain this focus, and it is these that are the most original and interesting. Questions such as whether torture is permissible in Tolkien's world view, whether war is glorified (with a side-debate about how the films differ from the books in this respect), and how victory and defeat are characterised, are worth considering and will encourage readers to think more deeply about *LOTR* and appreciate how nuanced Tolkien's treatment of these issues is.

The book becomes increasingly generalised as it goes on, with later chapters having such titles as "Human Freedom and Creativity" and "Moral Responsibility and Stewardship". There is much good content, but the author is trying to cover too much under headings which are too broad, and the book loses focus. The writing throughout is very accessible, and any Tolkien fan will enjoy reading it, but I suspect it would not persuade a sceptic to take *LOTR* seriously, nor do I think the author is saying anything particularly unique.

In the final chapter, the author quotes a line from one of Tolkien's letters: "*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work." Dickerson does not go into specifics about how Tolkien's Catholicism affected his writing, referencing Caldecott's book as a deeper exploration.



## “While highlighting the ill treatment of children, Victorian authors did not follow today’s pro-abortion attitude that it is cruel to let children be born into squalor”

Caldecott, as a Catholic philosopher, is perfectly placed to understand Tolkien’s faith and how it is expressed in his work. However, anyone, particularly a partisan Catholic, will be disappointed if they open this book expecting a nice easy list of how characters, events and objects in *LOTR* correspond to items of Catholic dogma. This is not how Caldecott thinks, and certainly not how Tolkien wrote: he made his distaste for this kind of obvious allegory very clear.

Instead Caldecott, in a lyrical, elevated tone reminiscent of Tolkien’s own writing style, goes deep into Tolkien’s spiritual vision, showing how this led him to create a work that is illuminated throughout by a faith at once fully orthodox and profoundly personal. This journey is not for the faint-hearted: the reader’s full attention is required as Caldecott takes us beyond *LOTR* to explore Tolkien’s entire fictional corpus, as well as many of his critical writings and a number of personal letters and biographical details.

Caldecott draws on a range of Catholic writing from Hildegard of Bingen to Newman to Flannery O’Connor to the *Catechism* itself, showing the rich tradition in which *LOTR* should be located, and demonstrating the influence of what Tolkien himself called “a Faith that has nourished me and taught me all the little that I know”. On the way he uncovers some treasures which have been underused in criticism, such as Tolkien’s description of a mystical experience he had while attending a Forty Hours devotion, an experience that fed into his vision of angels and subsequent characterisation of the Elvish in *LOTR*.

Another fascinating moment is Caldecott’s identification of the date on which the ring is destroyed with the feast of the Annunciation, the celebration of Christ’s incarnation, and his analysis of the implications of this for the book as a whole. It is this kind of detail which shows how profitable it is

to have an informed Catholic perspective when approaching Tolkien. Caldecott manages to achieve a difficult feat in this book: covering a vast range of sources and going into detailed textual analysis while still maintaining a specific angle.

About the last third of the book consists of an appendix of short essays, each of which focuses on a single issue in *LOTR*, and it is these that constitute the main difference between this book and the previous edition. This is an excellent way to cover a wide range of different approaches to Tolkien in a single book without losing overall focus. Different readers will enjoy different essays depending on their personal interest: I particularly enjoyed the essay on the influence of the King Arthur legend on Tolkien’s writing, and also Caldecott’s analysis of the films.

The sheer amount of criticism that exists about Tolkien is overwhelming, and for a critic to stand out as worth reading he or she has to do something unique. I believe that Stratford Caldecott has achieved this, and I thoroughly recommend his book to anyone who is committed to deepening their understanding of *LOTR*, and to all lovers of Tolkien who return again and again to the book to experience, in Caldecott’s words: “the glimpse of high Elvish beauty that inspires heroism, whether in the Third Age or this, the Seventh Age of the Sun” (p 146).

Lucy Nash

### War on the Unborn

*Culture and Abortion by Edward Short, Gracewing, 277pp, £14.99*

Marie Stopes sat under a yew tree outside her house in Dorking one day in 1922. There she claimed to have received a directive from God to tell the Anglican bishops assembled for the Lambeth Conference that the primary purpose of intercourse was

not the procreation of children. The audacity of the prominent campaigner for reproductive rights illustrates the kind of changing of attitudes that would lead to the 1967 Abortion Act.

*Culture and Abortion*, rather than forming a continuous narrative, is a selection of reflections on the impact of literature, the arts and politics on the culture of abortion. It is a look at British and American cultures now compared with the centuries before the passing of the Abortion Act and *Roe v Wade*. Blessed John Paul II’s encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* is used as a key text, particularly as Short describes the Polish pope as the “greatest historian of abortion”. For the reader, a basic knowledge of English literature is useful as the writings of authors such as Charles Dickens, G K Chesterton and the poet Anne Ridler are explored. A little knowledge of philosophy is also of help, particularly as Descartes’ theories are presented as throwing doubt on the nature of human identity.

Several striking hypotheses for why abortion was thought to be acceptable are put forward. Edward Short considers the ill treatment of children in Victorian Britain. Far from being regarded as a great gift, they were sent to the mill houses and up chimneys at an early age. Slavery may have been abolished, but it was still going on in the factories and mill houses.

However, while highlighting the poor quality of life of children in stories such as *Oliver Twist* and *Little Dorrit*, authors at that time did not follow today’s pro-abortion attitude – namely that it is cruel to let children be born into squalor. There might be poverty, but God-given life is also found in this hardship. Short argues that if Dickens were to have lived in a pro-abortion culture, his audience would never have stood for Oliver’s mother dying so that the young boy might live.

Short finds no evidence of explicit complaints against the demands of motherhood in the 18th century, nor



## Book Reviews continued

any foreshadowing of a call for “reproductive rights”. In fact, he claims here were no pro-abortion women in any century prior to the late 20th century. But later, he shows how just one generation of women, who are now mothers, grew up with widely available birth control. In a rapid change of culture, they were pressured to find their true womanhood in the bedroom.

As a consequence, the false promises of feminism have damaged families and neglected children. Not only this, but abortion has put women’s health at risk. In a chapter dedicated to the work of the Life charity, studies on the link between abortion and breast cancer are discussed, as are findings that show rates of suicide and binge drinking are higher among women who have had abortions.

The shocking attitudes of the main players of abortion culture are exposed. Marie Stopes rowed with her son when he got engaged to a woman who wore glasses. She could not cope with having a woman in the family with defective eyesight. Dr Katherine Hancock Ragsdale, dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, calls abortion “a blessing” because it helps women to enjoy a healthy sexuality without the risk of pregnancy.

However, Short contrasts these astonishing attitudes of the powerful towards the weak with many signs of hope. In perhaps the most intriguing chapter, “William Wilberforce and the Fight for Life”, he follows the sketch portrayed in William Hague’s biography of the 19th-century Hull and Yorkshire MP who heroically led the campaign for the abolition of slavery. Short compares the economic interest in the slave trade with the massive profits made by the abortion industry. The story of the abolitionists’ victory, in the face of great opposition, offers much hope to the pro-life cause. It is an example of how persistence and a conviction of serving God in politics can change hearts and minds.

Former abortionist doctors Aleck Bourne and Bernard Nathanson are presented as personifying the change of heart that must happen if abortion is to be ended. But the greatest sign of hope in the battle against abortion is Our Lady. In *Evangelium Vitae*, Blessed John Paul II says Mary is the “living word of comfort for the Church in her struggle against death”.

In short, *Culture and Abortion* is addressed to the committed pro-lifer who seeks to understand more about the social, historical, political and literary influences on the “barbarity of abortion”.

**Richard Marsden**

### A Father in Context

*Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy, edited by Paul Foster and Sarah Parvis, Fortress Press, 274pp, £25.99*

In the course of this learned work – 18 chapters preceded by an Introduction by the editors – an impressive amount of accurate scholarship is devoted to exploring Irenaeus in three parts: his life, his writings and his legacy. The precision of the writing is impressive, and the book is clearly intended for an academic readership. It is a collection of 18 papers delivered at a conference held in Edinburgh in August 2009. Each can stand alone: there is no overall thesis. Arguably the most useful part of the book is the introduction by the editors, which offers a helpful summary of the papers.

The opening chapter by Paul Parvis provides a compact introduction to the life and writings of Irenaeus, the second century bishop of Lyons. Our main source for knowledge of his life and works in Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5. The influence of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, himself a disciple of Saint John the apostle, is dealt with, though chapter 7 by Sebastian Moll questions how far this influence went, largely because in his

*Letter to Florinus* Irenaeus never mentions the name of Polycarp. However, Moll’s critic Charles Hill in the next paper regards Moll’s position as misplaced scepticism (cf pp101ff).

The Church owes a good deal to Irenaeus, above all in his argument for there being four and only four gospels, a position based on his understanding of the four corners of the world and the four beasts of the Apocalypse in Revelation 4:7 (see *Adversus Haereses*, Book III, chapter 11, para 8) – a view which became popular and is cited by Primasius, bishop of Hadrumetum in north Africa in the sixth century in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Part I, chapter 4). Indeed, one of the gaps in this learned work is the failure to address the question of the use made of Irenaeus by writers in later centuries.

Chapter 18, by MC Steenburg, entitled “Tracing the Irenaeian Legacy”, addresses this problem. He admits that whereas it is relatively easy to trace the legacy of Athanasius and Basil, the fourfold gospel apart we find in Irenaeus teaching of great importance, above all in his opposition to Marcion, a near contemporary, his doctrine of recapitulation and his treatment of Mary as the second Eve in his *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* 32 and 33. His influence can be traced in Augustine, Eusebius and Epiphanius. Augustine, the first western writer to use Irenaeus, cites him and mentions him by name; in his treatise *Contra Iulianum* he refers to him as “an ancient man of God”.

It is a pity, therefore, that in chapter 6, “Irenaeus’ Contribution to Early Christian Interpretation of the Song of Songs”, by Karl Shuve, despite the fact that he does mention Hippolytus, no reference is made to Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, both of whom wrote extensively about the Song of Songs. Nuptial imagery is dealt with in the second letter of Clement of Rome and by Justin, but the main interest of the author is looking backwards rather than forwards.

**“Far from her being cut off from her old Hollywood friends, the sharing of her Benedictine spirituality has proved an enrichment for the many whose hearts she has touched”**

In general terms the central purpose of this impressive collection of lectures is contextualisation, rather than textual analysis. To people like the present reviewer, who were lectured by scholars who discouraged this practice in favour of getting to know the text of a work, for example the *Republic of Plato*, without bothering about the background, the approach of most of the papers in this volume is novel and challenging. Contextualisation and content are not easy bedfellows.

With the possible exception of the first chapter, by Paul Parvis, none discuss either the *Adversus Haereses* or the *Demonstration* in any detail. Reference is indeed made to Irenaeus's opposition to Gnosticism, to his discarding of the Marcionites' attempt to get rid of the Old Testament, to his argument for four gospels and four only and to his doctrine of recapitulation, but there is no independent treatment of these issues.

**Anthony Meredith SJ**

## **The Nun From Hollywood**

*The Ear of the Heart by Mother Dolores Hart OSB and Richard DeNeut, Ignatius Press. 539pp, \$24.95, Also available via Amazon*

Dolores Hart was a highly successful screen and stage actress. She made her Hollywood debut in 1957 in a film with Elvis Presley, *Loving You*. Described as “beautiful, bright, witty and down to earth”, she starred in 10 films and earned a Tony nomination for her performance in the Broadway production *The Pleasure of His Company*.

Suddenly in 1963, though engaged to be married, she left Hollywood and entered the Benedictine abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Connecticut. She had first gone there in 1958 for quietness and prayer. *The Ear of the Heart* is her answer to the oft-asked question “How could you

throw away a promising acting career for the life of a cloistered nun?”

The book is both autobiographical and biographical. Early in 1997 Mother Dolores was discovered to have sensory peripheral neuropathy, which impeded her ability to write. To overcome this she had to make 225 tape recordings. These were carefully transcribed. The result is a book revealing her persona in a very personal and readable style. She is clearly a cultured lady, and *The Ear of the Heart* has a frankness and trust that brings Dolores Hart – star actress and dedicated Benedictine – very personally to the mind of the reader.

Linked with the biographical contribution of a friend of many years, Richard DeNeut, the book is thought-provoking, informative, a pleasure to read and in no way superficial. It records a wide variety of life experiences – the happy and the difficult – from her youth and Hollywood years to her service to the world as a Benedictine contemplative. It took 10 years to write.

It is a book to read, to keep, to dip into and to enjoy. Hollywood names she mentions – Karl Malden, Gary Cooper and their families, with Myrna Loy, Loretta Young and Anthony Quinn among a host of others – are spoken of as part of her wide circle of friends and associates. Two generous sections of photographs, spanning her early Hollywood and Benedictine years, complement the vividness of the written word.

Dolores had become a Catholic when baptised shortly before her 10th birthday. She wanted this, and her parents had no objection. She was instructed in the faith by one of the sisters at her school in California; and her Catholic faith was further deepened through her study of the *Baltimore Catechism*. Her autobiography reveals her in her younger days as a prayerful person, devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and insistent on living out the principles of

her faith. Her Catholic culture is evident in the religious and moral management of her Hollywood years. Rightly did she insist that, in writing about her, “her person was to be kept within a virginal integrity”.

What is clear from *The Ear of the Heart* is that Mother Dolores has maintained a continuity with many of her friends over the years. Far from her being cut off from such people in her consecrated state, as readers might readily assume, the sharing of her Benedictine spirituality has proved an enrichment for the many whose hearts she has touched with renewed hope and Christian joy.

Mother Dolores eventually became prioress of the community and also dean of the sisters' education. She is a thinker and a good listener. This ensured that every community member could contribute freely to all matters pertaining to their life and mission. The Mother Abbess noted how Mother Dolores “loves to take on new challenges” with “real reverence and real tenacity”.

At the end of the book Mother Dolores writes: “Many people do not understand the difference between a vocation and your own idea about something. A vocation is a call – and one you do not necessarily want. The only thing I ever wanted to be was an actress. But I was called by God.” *The Ear of the Heart* presents the life of a person whose character, faith and love continue, after some 50 years, to respond with self-emptying generosity to such a God-given call.

**Canon Brendan MacCarthy**





# Comment on the Comments

By William Oddie

## Sharia Law: A Catholic Critique

What does it mean to say that this is a Christian country? Historically and culturally, it is undeniable that that is what we are: but what, for such a culture, are the implications of the “multiculturalism” that was at one time more intellectually respectable than it is today, but which is nevertheless, for good or ill, now irreversibly established in England?

Specifically, how concerned should Christians be at recent attempts to give Sharia law a quasi-official status alongside the law of the land that governs the rest of us? In March, the Law Society quietly issued “guidance” which would make it possible for Muslims to commission English solicitors to draw up “Sharia compliant” wills.

The Christian peer Baroness Cox – who in 2011 attempted in the House of Lords to enact legislation called the Arbitration and Mediation Services Equality Bill, to protect women living here from the effects of Sharia as it is already allowed to be practised in this country – reacted to this démarche with some alarm. “This violates everything that we stand for,” she protested.

“It would make the suffragettes turn in their graves. Everyone has freedom to make their own will and everyone has freedom to let those wills reflect their religious beliefs. But to have an organisation such as the Law Society seeming to promote or encourage a policy which is inherently gender discriminatory in a way which will have very serious implications for women and possibly for children is a matter of deep concern.”

The question is this: should other Christians – should Catholics – share this concern? The text of the Law Society’s “guidance” certainly appears to bear out Baroness Cox’s reaction. The document sets out crucial

differences between Sharia inheritance laws and Western traditions. It explains how, in Islamic custom, inheritances are divided among a set list of heirs determined by ties of kinship rather than named individuals. It acknowledges the possibility of people having multiple marriages.

“The male heirs in most cases receive double the amount inherited by a female heir of the same class,” the guidance says. “Non-Muslims may not inherit at all, and only Muslim marriages are recognised. Similarly, a divorced spouse is no longer a Sharia heir, as the entitlement depends on a valid Muslim marriage existing at the date of death. This means you should amend or delete some standard will clauses.”

It advises lawyers to draft special exclusions from the Wills Act 1837, which allows gifts to pass to the children of an heir who has died, because this is not recognised in Islamic law.

The Law society, in other words, has given “guidance” to its members as to how to draft wills in a way which circumvents English legal principles as they have always been accepted: and it envisages that this might even mean taking on the English law in court to see if their wily little legal tricks have been successful: a perfect example of an attempt to make the letter of the law prevail over its spirit: Christians will remember that, according to St Paul (2 Corinthians 3:6), “the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life”.

This is not, of course, the first time the notion of integrating Sharia law into our legal system has been suggested; readers will recall that no less a person than the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said that it was “unavoidable”. This is how the BBC reported it (7 Feb 2008):

*Dr Rowan Williams told Radio 4’s World at One that the UK has to “face up to the fact” that some of its citizens do not relate to the British legal system. Dr Williams argues that adopting parts of Islamic Sharia law would help maintain social cohesion.*

*For example, Muslims could choose to have marital disputes or financial matters dealt with in a Sharia court. He says Muslims should not have to choose between “the stark alternatives of cultural loyalty or state loyalty”.*

*In an exclusive interview with BBC correspondent Christopher Landau, ahead of a lecture to lawyers in London on Monday, Dr Williams argues this relies on Sharia law being better understood. At the moment, he says “sensational reporting of opinion polls” clouds the issue. “An approach to law which simply said – there’s one law for everybody – I think that’s a bit of a danger.”*

*He stresses that “nobody in their right mind would want to see in this country the kind of inhumanity that’s sometimes been associated with the practice of the law in some Islamic states; the extreme punishments, the attitudes to women as well”.*

*But Dr Williams said an approach to law which simply said “there’s one law for everybody and that’s all there is to be said, and anything else that commands your loyalty or allegiance is completely irrelevant in the processes of the courts – I think that’s a bit of a danger. There’s a place for finding what would be a constructive accommodation with some aspects of Muslim law, as we already do with some other aspects of religious law.*

Well, Dr Williams may think we can simply adopt “some aspects” of Sharia law; but for Muslims, Sharia law is indivisible. Their law permits them, as a temporary expedient, not to impose it

**“Our democracy is built on the principle that there is one law for all, high or low, believer or unbeliever, and that it protects our liberties as well as constraining and channelling them”**

in full in countries where they are in a minority: but in areas within that country which they consider to be Muslim territory and therefore part of the Umma, like large parts of Bradford, say, or certain parts of London, more of Sharia law will be imposed (unknown to the rest of us) than in others.

Dr Williams says that “nobody in their right mind would want to see in this country the kind of inhumanity that’s sometimes been associated with the practice of the law in some Islamic states” and gives as one example of that: “the attitudes to women”. Well, maybe nobody *should* want to see that in this country: but the Law Society is now openly and blatantly proposing to make precisely these attitudes to women a part of our legal system: so the body officially representing all solicitors actually does want to see it.

Is this something we should as a society be prepared to tolerate? This is how Baroness Cox explained the intentions underlying her Arbitration and Mediation Services Equality Bill:

*We live in a country where we have a fundamental commitment to equality under the law and to freedom, and that’s a very precious commitment to our liberal democracy and our traditions, but there’s been growing up in our midst an alternative system, which affects many citizens, especially women. It’s a kind of quasi-legal system that goes under the name of Sharia law and obviously it’s associated with the Muslim community. It discriminates systematically against women, particularly in matters of family law and testimony evidence before the law and domestic violence. I just don’t feel you can have a quasi-legal system operating alongside our own historic and traditional legal system, particularly one which discriminates against women and is causing many women real suffering.*

She failed, of course, to get her law on the statute book; and many will think that that was regrettable. But

Parliament now has surely to act to contain the threat to English law which this latest encroachment of Sharia law will represent – if the Law Society has its way. As *The Sunday Telegraph* said at the time of the Law Society’s initiative: “Britain’s legal system has its roots in Judaeo-Christian morality. It is, or should be, a single system of law that applies to everyone. That is the most fundamental principle of British justice. Our society welcomes diversity, but this should not mean adopting legal practices that are hostile to our values.”

The extent to which a parallel system already operates, however, is not generally understood. According to a study by the think-tank Civitas, many more Sharia courts are operating in Britain than is generally assumed. The tribunals operate mainly from mosques, and they settle financial and family disputes according to religious principles. They lay down judgments which can be given full legal status if approved in national law courts.

However, they operate behind closed doors and their decisions, according to Civitas, are likely to be unfair to women and backed by intimidation. Commentators on the influence of Sharia law often recognise only the five courts in London, Manchester, Bradford, Birmingham and Nuneaton that are run by the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal, and whose rulings are enforced through the state courts under the 1996 Arbitration Act.

But the Civitas study, by the academic Islamic specialist Denis MacEoin, estimates that there are in fact at least 85 working tribunals and he says that the principles on which most Sharia courts work are indicated by the fatwas – religious decrees – set out on websites run by British mosques.

“Among the rulings,” says the report, “we find some that advise illegal actions and others that transgress human rights standards as applied by British courts.” Examples set out in the study include a ruling that no Muslim


woman may marry a non-Muslim man unless he converts to Islam and that any children of a woman who does should be taken from her until she marries a Muslim.

Further rulings, according to the report, approve polygamous marriage and enforce a woman’s duty to have sex with her husband on his demand.

The report went on: “The fact that so many Sharia rulings in Britain relate to cases concerning divorce and custody of children is of particular concern, as women are not equal in Sharia law, and Sharia contains no specific commitment to the best interests of the child that is fundamental to family law in the UK. Under Sharia, a male child belongs to the father after the age of seven, regardless of circumstances.”

The whole point, of course, is that our entire democracy is built on the fundamental principle that there is one law for everyone, high or low, believer or unbeliever, and that the law protects our liberties as well as constraining and channelling them. There is no habeas corpus in Sharia law; there is no right in English law, furthermore, for a man to put away his wife by simply repeating “I divorce you” three times.

Dr Williams’s pronouncements on Sharia law were, said the *Sunday Times* commentator Minette Marrin at the time, “a truly astonishing revelation of his unfitness for his office”. Well, she may think that; as a Catholic commentator, I couldn’t possibly comment.

For the Master of Magdalene, which Dr Williams is today, to come out with such speculative reflections would certainly have been much less controversial. But now, of course, there would be no interview on *The World at One*. Nobody would notice. It is surely good, for him as well as for the Church of England, that Dr Williams is now comfortably settled in Cambridge. I wonder if he is causing as much local bemusement there as I remember him doing in Oxford in the 1980s. 

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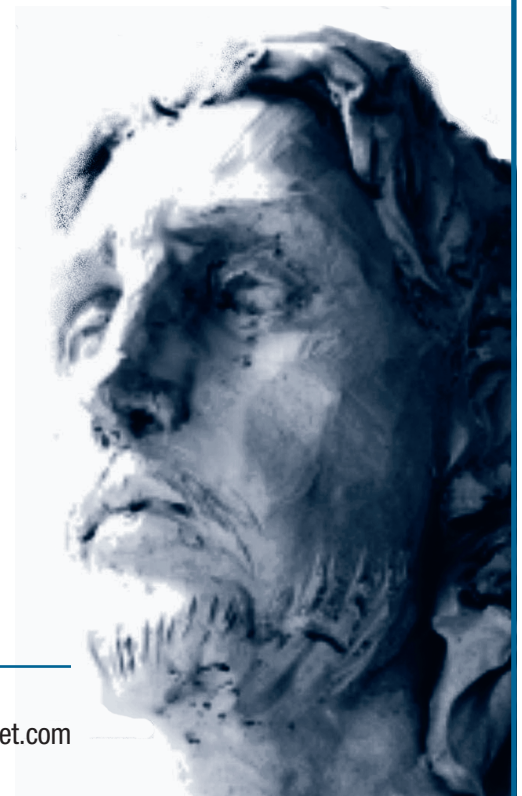


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