

faith



Promoting A New Synthesis Of Faith And Reason

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Christmas: a time to bring healing and hope

With this issue of FAITH magazine, we bring Christmastide greetings to our readers. Their number is growing – recent promotional work at Catholic gatherings this past summer introduced the magazine to a number of new readers. Welcome!

It's a cliché to say that Christmas is a "family time". But clichés usually hold some well-established truth: that's why they become clichés.

Christmas Dinner ought to be – for many still is – a grand gathering of family and clan around a table with good food and with glasses raised in toasts and a generous host dispensing large quantities of good cheer.



Britain in 2018

But Christmas in the Britain of 2018, along with Christmases of the past half-century in our country, will see many families divided. Children will be ferried from one Christmas dinner to another: Mum and her new boyfriend, Dad and his parents, with some step-grandparents and half-siblings variously added to the mix over the Christmas gatherings. Cohabitation, divorce, complicated pairings, all make for awkwardness. A thoughtful Christmas feature in a newspaper last year noted a child's lament about the boredom of being ferried down what seemed endless motorway journeys, with lavatory stops and offers of hamburger meals en route to various step-relatives following parental divorces.

Language once regarded as odd is now standard: "My ex-stepmother's parents", "My sister's lesbian partner".

So we make no excuse for featuring, in this Christmas issue of FAITH, some comment and analysis of Britain's current tragic situation concerning marriage and family life. At a time when food has never been so abundantly available in Britain for this season of feasting – indeed, our major national health problem is obesity – many will be hungry not for food but for family solidarity, love and goodwill, for a renewed confidence in the truth

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about God's covenant plan for marriage as the lifelong union of a man and a woman. And the solution lies with the Church.

Message

Christmas is not the right time for great public denunciations of divorce or contraception or same-sex "marriage" in fiery terms from the pulpit. But it is a time to affirm that the Church does not and cannot change her teachings: even a general upbeat message to that effect, without going into much detail, will be understood and will send a powerful message.

This is a time to take note of the raw wounds being endured by the many people for whom the breaking up of family bonds has been particularly horrific and for whom this season will be miserable, so an emphasis of the consistency of God's love for us and the consistency of the Church's message will offer hope and healing.

Christmas has, or should have, an "edgy" message, a slightly uncomfortable challenge

It is a time for the Church to focus firmly on the truth:

God came to dwell among us, he knows our wounds, and he is really and substantially present with us now. He brings that steadfast love about which he taught when he spoke of the Good Samaritan who healed raw wounds with wine and oil and gave a pledge of future care for which he paid full price. Christ is the Good Samaritan and if our journey has been a savage one, with many wounds perhaps inflicted by a savage society imposing or encouraging horrible things, he is there to rescue and help us.

God is unchangeable, reliable, and loving

Many Catholic schools and organisations hold carol services in Advent: these are an opportunity to emphasise Advent as a time of preparation for Christmas and the place of the sacrament of penance (confession). Many people attending services at Catholic churches over Advent and Christmas will not be Catholic: this is time to offer all that is glorious in the liturgy and be generous with candlelight and beautiful traditional music so that the central importance of worship of God is grasped. Many Catholics will be at Midnight Mass who are not at Mass through the year: this is a time to bring a sense of joyful urgency about a new encounter with Christ, noting that as Catholics at Mass this Christmas, we should also be at Mass on every Sunday of the year: Christ calls us to this as we encounter him in the Christmas liturgy. If we have not been faithful to this in 2018 then the Christmas Mass is a time to open our hearts to him and make a fresh start.

A light for the year ahead

Midnight Mass as a sort of sentimental preliminary to general indulgence and socialising with a vaguely troubled conscience does not make for happiness: Midnight Mass as a spark that offers a light for the year ahead, perhaps through the challenging words of the sermon, could be a real Christmas gift.

Above all this is a time to bring people close to God. Often, the emphasis even in church at this season is about food for the body rather than the soul: collections of money to fund important projects for the hungry and the poor. Of course such action is essential. But the message of Christmas is not just about encouraging well-fed people to part with their spare cash or their used toys or clothes. Christmas is more soul-searing, more real, than that.

An "edgy" message

Moaning about the "commercialisation of Christmas" tends to fall on deaf ears. We all know about it. More useful and important is a reminder of the hugeness of what Christmas celebrates: God becoming man and sharing directly in our lives. Our entire civilisation in Britain is based on an understanding of that reality: it is why we number our years in the way that we do, it frames our language and our traditions, it has shaped our family structures and is at the core of our common life.

So Christmas has, or should have, an "edgy" message, a slightly uncomfortable challenge that will in fact act as a sort of healing to people who know that the wounds in our families and common life cannot be covered with a band-aid while festering beneath.

Evangelise

Christmas is a time to evangelise. The message is that God really is among us, that there is hope here, that the Child in the manger did not leave us but grew to adulthood, served and died and rose again, and is with us still - that we will all one day meet him face to face and that meanwhile our lives have meaning and purpose.

the consistency of the Church's message will offer hope and healing



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From the Aims and Ideals of Faith Movement:

Faith Movement offers a new synthesis of faith and reason, explaining the Catholic faith in the evolutionary perspective of modern science.

Reflecting on the unity of the cosmos, we can show the transcendent existence of God and the essential distinction between matter and spirit. We offer a vision of God as the true Environment of men in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) and of his unfolding purpose in the relationship of word and grace through the prophets which is brought to its true head in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Lord of Creation, centre of history and fulfilment of our humanity.

Our redemption through the death and resurrection of the Lord, following the tragedy of original sin, is also thereby seen in its crucial and central focus. Our life in his Holy Spirit through the church and the sacraments and the necessity of an infallible magisterium likewise flow naturally from this presentation of Christ and his work through the ages.

Our understanding of the role of Mary, the Virgin Mother through whom the Divine Word comes into his own things in the flesh (cf. John 1:10-14), is greatly deepened and enhanced through this perspective. So too the dignity of Man, made male and female as the sacrament of Christ and his church (cf. Ephesians 5:32), is strikingly reaffirmed, and from this many of the church’s moral and social teachings can be beautifully explained and underlined.

Marriage and the Holy Trinity

Fr. Richard Conrad, O.P. – A sermon originally preached at a Ruby Wedding thanksgiving Mass (readings: Genesis 1:26-28, 31a; Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32; John 2:1-11)



We come with great joy to give thanks for a covenant¹ made 40 years ago; to give thanks for the grace of fidelity to that covenant; to give thanks for its manifold fruitfulness; to give thanks for what it has meant to so many people – extended family, friends, colleagues, pupils.

The Holy Trinity, Mystery of Love

In our second reading we heard St. Paul speak of Marriage as ‘a great mystery’. It is a mystery, not in the sense of a puzzle to be solved, but in the sense of a *reality* that we cannot fathom, the stuff of poetry and not just prose. It is that, because it participates in the Mystery of Love that God the Holy Trinity is.

In our first reading we heard the Holy Trinity say, ‘Let us make humanity in our image and likeness... Male and female he created them.’ That word ‘created’ should give us pause for thought.² It points towards how God alone possesses being, and in love grants being to all his creatures.³ But that word ‘create’ is used at the very beginning of the creation story – ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ – then not again until this point in the story when humanity is created in God’s image and likeness. For every time a new human being comes into existence there is a creative act of God. This implies that husband and wife engage in what we call ‘pro-creation’. They are ministers for God’s act of creative love. They provide, so to speak, the ‘material’⁴ that God lifts to a new dignity, creating a new human being in His own image and likeness, someone who is then entrusted to the parents to nurture and cherish.

¹ For a long time Marriage was usually spoken of as a ‘contract’; it was Vatican II (*Gaudium et Spes* 48) that restored to our consciousness the Biblical and traditional term ‘covenant’.

² It translates the Hebrew *bārā*.

³ This is the meaning of the Name YHWH, at least as understood by the Septuagint translators, who rendered the explanatory Exod. 3:14 as ‘I am He Who Is.’ Arguably, it comes from the archaic form of the verb ‘to be’, and is a part of the verb which often means to cause someone else to do the action, in which case the Name could be translated ‘He is causing things to be.’ But that part of the verb is sometimes used for exhibiting a certain quality, in which case the Name could be paraphrased ‘His Being is resplendent.’

⁴ Not ‘material’ in the sense of undifferentiated stuff; sperm and ovum as they fuse are ‘biological material’ of immense complexity. Their genetic material, modified by epigenetic factors, is an individual combination of elements from previous generations and from the more immediate history of grandparents and parents. It will shape child’s physiology and ‘individual character’; family and society will help (or hinder!) him/her to make something personal of this inheritance.

Unity in distinction, distinction in unity

It is not just the individual who is in God's image and likeness. 'Male and female he created them.' Man and woman coming together in marriage to forge unity in difference: they too imitate God the Holy Trinity. That is a truth glimpsed by St. Augustine, and brought to our consciousness by St. John Paul II.⁵ For in God the Holy Trinity there is unimaginably intense unity, and an unimaginably rich distinction: there is one Fatherhood, one Sonship, one proceeding-as-Love, which are too distinct to be added together to make anything at all like three Gods. It is that unity in distinction, distinction in unity, which is reflected in the coming together in marriage of man and woman, of male and female. This unity is not a dull uniformity; rather, husband and wife come to know, and cherish, each other in their complementarity as man and woman. This complementarity is of course biological, but it also involves the many personal variations on the theme of the psychological differences between man and woman, differences that to some extent correlate with the physiological differences. Then of course there are the many other personality differences that husband and wife learn to delight in (or at least to live with!) – one (not necessarily the husband) might be sporty and the other not sporty; one might be Northern and the other Southern. Thus a good marriage is a lifelong – indeed an eternal – voyage of discovery of each other.

We can gain some small purchase on the relationships within the Holy Trinity by thinking of the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the love of Father and Son.⁶ Thus we can see the fruitful love of husband and wife as nothing less than a mirror of the Holy Trinity!

Cana: the New Adam and the New Eve

So it is no wonder that in the Old Testament, despite the imperfections that have marked marriage for much of human history,⁷ marriage is seen as a delight and a blessing – and as an image of God's fierce loyalty to his People. And it is no wonder that the first of Jesus's signs was given at a wedding feast. There Jesus revealed himself as the Divine Word who, year by year, turns water into wine, as the grapes drink the rain and their juice is buried in vats. What he does year after year in the world of nature, he did in one instant in that house.⁸ That was where John the Evangelist had

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⁵ Augustine put forward lover-beloved-love as a 'model' for the Holy Trinity, but saw the individual mind as the best image of the Holy Trinity. It is arguable that he provides us with resources that can be applied to Marriage, including an intense sense of the Holy Trinity as unity in distinction, distinction in unity. For two accounts of valuable recent theology and doctrine, see: (1) Bertrand De Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History* (Petersham: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), the section on Marriage as an icon of the Trinity; (2) Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars* 37, 1; St. John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 10.

⁷ These imperfections are summarised in the sections on 'The disfigurement of marriage' and 'Marriage and Original Sin' in: Andrew and Dora Nash, *Christian Marriage: Covenant in Christ* (Faith-Keyway Trust, 1983), which gives a beautiful and inspiring account of the restoration and elevation of Marriage in Christ.

⁸ Cf. George Mackay Brown, 'A Treading of Grapes,' in *A Time to Keep and Other Stories* (Hogarth Press, 1969), the sermon ostensibly by Fr. Halcrow, a 16th-Century Catholic priest.

his first glimpse of Jesus's glory, a glory he would see fully manifested when he stood by the Cross and saw Jesus lifted up from the earth.⁹ He insists that he saw water and blood flow from Jesus' side, symbolising the gift of the new wine of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it any wonder that Jesus' first sign, given at Cana, was given at the behest of Mary, the Woman, the New Eve,¹⁰ who is Mother and Daughter and Sister and Bride of Christ the New Adam.¹¹ Inevitably, Mary was there by the Cross, to symbolise the Church, which is also Jesus's mother and daughter and sister and bride.¹²

The Spirit and the bond

The Sacrifice Jesus offered on the Cross is the new and eternal Covenant, God's ultimate, irrevocable pledge of loyalty towards us – a pledge that has the power to attract our loyalty to God and to empower our loyalty to each other. Those who marry in Christ participate in that Covenant when they pledge loyalty to each other. If, as St. John Paul calls him, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Love in Person,¹³ we can recognise that it is the Holy Spirit who comes to forge the bond of love between husband and wife.¹⁴ He forges the Marriage Bond in a way fairly similar to the way in which He stamps us as belonging to Christ in Baptism, Confirmation and Orders. Hence the bond the Spirit crafts is an ongoing reality 'till death do us part', a reality which has the potential to be an ongoing sign and an ongoing channel of God's grace. This means that forty years ago [the couple] became themselves sacramental to each other, to their extended family, and to us.



The work of God 'beneath the surface'

Much of the work of God's grace is unobtrusive, for the Holy Spirit is the Living Water that enters us to refresh us, the Fire that makes us aglow with love, and the Wind that blows where He will – but the wind is the air that we breathe all the time and usually take for granted. In the house at Cana, the work of the Divine Word was unobtrusive, even 'understated': as St. John tells it, the servants filled the jars with water, drew some,

⁹ John 1:14, '... we beheld his glory, glory as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of grace and loyalty,' means: We saw Him on the Cross, revealed as the Only-Begotten Son who accomplishes His Father's work and enacts His Father's love and loyalty. The Gospel moves inexorably towards the Hour when Jesus will be glorified, will be revealed as I AM HE (John 8:28), and will draw all things to Himself (John 12:32).

¹⁰ The title 'Woman' in John 2:4, 19:26 alludes to Gen. 2:23. The Fathers of the Church recognised Mary's obedience in Luke 1:38 as undoing Eve's disobedience. For St. John, Mary seems to act as New Eve at Cana, where she urges Christ, as the New Adam, to embark on the course that will lead to His great act of saving obedience. It is likely enough that Mary and Jesus had talked over the strange things that had happened and which Mary had treasured in her heart, had pondered the Scriptures together, and had realised at least something of what Jesus' ministry would lead to. (Obviously Jesus saw His whole course in the Beatific Vision; but that Vision is not a matter of concepts of the kind that can be handled in the normal way.) When Jesus asked Mary, 'What to me and to you?' (John 2:4), he was using an idiom found in the Old Testament (e.g. Judges 11:12, II Sam. 19:22, I Kings 17:18, II Kings 3:13, II Chron. 35:21), which can mean, 'Why are you putting me under pressure?' or even, 'Why are you endangering me?' Both of them knew what Mary was asking, indeed what, as Mother of all the living (cf. Gen. 3:20), she had to ask on behalf of a world needing 'wine'.

¹¹ In the Song of Songs the bride is also the sister (4:9). The Mediaeval poets knew they had to be agile with such symbolism, for example Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto 33 line 1, and the carol 'This endris night.'

¹² Jesus Himself asks us to apply the symbolism of mother and sister/brother to ourselves: Mark 3:35. A sermon by Bl. Isaac of Stella (see the Office of Readings for Saturday in the 2nd Week of Advent) presents Mary as type of the Church and of the Christian soul. The Fathers of the Church recognised the Blood and Water as symbolising the Church, the New Eve, born from the side of the New Adam as He slept in death, a mystery prophesied by the formation of the first Eve from the side of the first Adam as he slept in the garden. The Blood and Water symbolise the Eucharist and Baptism, the Sacraments which most of all build up the Body which is Christ's Bride. St. John wanted us to see this complementary symbolism of the Blood and Water, since he tells us how the Passion began and ended in a garden (John 18:1, 19:41).

¹³ The precise phrase is, 'He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift' (*Dominum et Vivificantem*, 10).

¹⁴ This is expressed by the long-standing custom in Poland of singing the *Veni Creator Spiritus* immediately before the Marriage Vows.

and took it to the MC; when the MC tasted the water (become wine) but did not know where it was from. This unobtrusive gentleness is especially the case with the Sacrament of Marriage. All Sacraments employ something already laden with significance (washing, applying a 'cosmetic' or a salve, feeding, commissioning or apologising), but employ it in a specifically Christian ritual that is recognisably not something non-Christians do. But Jesus did not give us a ritual akin to the marriages human beings have made throughout history; He took that human ritual itself, and made it sacramental for all who would marry in Him.¹⁵ Christian Marriage is, par excellence, grace pervading and perfecting nature: the Holy Spirit is at work in the whole everyday fabric of living the covenant, caring for each other, nurturing the children, attending to neighbours and the extended family... The work of God goes on largely 'beneath the surface' in a depth dimly discerned by faith. We believe – we can see – that grace has been at work in the Marriage of [the couple]. We hope confidently, and we pray in hope, that it will continue its work for many years.

we look forward to what the Sacrament of Marriage points us forward to: the coming Kingdom, when Jesus and his Bride will be one for ever



Looking back and looking forward

So we look back with gratitude over forty years. But we look back much further, to what the Sacrament of Marriage points us back to and brings into our present: Jesus's Paschal Sacrifice which brought us the Holy Spirit, who crafts our love and guides the pilgrimage we make together. And we look forward to what the Sacrament of Marriage points us forward to: the coming Kingdom, when Jesus and his Bride will be one for ever. In that Kingdom, we hope, we shall give thanks with and for those who have closely shared our pilgrimage.

the Holy Spirit is at work in the whole everyday fabric of living the covenant

Fr. Richard Conrad O.P. has taught theology in the Dominicans and at the Maryvale Institute. He is Director of the Aquinas Institute, Oxford. This text of the sermon includes passages omitted for reasons of time it was when preached.

¹⁵ So, for some centuries, Christians married according to the local custom, then went to Church for the Nuptial Mass, which was given immediately after the Eucharistic Prayer (for it seems to have been a few centuries before the Our Father was recited at Mass), i.e. 'under the shadow' of Christ's Sacrifice which is symbolised by, and empowers, the self-giving of Marriage. Gradually, the Vows came to be taken at the door of the church, then in the church itself.

Family Breakdown and its Consequences

By Piers Shepherd



The UK has one of the highest rates of family breakdown in the developed world. While liberal elites have often viewed the decline of the married family as a positive and liberating phenomenon, the reality is that the decline of the traditional family has had negative consequences for all concerned, but especially for those we should be most concerned about, young people.

Two trends in particular have been particularly destructive at the current time, cohabitation and widespread divorce.

The Detrimental Effects of Cohabitation

Cohabitation is the fastest growing living arrangement in the UK.¹ It is estimated that nearly 85% of all couples cohabit at some point during their relationship.²

Cohabitation is endorsed by many today as a sort of trial marriage, the rationale being that if couples live together before marriage they will gain a greater sense of their compatibility and subsequently enjoy a more successful marriage. Others argue that as long as people are in a committed relationship, whether or not they are married does not matter and, as long as children have loving parents, who cares whether or not they are married? The evidence tells a different story.

The majority of family breakdown now involves families where the parents are cohabiting. According to the Marriage Foundation, while cohabiting parents account for only 20.7% of couples, they contribute to more than half (51.4%) of the cases of family breakdown.³ The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) report, *Fractured Families* found that 'parents who cohabit are approximately three times more likely than those parents who are married to have separated by the time the child reaches the age of five.'⁴ Of parents who remain together by the time their child turns 15, 93% are married.⁵

¹ Office for National Statistics, Families and Households: 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2017#number-of-families-in-the-uk-continues-to-grow-with-cohabiting-couple-families-growing-the-fastest>

² Centre for Social Justice, *Fractured Families: Why stability matters*, June 2013, https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ_Fractured_Families_Report_WEB_13.06.13.pdf

³ Harry Benson, *Annual family breakdown in the UK*, Marriage Foundation, March 2017, <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/MF-paper-Annual-family-breakdown.pdf>

⁴ CSJ, *Fractured Families*, p. 13.

⁵ Harry Benson, *The myth of 'long-term stable relationships' outside marriage*, Marriage Foundation, May 2013, <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/pdf-020.pdf>

The instability associated with cohabiting unions has had a thoroughly detrimental effect upon the mental health of many young people. A study undertaken by the Marriage Foundation found that family breakdown is the single biggest influence on the mental health of young people.⁶ The study, which examined mental health problems among 10,929 fourteen year olds, found that:

Among intact married families, 20 per cent of 14 year olds exhibit high level of mental health problems, compared to 27 per cent among intact cohabiting families. Among divorced families, 32 per cent exhibit problems, compared to 38 per cent among separated cohabiting families.⁷

Easy Divorce

Given the above evidence one would have thought that the British government would be going out of its way to promote marriage and support families staying together. Yet despite the fact that around 42% of marriages already end in divorce,⁸ the government is considering legislating in favour of 'no fault' divorce. Those who support this, claim that it will spare the couple unnecessary conflict caused by having to produce evidence of fault. What appears to have been neglected is the effect that divorce has upon children and the evidence shows that it is deeply harmful.

A research article, drawing on studies from around the world, published in the *Journal of Clinical and Medical Genomics* states:

It is well recognized that the divorce process affects the mental state of the children, including development of behavioral problems, negative self-concept, social problems, and difficulties in relationships with the parents. Among these children there is a higher frequency of depression, violence, learning and social deterioration, and high risk for suicidal attempts.⁹

An overview of studies published by the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) highlighted numerous negative outcomes for children of parental divorce. These included the effects of divorce on family relationships, behaviour, likelihood of engaging in crime and mental health.

The study found that '(t)he primary effect of divorce...is a decline in the relationship between parent and child...Children in divorced families receive less emotional support, financial assistance, and practical help from their parents'.¹⁰ The children of divorced parents

The majority of family breakdown now involves families where the parents are cohabiting.

are more likely to have behavioural problems than those from intact families. These behavioural problems include fighting with their peers, stealing, damaging property, getting drunk and engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Of the latter behaviour, the study notes: '*Children's approval of premarital sex, cohabitation, and divorce rises dramatically, while their endorsement of marriage and childbearing falls*'.¹¹

Children of divorce

Children of divorced parents are more likely to have sex earlier with 25% having had intercourse by the time they were 14 years old, compared with 12% for those from intact married families. 36% of girls raised by a divorced parent were pregnant before marriage compared to 19% of those from intact married families. Daughters of divorced parents were also more likely to have had an abortion. The study noted that '*one generation passes on its marital instability to the next*' with the children of divorce twice as likely to subsequently divorce themselves.¹²



Delinquency, violent crime and drug use were also found to be more common in those with divorced parents. The children of divorce were more likely to experience abuse and neglect and to suffer with depression. Tragically the MARRI study found that '*the strongest demographic indicator of suicide is the family structure within which a person resides: the divorced family structure has the highest suicide rate*'.¹³

The UK figures were remarkably similar, especially in relation to the sexual behaviour of those from separated or divorced families. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) found:

Children from separated families are also more likely to become parents at a young age: 25 per cent of women whose parents had separated became teenage mothers, compared with 14 per cent of those whose parents stayed together. Girls from divorced families between the ages of 7 and 16 are almost twice as likely to go on to become teenage mothers as those whose parents remained married.¹⁴

Lone Parenthood and Fatherlessness

The breakdown of marriage, the increase in out of wedlock births, and the often temporary nature of cohabiting unions has led to an increase in lone parenthood. The number of lone parent families has increased by 15.2% since 1996 with 21% of children now living in such families.¹⁵

⁶ Harry Benson and Stephen McKay, *Family breakdown and teenage mental health*, Marriage Foundation, November 2017, <http://marriagefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/MF-paper-Family-breakdown-and-teenage-mental-health-FINAL.pdf>

⁷ Ibid, p. 1.

⁸ Office for National Statistics, *Divorces in England and Wales: 2016*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/divorce/bulletins/divorcesinenglandandwales/2016>

⁹ Motti Haimi and Aaron Lerner, *The Impact of Parental Separation and Divorce on the Health Status of Children, and the Ways to Improve it*, *Journal of Clinical and Medical Genomics* Volume 4 Issue 1, 2016, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Motti_Haimi2/publication/295693740_The_Impact_of_Parental_Separation_and_Divorce_on_the_Health_Status_of_Children_and_the_Ways_to_Improve_it/links/56cc774908ae1106370d92a4/The-Impact-of-Parental-Separation-and-Divorce-on-the-Health-Status-of-Children-and-the-Ways-to-Improve-it.pdf

¹⁰ Patrick F. Fagan and Aaron Churchill, *The Effects of Divorce on Children*, Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 2012, <https://www.frc.org/EF/EF12A22.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid, p. 15.

¹² Ibid, p. 23.

¹³ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁴ Centre for Social Justice, *Fractured Families: Why stability matters*, June 2013, https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ_Fractured_Families_Report_WEB_13.06.13.pdf

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics, *Families and Households: 2017*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2017>

Rabbi Lord Sacks

Some years ago the former Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, speaking in a House of Lords debate, stated:

[I]n the space of half a century we have become two nations that are divided into those who, as children, have and do not have the gift of growing up in stable, loving association with the two parents who brought them into being. According to copious research, those who have not will be disadvantaged in many ways. On average, they will do less well at school and have less chance of attending university. They will be less likely to find and keep a job. They will be less well off and less likely to form stable relationships of their own. They will be more prone to depression and its syndromes. They may even be less healthy. All that will be through no fault of their own but through the circumstances of their early childhood



*The result is a deep and dangerous divide between two cultures, in one of which children are growing up without the support and presence of their natural fathers and often without constructive male role models. They are at risk of being robbed of the habits of the heart, the security and self-confidence, the discipline and restraint that they will need safely to negotiate the challenges of an ever-changing world.*¹⁶

Research has certainly borne out the truth of the Chief Rabbi's words and lone parenthood and fatherless families have taken their toll. A study by the think tank Civitas surveyed the effect of lone parenthood and fatherless families on mothers, fathers, children, teenagers and young adults. The report found that lone mothers were twice as likely to live in poverty, eight times as likely to live in a workless household and twelve times as likely to be receiving income support as those in two parent families.¹⁷

Report

The same report revealed the extent to which non-resident biological fathers lose touch with their children following a divorce or separation. 20-30% of such fathers had not seen their children in the last year. Divorced men were significantly more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.¹⁸

The greatest casualties of lone parenthood and fatherlessness are, as ever, the children. Children living without their biological fathers are more likely to live in poverty and deprivation and are more prone to emotional and mental problems, with children from lone parent families twice as likely to have a mental health problem as those from intact families.

The greatest casualties of lone parenthood and fatherlessness are, as ever, the children

¹⁶ HL Hansard, 11 October 2012, col 1148, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2012-10-11/debates/12101112000573/ChildDevelopment?highlight=lord%20sacks>

¹⁷ Rebecca O'Neil, *Experiments in Living: The Fatherless Family*, Civitas, September 2002, <http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/Experiments.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

These children have more problems at school, a 50% greater risk of developing health problems and greater risk of suffering physical or sexual abuse. When they reach their teenage years they are more likely to engage in under-age sex and become teenage parents. They are three times as likely to be excluded from school and 25% more likely to have committed a crime in the last year. Children who grow up without their biological father in the home are more likely than those raised in an intact married family, to form unstable relationships in later life themselves.¹⁹

The involvement of a father in their lives is important for both boys and girls as it contributes to their healthy development and happiness

According to the CSJ, 76% of children and young people in custody had an absent father and 33% an absent mother.²⁰ The absence of a father leaves a vacuum which is often filled by someone with 'street credibility'. Thus fatherlessness is a key driver of 'gang culture'.²¹ The CSJ also found that 'boys who grew up apart from their biological fathers were at least two to three times more likely to end up in prison than those who had grown up with both parents'.²²

Health and Happiness

The involvement of a father in their lives is important for both boys and girls as it contributes to their healthy development and happiness. As the CSJ notes:

*Having a father involved in their lives boosts children's self-esteem and confidence. School-aged children with good relationships with their fathers are less likely to experience depression, exhibit disruptive behaviour, or to lie than children without good father-child relationships. Similarly, girls who have fathers involved in their lives often have stronger self-esteem than girls who do not.*²³

When families break up, the child's contact with their father is often the first casualty. MARRI found that '(b)y adolescence...fewer than half of children living with separated, divorced, or remarried mothers had seen their fathers at all in more than a year'.²⁴

The phenomenon of lone parenthood and fatherlessness certainly ranks as one of the most tragic legacies of family breakdown.

Dangers of Step-families

When a relationship breaks down and one partner, usually the father, moves away, any children are frequently left to be raised by only one parent. Others however will acquire a new substitute father, sometimes their mother's new husband but often simply her live-in

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 6-11.

²⁰ Centre for Social Justice, *Rules of Engagement: Changing the heart of youth justice*, January 2012, https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ_Youth_Justice_Full_Report.pdf

²¹ Centre for Social Justice, *Dying to Belong: An In-depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain*, February 2009, <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DyingtoBelongFullReport.pdf>

²² CSJ, *Fractured Families*, p. 59-60.

²³ CSJ, *Fractured Families*, p. 57.

²⁴ Patrick F. Fagan and Aaron Churchill, *The Effects of Divorce on Children*, Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 2012, <https://www.frc.org/EF/EF12A22.pdf>

boyfriend who has little interest in children who are not his. While some step-families are loving environments, in others children are subject to terrible suffering.

Abuse

Step-families have higher rates of abuse than do intact families. A study from Brazil of children with step fathers found that 34% had been physically abused compared with 17% of those with living with their biological father.

When adjusted for various factors the study found that children in these families were 2.7 times more likely to experience abuse than those in intact families, with the abuse often perpetrated by the mother.²⁵

The MARRI study referred to above found that the highest rates of both physical and sexual abuse occur in cohabiting step-families. It states:

Living with a stepfather increases a child's likelihood of subjection to pre-pubertal sexual contact. The rate of sexual abuse of girls by their stepfathers is at least six or seven times higher, and may be as much as 40 times higher, than sexual abuse of daughters by their biological fathers who remain in intact families.

A study of 26 instances of fatal child abuse reported that 62 percent of perpetrators were the stepfathers of the abused children and that 81 percent of perpetrators were engaged in cohabiting relationships with the victimized child's mother...Another study reported that children under age five were 50 times more like to suffer fatal abuse if they lived in homes with an unrelated adult (particularly a mother's boyfriend) than if they lived in a biologically intact family.²⁶

MARRI further noted:

In Britain, fatal abuse of children of all ages occurs three times more frequently in stepfamilies than in intact married families.²⁷

Benefits of Marriage

Given the abundant evidence that cohabitation, easy divorce and lone parenthood have brought negative outcomes for young people, teaching the benefits of marriage is an urgent need.

Those of us who defend the traditional vision of marriage as a lifelong union have all the evidence on our side.

Given the abundant evidence that cohabitation, easy divorce and lone parenthood have brought negative outcomes for young people, teaching the benefits of marriage is an urgent need.



²⁵ Gisele Caldas Alexandre et al, The presence of a stepfather and child physical abuse, as reported by a sample of Brazilian mothers in Rio de Janeiro, *Child Abuse & Neglect* Volume 34, Issue 12, December 2010, 959-966, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S014521341000236X>

²⁶ Fagan and Churchill, Effects of Divorce on Children, p. 38.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 39.

The next generation

It is our duty to the next generation to make the immense rewards that marriage brings to the individual, the family and to society as widely known as possible. As Lord Sacks put it: *'We cannot change the past but we can change the future'*.²⁸

Indeed, we can.

Piers Shepherd is a research and administrative assistant with Family Education Trust www.familyeducationtrust.org.uk

²⁸ HL Hansard, 11 October 2012, col 1148, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2012-10-11/debates/12101112000573/ChildDevelopment?highlight=lord%20sacks#contribution-12101112000246>

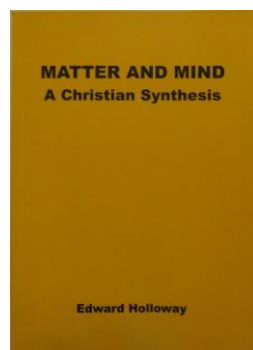
Valerie Riches RIP

Mrs Valerie Riches, a founder and for many years the principal figure in Family and Youth Concern, died this year. A noted writer, public speaker, and defender of marriage and family values, Valerie was a strong friend of the Faith Movement, and a mentor to many of its earliest members.

Valerie experienced hardship at first hand when the family home was destroyed by bombing in World War II. After leaving school she worked for the Admiralty and then for a musicians' agency, and it was through a joint love of music that she met Denis Riches: they would later tell the story of their marriage and work in a readable biography, *Built on Love*.

While raising their two children, Valerie trained as a social worker and it was this that became the spur for decades of work supporting lifelong marriage as the basis of a healthy society. Always a careful, thoughtful researcher, producing publications devoid of loud polemic, she endured rather than enjoyed publicity, but could be a powerful and effective debater and contributor to TV and radio programmes. Her publications included *Sex and Social Engineering* and *Who cares for the children?* and for many years she edited a popular and informative newsletter which went to Parliamentarians, educationalists and the wider media as well as supporters of Family and Youth Concern.

A large attendance at Valerie Riches' funeral Mass in the Oratory Church at Oxford gave evidence of the gratitude felt by many for her work and witness, and the courage, wisdom and kindness that characterised her approach to her projects..



MATTER AND MIND A Christian Synthesis by Edward Holloway

Edited and with an Introduction by Roger Nesbitt

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Fr Edward Holloway's masterpiece on science and religion, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*, has inspired priests, laity and religious since it was first published in 1969. Here now is his original version – never published before – of this profound vision. Written when he was a young priest in the late 1940s, it sets out with freshness and urgency his insight into how the Catholic faith can be presented in a synthesis with the new scientific knowledge of evolution. He addresses the fundamental issues about God, the evolution of the universe and the emergence of human life. The question of human nature – how much is matter and how much is mind? – is answered convincingly. And God's revelation to the world, climaxing in Jesus Christ, is presented in a striking perspective. With his grasp of evolutionary science – which research in the decades since has further confirmed – he argues the philosophical and theological basis which must underpin Christian thought in the modern age.

His friend and fellow founder of the Faith Movement, Fr Roger Nesbitt, has now edited this early text to bring Fr Holloway's thought to a new generation. As atheism grows in the secular West, this synthesis is more urgently needed than ever if the Church is to present the Faith in its fulness to the scientific age.

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Interview

Newman, a village, and a link with St Nicholas

Joanna Bogle visits the Sisters of The Work at Littlemore



We are sitting in a cosy cottage: tea and cake on a low table by the fireplace, and lots of lively talk. Outside is a charming walled garden, and nearby stands a village church. It's all a very delightful scene...but the setting is also one where a very particular drama in England's church history took place.

This is Littlemore on the outskirts of Oxford, and Ambrose Cottage is part of the small collection of buildings that John Henry Newman acquired in the 1840s to turn into a retreat and study centre where he read, prayed, and pondered the nature of the Church and the path he should take for the future.



Christianity in Britain

Newman's decision in 1845 to come into the Catholic Church was a turning point – for him, of course, but also for the story of Christianity in our country. As vicar of the great University Church in Oxford, he had taken seriously his responsibilities for Littlemore, a poor village entrusted to the care of the University parish. He had built a church there – his mother laying the foundation stone – taught the children, formed a choir, visited the elderly and sick, and became a much-loved figure as he tended to people's spiritual and practical needs. The day he preached his final sermon, having taken the decision to retire to what became known as "The College" to pray and read, the entire parish gathered and many were in tears. The children

*The day he preached
his final sermon... the
entire parish gathered
and many were in
tears*

were wearing new clothes that he himself had provided – and the music they sang and the prayers they knew were all due to his patient efforts in teaching.

A retreat and study centre

It is all recalled in the memorabilia that is now held at Littlemore. The College is now in the care of the Sisters of The Spiritual Family The Work, an international religious community founded by Mother Julia Verhaeghe in 1938. The Sisters arrived at Littlemore in 1986 and they run The College as a retreat and study centre. I asked how this works.

“We have groups who come on visits, and we also offer private retreats, or just a place where people can stay and be restful and quiet for a few days” Sister Ingrid, the local superior of the community, explains “And we have many people who come here as Newman pilgrims. We offer a welcome and an opportunity to discover the life and message of John Henry Newman.”

“They are able to pray in Newman’s own small chapel here, and visit the room where he slept, as well as spending time in the Library with its collection of books by and about him. And of course the chapel is also the place where he was received into the Church by Blessed Dominic Barberi.”

The Sisters have a good relationship with the vicar and community, and frequently take visitors

“Priests can say Mass here, perhaps bringing a group or perhaps just coming for a quiet day.”

Welcoming

The sisters evidently enjoy welcoming their many and varied visitors. “When they arrive, they are often surprised because the outer wall looks rather blank on the street side, and they are not expecting the beautiful garden that awaits them as soon as they enter” said Sister Bianca “And they often say that they are able to feel close to Newman here.”

“When I first learned about Newman it was as a famous writer and poet and so on – but here one discovers him as the pastor in the village, who cared for the sick and the lonely and the children.”

Visitors

Visitors come from all over the world, including some very special ones. “We had a visitor from Australia, a descendant of Newman’s sister, Harriet. He had come because he was so interested in the family history.”

There will of course be celebrations when Newman is canonised, and already plans are being laid. “Not every priest will be able to go to Rome – they have parish duties and so on. Some who can’t get to Rome will come here.”

The church that Newman built is of course still the local Anglican church. The Sisters have a good relationship with the vicar and community, and frequently take visitors into the church to show them around, noting the monument to Newman’s mother and other features.



St Nicholas

The fact that the Sisters are an international community, with members from Austria Belgium - where St Nicholas is a popular saint - and many other countries. has proved of particular value on the church’s patronal feast-day.

“The church is dedicated to St Mary and St Nicholas, and each year on St Nicholas Day in December the children come here in processions with lanterns, and we greet them with a St Nicholas song and a little treat, before all finish in the church.”

Singing, treats for children, retreats and fireside tea – but the real work of the Sisters of The Work is also scholarly and Littlemore is known for its talks and seminars, while the sisters international work includes translation and interesting visitors in Rome and elsewhere. And they are above all a religious community, spending time in prayer. When praying the Office together, they wear white bridal-style robes complete with small coronets – a dramatic sight.

Night Walk

Each October they greet pilgrims on the now traditional Night Walk honouring Newman on his feast-day. The Walk starts at the Oxford Oratory and goes to Littlemore, following the route walked so often by Newman. It finishes with Night Prayer in the modern church of Blessed Dominic Barberi in the village, where the sisters in their white robes lead the singing.

When praying the Office together, they wear white bridal-style robes complete with small coronets – a dramatic sight.

The Work at Littlemore offers a mix of friendship, music, teaching and prayer: very much in the spirit of John Henry Newman.



faith

Talk One: Fr Scott Deeley
I have come that they may have life and have it to the full: From the Big Bang to the Mass

Talk Two: Fr Richard Marsden
While they were at supper: The Eucharist as the Sacred Meal

Talk Three: Fr Stephen Brown
This is my body, broken for you: The Mass as Sacrifice

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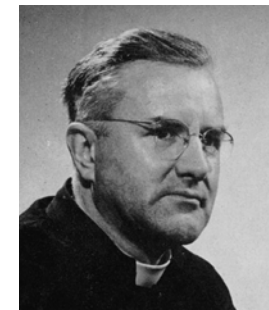
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Holloway on...

The Covenant of Christian Marriage: Part I

EDWARD HOLLOWAY



All great love is union and communion. The love of God is a personal joy as invigorating to the inner man as youth and life abounding. It is a holy communion with that Love who grows not old, the love God bestows and which we sense reaches its fulness in the Holy Eucharist. And in this love it is God who does the wooing, God who takes the initiative. All deep friendship found down the years of life, especially when enkindled by a mutual love of God and joy in His service, forms an alliance, it is a sort of covenant between men because first a union with Christ.

Marriage is the love basic and natural, but of the divine order in Christianity, which binds men and women when they enter upon the office of sharing with God in the love which prompts God to create us. They are officers and stewards of this love of God: their love is a reflection of His own. Let it be holy, like His own. The union of God and man through the Incarnation of God in Christ constitutes the 'New Covenant', i.e. the creative, saving, and fulfilling work of God who makes men and who nourishes the flesh and the spirit to life everlasting. If marriage is a co-sharing with Christ in this work of creating men, and bringing them as 'People of God' into an eternal fulfilment, then marriage must be like Christ's own work. It must be an alliance, a covenant, a mutual office in which each needs the other. And it is so. The very mutual ordering and configuration of their bodies as men and as women speak *an office of nature: Christ has raised it to an office of the divine order* that is to say, to an office of salvation in the very being of God, to the taking up of the children of men into the divine sonship and daughterhood in Christ.

*A selfish marriage
is very likely to
break up*

A love which goes out with Christ to others

Marriage should be entered upon in this way. It is not merely a private joy, a personal fulfilment of spirit and body between two people, which has incidental spiritual duties and responsibilities. No, *the sort of love* which defines marriage is a love both personal, and cherishing, and faithful, but also a love which goes out with Christ to other people, in this case, to the offspring of the couple. Their love may not be selfish. It is unitive indeed, but unitive because it is creative: the office of nature, obvious in their bodies, becomes an office and vocation also in their spirit. A selfish marriage is very likely to break up, and a marriage knit too narrowly by sexual enjoyment together is very likely to break up. There

is no intrinsic reason why this sort of love should make a couple want to live together, especially in an exclusive fidelity of the flesh, all the years of their lives! Only a love which in various ways, from the contemplative Order to Christian marriage, ministers to Christ, has a lasting reason to remain in mutual communion.

Christ and marriage

The Incarnation of Christ among men is an Office and a Status: through this office the Son of God and Son of Man is the root and cause of our being and our salvation. This is the fundamental reason why the office of Christ constitutes the New Covenant between God and mankind. In fact, as we know, it becomes also the office of a painful redemption. It becomes 'the New Covenant in my blood', but a Covenant it is. Again and again St. Paul teaches us that the creation of the universe and its very order of reality centres upon and hinges upon the Incarnation of God in Christ. He teaches it in many places, and nowhere more clearly than in his Letter to the Colossians (Col. 1:15-20). The same apostle writing to the Ephesians (Eph. 5:21-33) teaches that marriage is a sacrament which images and shares in the union, the Covenant, between Christ and the Church. He says there is a certain intrinsic, inner likeness of reality between the office of Christ to the Church, and the office of Christian couples through the sacrament of matrimony. The man, says Paul, stands like Christ to his spouse: he prompts life within her womb, he is the determiner of life, and he nourishes, cherishes, and protects her as Christ does the Church. The woman responds with life which is spiritual and not merely physical. She brings forth and nourishes a perfect work, her love is total, faithful and pure.

marriage is a sacrament which images and shares in the union, the Covenant, between Christ and the Church

Marriage an office and a ministry in the Church

The reason for this intrinsic analogy of being between the Covenant of Christ and the covenants of marriage is that the office of marriage is a co-sharing with God and with Christ in the work of creation. The love by which God desires us, and makes us through His Only-Begotten Son, is a love mediated through man and woman. Their own human love is a supernatural, that is to say a 'divine' love, a love which reflects the love of God in making us; and God's love for us calls us into the intimate possession of the divine being. It must follow then, that Christian Marriage is, strictly speaking, an office in the Church and a specific ministry in the Church: we do not teach it that way, and we ought to do so. To do so enormously enhances the dignity of Christian marriage, and gives so much hope and joy to young couples. One knows this is true, from their reaction to such a presentation when preparing them for marriage. Marriage does not confer a character indeed, because it does not confer an unrepeatable relationship to the Being of God, or in the case of the priesthood of the altar, to the personal character of Christ the Priest. But it does confer an office and a ministry in the Church, in the same specific way as does the priesthood of the altar.

The love which makes marriage to be marriage

The nature of this status and ministry is clear in the very fact that before the altar, exchanging their vows, the man and the woman, in the likeness of Christ and the Church, are the actual ministers of the sacrament itself. The priest who officiates only blesses the union and makes sure of its validity before Christ and the Church. So, Christian Marriage is more than an office of nature. It is more than an office of personal fulfilment between individuals. It is a personal fulfilment which is an office and a ministry of creation and of bringing to perfection. This is the sort of love which makes marriage to be marriage. If the office of creation is excluded, then it is nothing more than a friendship of indefinite duration between two people, a friendship in which sexual union will be used, while the basic sweep of its meaning as spiritual fulfilment is denied and frustrated. No wonder this Humanist concept of marriage gives us marriages which do not last! If marriage is looked at in the way we suggest, then it should be taught that way to teenagers. This indeed would be 'preparation for marriage'.

there is a certain intrinsic, inner likeness of reality between the office of Christ to the Church, and the office of Christian couples through the sacrament of matrimony

Vision

Such a vision would and does, condition their boy-girl friendships with a new care for chastity, and for that office of the womb which it is sacrilege to violate outside of the office of grace with Christ. It gives to the girl also a new respect for a boy, and also a motive to help him so to love, that whether the friendship leads to marriage in their case or not, she does not tempt him but respects in her loving that office of determination to life, which is the meaning of his sexuality, even as it is the meaning of Christ's creative and saving relationship to us all. Because it is the physical basis of the very office of creation in nature and in the Church, all sex is holy. It cannot be presented as having fun in a relaxed and sybaritic manner. To do this, to teach this is to destroy the beauty of young love in boys and girls. It would be better for such people that a millstone were put about their necks and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea.

A natural priesthood

There is a certain natural priesthood in the office of parents to their children, because they are the 'good shepherds' of their own little flock, indeed perhaps of their one beloved lamb! The new service of Baptism reminds parents that they are 'the first teachers of their children in the ways of the Faith' and exhorts them to be the best of all teachers. The final blessing of the child and its parents is given before the altar, to remind the parents that 'what is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit'. The parents are co-sharers with God in a work of creation which through Christ is of the divine and not merely of the natural and biological order. They are reminded too, in the exhortation which ends the same service of Christening, that the new birth of Baptism,

the milk of God, leads on with growth of time to the bread of God. It leads to the Table of Holy Communion, to the child's first receiving of Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life. It leads also to the inner Chrismation of the soul of the child, as it grows in years, by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. This is the sacrament both of adult, mature resistance to Satan and all his works, and also of witness and apostleship. In all of this work, the parents share intimately and by vocation and office in the Church.

Relationship to the Eucharist

There must also be, in Christian Marriage, an intrinsic relationship to the Holy Eucharist which is proper to the office of marriage and parenthood, both as spiritually unitive for the couple and life-giving for the child. It would seem that, if the office of the Covenant of Marriage mirrors the Covenant of Christ and mankind in the Church, there must be a similar special relationship between Matrimony and the Eucharist. The Eucharist as sacrifice and sacrament is the source of life and grace for us all, but what one is saying is that the graces which are promised in marriage, the special graces of life and state, must one thinks be obtained in a unique and special way through the Eucharist in the case of Christian spouses. For Christ, having loved his own who were in the world, 'loved them unto the end', and the sign and focus of that especial love, and source of life and power, was the giving of the Holy Eucharist: the New Covenant in my Body, and in my Blood. If Christian marriage is a co-sharing with Christ in the basic office of that Covenant between Christ and the Church, which is sealed and centres in the Eucharist, then surely there is a right and a necessity for Christian spouses to turn to the Holy Eucharist, that the graces of state which their way of life requires, may be received in fullest measure from the sacrament which is the centre of Christ's creative work for men. This would seem to mean that the grace of Matrimony is mediated in a special way through the Holy Eucharist, and does not stand without it.

Catholic couples should view their attendance at Mass, and their liturgical assistance at Mass, as a most sacred duty and need

The church as an 'extension' on the home

In the name of their office, and their vocation in the Church therefore, Catholic couples should view their attendance at Mass, and their liturgical assistance in the Mass, as a most sacred duty and need. They should bring their children also to the Table of the Lord with the same sense of urgency and office. Here the Lord feeds their children in the noble virtues of the spirit, as they the parents are so careful to feed them with the bread of the body. Here they should bring their children to be educated in the word of the Word of God, with the same sense of necessity and duty as they are so anxious that they get the very best in the education and culture of this world and its making of money. They themselves should teach their

There must also be, in Christian marriage, an intrinsic relationship to the Holy Eucharist

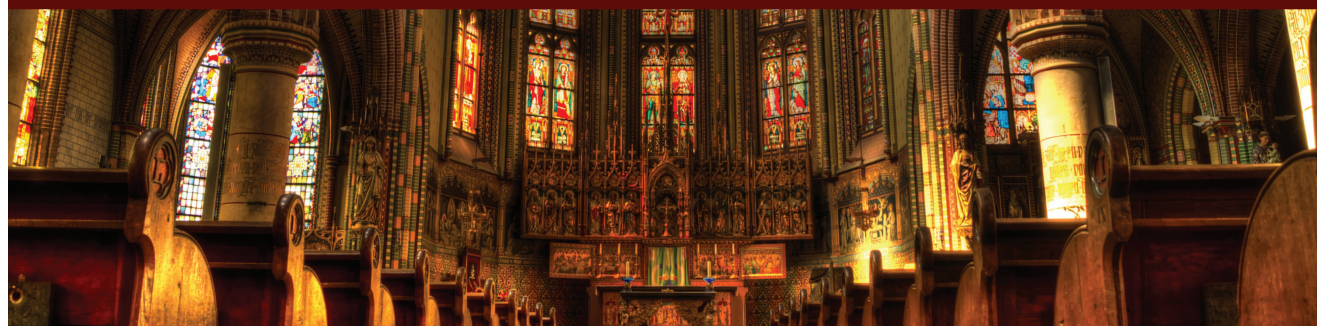
children their first prayers, their basic catechism, their first knowledge and love of God. They should not leave it all to the Catholic school. It is no accident that the Real Presence of Christ, by very Being, in the tabernacle of the parish church is the living centre of the community gathered around it which we call 'the parish'.

Because of this, the church in which Christ is reserved as Sacrament becomes a room which belongs to, and is 'an extension' upon every home in the parish, whether large or humble, richer or poorer. This becomes a much richer thought and fact if the Holy Eucharist, whether as offered or as received, is itself related in a special way to the state of marriage of Christian people, and through it they receive the very graces which their sacrament signifies and demands. They have but to come, come to the source to which their office and vocation in the Church points: come to Him who is the Living Seal of the New Covenant in His Body and His Blood. I think we could get many more devout laity to come to daily Mass if we so related the grace of their state of life to the grace and office in the Church of the Holy Eucharist itself. Marriage has become too ordinary and humdrum a state and status. Moreover, its love and its grace has declined into an obsession with that which, as an experience, is its least part, namely bodily pleasure. We must regain the recognition of marriage as first and fore-most a spiritual love, and a spiritual vocation.

This is the first half of the editorial for the September/October 1979 issue of FAITH. Part II will be published in our next issue.

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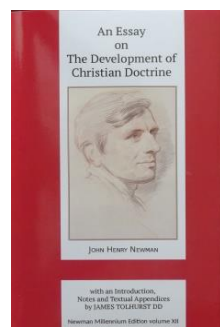
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An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine

by

John Henry Newman

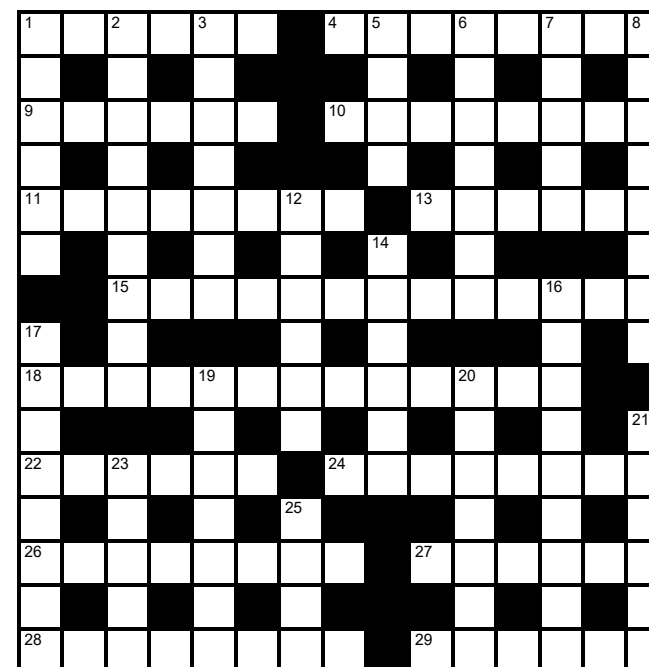
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CROSSWORD 14 by Aurora Borealis



We invite you to complete this crossword. The clues in bold involve general religious knowledge - the others are cryptic clues with secular answers.

A copy of George Weigel's *The Fragility of Order* will go to the sender of the first correct solution opened from all those received by December 31st 2018. Entries may be the original page or a photocopy and should be sent to:

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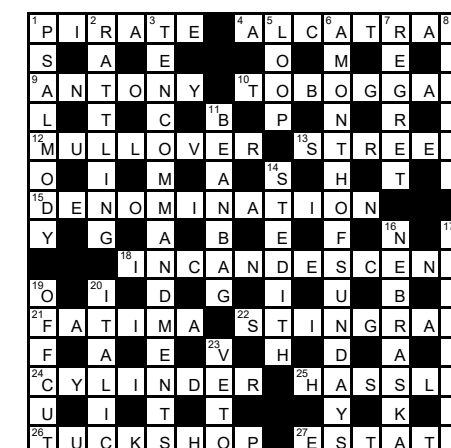
Across

1. Chemical found in river. Thanks! Don't tell! (6)
4. **Novel by Blessed John Henry Newman (8)**
9. Daytrip pleasure boat makes little wave (6)
10. Copy sack, and start to enjoy game (8)
11. Hose filled with best carbon can be a turn-off (8)
13. **Cave in Lourdes where Our Lady appeared (6)**
15. Unravel knots, have fear for card (5,2,6)
18. Missing from the pack? It is not likely to happen (3,2,3,5)
22. Three times a top singer (6)
24. **City named after protomartyr of Britain (2,6)**
26. Noble that is good man and first in line (8)
27. Following customs and realise duty (6)
28. Everyone starts to exclaim "You can't avoid the stray!" (5,3)
29. A long time after Christian era, there will be sayings (6)

Down

1. **The primary constituent of a diocese (6)**
2. In tag, I am replaced by colleague and find place for writers (3,6)
3. **Island named after virgin martyr from Syracuse (2,5)**
5. Girl loses head, creating atmosphere (4)
6. Freedom for the French! (7)
7. Neat sting? (5)

8. Shelter behind odd haulier in tavern (8)
12. Revolutionary supports first class railway experience for children (6)
14. On the turn, wound waste material (3,3)
16. He's a prig, heart of one reforming - reforming! (9)
17. **A formal curse by Pope or Council (8)**
19. **A declaration that a marriage is void (7)**
20. Laid back about the French, cross journalist (7)
21. Idiots take time to get property (6)
23. Saga written up about national register (5)
25. When I have a lot of land! (4)



Crossword 12 solutions above.

The winner of Faith Crossword 12 was Miss A. Hill

A Christmas Quiz

For family, friends, a religious community...or try it in your parish newsletter...

1. What does the word Advent mean?
2. The feast of St Nicholas is on December 6th, which is why he became linked with Christmas. When did St Nicholas live and why do stories about him always include the number 3?
3. What is the traditional name for the THIRD Sunday of Advent?
4. What does the name "Lucy" mean? When is the feast of St Lucy?
5. What does the name Bethlehem mean?
6. You will sometimes see the following chalked up over the door of a house, or over a church door:
C+M+B (with the date eg 2018)
What does it mean and why is it there?
7. Who were the Holy Innocents?
8. What does the word Epiphany mean?
9. William Shakespeare wrote a play to be performed around Christmas time. What is its name?
10. The Polish Christmas Eve dinner is called *Wigilia*. Why?
11. When is Candlemas?
12. When is the feast of the Annunciation and what is its link with the Shrine of Walsingham?

Answers:

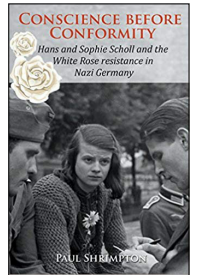
1. Coming. It refers to Christ's coming at Christmas, for which we are waiting his return at the end of time, which we also await.
2. St Nicholas was a Bishop of the 4th century, at a time when there were disputes about the Trinity, and whether Christ was truly God. He was a great defender of the Trinity, hence stories about him always include things in threes, eg three young women who were poor and to whom he dropped gold coins down the chimney of their home.
3. Gaudete Sunday. It is Latin and gives us the word "Gaudy" meaning brightly coloured.
4. Lucy means "light". St Lucy's Day is on December 13th, which was the darkest day of the year according to an earlier calculation of the calendar. She was an early Roman martyr: a sign of light and hope in dark times.
5. The house of bread.
6. The letters refer to the three Wise Men: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. There is a tradition of blessing the house at or around the feast of the Epiphany, and chalking up the letters and the date. The chalk is blessed beforehand in church. This is popular in Poland and in Austria and has become increasingly popular in Britain. The CMB also refers to the Latin for "Christ bless this house".
7. The Holy Innocents were the boy babies slaughtered on the orders of Herod as he sought to kill the baby king of whom the Wise men had spoken.
8. Epiphany means "manifestation" or "showing". Christ is revealed to the wider world – to the Wise men from the East, and to us.
9. Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* – or *what you will* – was written for a Christmas entertainment.
10. It is the vigil meal – the vigil as we await Christ's birth.
11. February 2nd. It is 40 days after Christmas and marks the end of the Christmas season.
12. The feast of the Annunciation is March 25th, nine months before Christmas. The Annunciation – when the Angel Gabriel told Mary she was to be the mother of the Lord – took place at Nazareth, in the holy house where Mary lived. At Walsingham, a thousand years later, following a vision, a replica of the Holy House at Nazareth was built and it is known as "England's Nazareth".

Book Reviews

What inspired the heroic young resisters to Nazism?

Conscience before conformity: Hans and Sophie Scholl and the White Rose resistance in Nazi Germany by Paul Shrimpton, Gracewing, 328pp, £15.99.

reviewed by Alexandra Lloyd



On 18 February 1943 three students at the University of Munich were convicted of high treason and executed by guillotine. Hans Scholl (25), Sophie Scholl (21) and Christoph Probst (24) had been members of the White Rose resistance group which between 1942 and 1943 produced and distributed leaflets calling for resistance to Nazism and an end to the Second World War. A further series of trials followed as other members of the group were rounded up. The final White Rose leaflet was smuggled out of Germany and intercepted by Allied forces, with the result that, in the autumn of 1943, millions of copies were dropped over Germany by Allied aircraft. The sacrifice of these young people, a story which is well known in Germany if not in the UK, is remarkable. Even more extraordinary is that Hans and Sophie had been enthusiastic members of the Hitler Youth, indeed defying their anti-fascist father by doing so.

and understanding of conscience, which had been informed by their voracious reading of Christian writings, among them those of Blessed John Henry Newman. The influence of Catholicism on the Protestant Scholls has tended to be downplayed; Shrimpton's book succeeds in showing how they were shaped by their engagement with Catholic writers and thinkers. These young individuals were not simply cultural Christians but had active prayer lives and a deep love of God and their fellow men. Shrimpton challenges historians who have dismissed aspects of Sophie's spiritual confusions and confessional writing, seeing in them something of the mystic's introspective search for God. By retelling the story of the Scholls through the lens of their faith, Shrimpton makes an original and invaluable contribution to the significant body of writing and research on the White Rose and its legacy in English.

The influence of Catholic thinkers

What, then, motivated these young people, who had been indoctrinated by the National Socialist state, to stand up courageously to the monolith of Nazism? This is the question Paul Shrimpton's latest book seeks to answer, by focusing on an aspect of Hans and Sophie Scholl's lives which English-language studies of the White Rose have tended to downplay: the extent to which their religious conviction drove their actions. Shrimpton persuasively argues that these young people possessed a profound awareness

Newman translated into German

The author's analysis is based primarily on Hans and Sophie Scholl's letters and diaries, as well as retrospective accounts by friends and relatives, and official transcripts of the Gestapo and trial reports. Shrimpton has worked from sources published in English translation, a fact that speaks to the international resonance these events have found, as well as the spirit of exchange between English and German on which the book touches. Indeed, the first chapter begins not with the Scholls, but with Theodor Haecker (1879-1945), a writer, cultural critic, and translator, who in

November 1920 wrote to the Birmingham Oratory asking for permission to translate Newman's *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* into German. Between 1920 and 1945 Haecker translated seven works by Newman, including selected sermons and *The Dream of Gerontius*. Since he had been under a public speaking and writing ban since 1935, translation provided a means of resistance to the regime. Haecker would go on to exert a profound influence on the Scholls, and introduce them to Newman's works.

'The courage to speak'

Shrimpton then charts the lives of the Scholl siblings from early childhood, through the early years of the war, to the efforts of the resistance group and their subsequent arrest and execution. He interweaves the private and political, deftly balancing evidence of the Scholls' interior lives and developing awareness of philosophy and ethics, with historical events of the period. For example, he sets out the relationship between Nazism and the Catholic and Protestant churches in the Third Reich, focussing on the three controversial sermons of Count Clemens August von Galen, Catholic bishop of Münster, who struck out against the hegemony of Nazism, and in particular its pursuit of a policy of euthanasia for individuals deemed 'unworthy of life'. The sermons were widely circulated illegally and the Scholls received a copy, which Hans read, declaring 'finally someone has the courage to speak'.

Newman 'like drops of precious wine'

Shrimpton paints a vivid picture of the other core members of the White Rose, students Willi Graf and Alexander Schmorrell, and the philosophy professor Kurt Huber, as well as many other significant individuals: those who influenced the Scholls, such as the graphic designer Otl Aicher and the publisher Carl Muth, and their persecutors including the Gestapo official, Robert Mohr, who interrogated Sophie, and the infamous judge at their trial, Roland Freisler, who had been present at the Wannsee Conference to discuss the so-called 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question'. An important figure is Sophie's fiancé Fritz Hartnagel, whom she met at a dance in 1937. Under Sophie's influence

this career soldier transformed into a critic of the regime. When he left for the Eastern Front in May 1942, Sophie gave him two volumes of Newman's sermons as a farewell present. He wrote to tell her that Newman's words were like 'drops of precious wine'.

The final chapter, on the Scholls' legacy, is particularly compelling; especially Shrimpton's reflection on what the Scholls might have to teach contemporary readers, and addresses criticism that Hans and Sophie were 'impractical idealists' who made little difference, endangering the lives of others as they did so. The questions are sensitively handled and well-integrated into the book's wider narrative.

Freedom of conscience

Sophie Scholl was taken to the court from her cell on the morning of Monday 22 February 1943. Her cell mate, Else Gebel, noted that she had left behind the court's indictment on which she had written a single word: 'Freiheit!' — 'Freedom!' Sophie was executed that same day at 5pm. Minutes later, it was her brother's turn. As he was led to the guillotine Hans Scholl cried out 'Es lebe die Freiheit!' — 'Long Live Freedom!' The freedom for which the Scholls and their circle were fighting was of course freedom from the yoke of Nazism, but more than that, it was *freedom for*, the freedom of the individual to conform their will to the will of God, what Newman called 'freedom of conscience'.

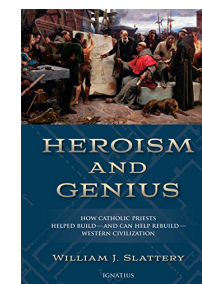
The story of the White Rose is a moving one, perhaps especially for those of us who work closely with young people. One has the impression that the author, himself a teacher, has developed a deep fondness and admiration for the young subjects of his book. Yet he does not idolize them; he allows them to speak and frames their story elegantly, straightforwardly, and often movingly. This book ought to be widely read. It has much to teach us about faith, courage, and conviction.

Dr Alexandra Lloyd is Lecturer in German at St Edmund Hall and Magdalen College, Oxford. Her main research interests lie in twentieth-century literature and film, particularly cultural memories of childhood, war, and dictatorship.

Can the priesthood renew society?

Heroism and Genius: How Catholic Priests helped build – and can help rebuild – Western civilisation by William J. Slattery, Ignatius Press, 272 pp.

reviewed by Richard Whinder



When I saw the title of this book, I imagined it would be a breezy and 'popular' treatment of its subject – easy reading, in fact. The reality was slightly different. William J. Slattery is himself a priest and, it is clear, something of a scholar as well. His work was conceived while he was pursuing higher studies in Rome, and the book comes fully equipped with a full range of scholarly apparatus, including a 'select bibliography' of some six closely-typed pages. Not quite the 'easy reading' I had imagined, then – but a very rewarding read for all that.

Prolonged crisis

Father Slattery's book is a labour of love, as well as of learning, and it is certainly a timely publication. We live at a time when the Catholic priesthood is experiencing a prolonged period of crisis. The negative impact of secularisation and the shortage in vocations has left many priests disheartened and over-burdened. The confusion over priestly identity which followed in the years after Vatican II continues to have a highly damaging effect. Most devastating of all, of course, has been the fall out from the clerical abuse scandals, which has arguably changed the whole way in which the general public – and even many of the Catholic laity – view their priests. No one can deny that heinous crimes took place, sometimes on

a frightening scale. And while it is now clear that this was a problem affecting virtually all institutions, not just the celibate clergy, it is only right that the priesthood should be held to account to a higher standard than other professions. Still, the scandals have been used as a highly convenient tool to undermine not only the clergy and the institutional Church, but the entirety of Christian life and morals – as we see most dramatically in the Republic of Ireland. It is, therefore, not only desirable but urgent to remind people that, not only have the vast majority of priests always lived decent and honest lives, but that a high proportion of them have indeed been capable of 'heroism and genius' – and indeed, sanctity, too.

Every Catholic ought to know

Father Slattery's book is wide-ranging. Broadly speaking it focuses on the Mediaeval period – the age of Christendom – with excursions into the early Church and the Renaissance. Sometimes he is reminding us of stories which every Catholic ought to know, but which are so often overlooked and neglected – the contribution of monasticism to the rebirth of Europe after the fall of Rome, and the complementary efforts of the great Church Fathers to re-establish culture and learning in the West. He gives some emphasis to the court of Charlemagne, and the great work of Alcuin of York – one of the greatest

Englishmen in history? – in bringing about the ‘Carolingian Renaissance’ of the ninth century. At other times he tackles less obvious but intriguing subjects – the meaning and value of chivalry (surely due for rediscovery in the age of #metoo and #timesup?) and ‘The Catholic Ideal behind Western Economic Progress’. At all times Fr. Slattery writes with controlled passion, and if his style is occasionally a little involved it well repays any efforts.

The Church and capitalism

Two slight quibbles to conclude. Firstly, our author occasionally allows his enthusiasm to get the better of him. For example, in writing about ‘Western Economic Progress’, Fr. Slattery reveals himself to be a convinced advocate of free market capitalism (perhaps unsurprising in an American citizen). There is, of course, nothing wrong with that. Indeed, it can be argued that the Church in general has always tended to overlook the positive aspects of the capitalist model. True, it does have an in-built tendency to encourage materialism, and to commodify all aspects of human life, even things as intimate as sexuality. But on the other hand it has also done more to raise the most desperate people in the world out of poverty than any other system, while remaining compatible with basic human freedoms (which communism, for example, signally failed to do). It is therefore quite refreshing to see a Catholic priest give a full-bodied defence of the capitalist ideal.

Usury

Arguably, however, Fr. Slattery over-eggs the pudding and ends up telling a rather one-sided story. It is certainly true that there were priests whose writings on economics influenced such luminaries as Freidrich Hayek (and this is a little-known and fascinating chapter in economic history). On the other hand, the mediaeval and renaissance clergy in general could

hardly be described as cheerleaders for the modern capitalist model. I was rather taken aback that nowhere in his treatment of this subject does Fr. Slattery attempt a proper explanation of the Church’s teaching on usury, nor does the word ‘usury’ appear even once in the index. Yet throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Counter-Reformation period every Catholic preacher of note railed against the lending of money with interest as a serious sin. Now, a case can certainly be made (and I think legitimately) that there has been a genuine development of doctrine in this area – that the changing nature of society, and of money itself, has altered our understanding of what constitutes ‘usury’, so that the demand for a fair rate of interest is no longer sinful. As I say, I think a strong case can be made for this position – but it needs to be argued, not simply assumed.

The laity

Secondly, the book occasionally attributes to ‘the priesthood’ what might be better ascribed simply to ‘the Church’. True, priests are the shepherds of their flock, and direct much of their activity (certainly in past centuries, anyway). Yet one need not be a radical progressive to believe that the laity do indeed have their own proper activities and sphere of influence – and at times Fr. Slattery is perhaps a little too ready to credit his fellow priests with *all* the achievements of Western civilisation.

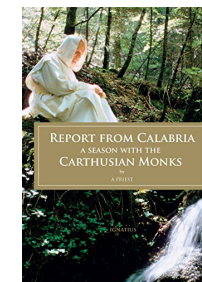
But these are quibbles. This is a finely produced book, richly embellished with black and white illustrations, and it deals with a timely subject in a scholarly but accessible way. It deserves a wide readership.

Fr Richard Whinder is a graduate of King's College London and a priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark; he is Parish Priest of Holy Ghost, Balham.

Silencing the outer voices so that we can hear the inner ones

Report from Calabria, a Season with the Carthusian Monks
by a Priest, Gracewing, 142 pp, £14.99.

reviewed by Bryan Storey



One reviewer describes this book as a gem, and it is certainly no exaggeration to describe it in this way, as the Bishop of Oakland, California, does. Moreover, he goes on to say something particularly important and significant: ‘It will make you want to pray.’ I can think of no higher recommendation for a book, especially as prayer is the only way we can find that vital and unique increase in our human love. To want to pray more involves the vital first step we need to take in order to continue this important journey.

Never reformed because never deformed

The priest-author, based in the USA, who stayed with the Order for four months, follows a great Carthusian tradition of remaining anonymous. This particular tradition helps to give exclusive glory to God and is no doubt also linked to the Carthusian motto ‘never reformed because never deformed’. What a truly wonderful thing that this Order has never deviated from the Lord’s Gospel teaching, helped no doubt by the effort of trying to be anonymous which can help in finding more space for God.

I can think of no better way to spend £15 than to buy this book. It will help improve one’s personal spiritual life, so vital as we always are in need of being helped to cope with our theological confusions, particularly because of our tendency to try to make religion more like myself. Moreover, this helps us find that silence which is such a vital part of enriching one’s life with thoughts of God and His Kingdom. It is also helpful to spread the Good News by giving copies to friends.

Elusive silence

Silence, which is so necessary in our journey towards spiritual transformation and conversion, is more elusive than we think! At first we think it is the absence of noise; later we discover it is more than that, much more. Father Tadeusz Dajczer wonderfully shows us in his books on the Eucharist that silence is transforming. This is beautifully demonstrated in that film ‘The Great Silence’ which leads the Trappist monk to give us all a lesson for life when he said that he was sure that God had allowed him to be blind so that he could discover much more of God’s love

for him. The voice of conscience is made real and appealing by following silence as a vital part of life and helps us in every way to have a more positive, objective outlook.

Speechless in the face of beautiful things

This book, beautifully illustrated with many coloured pictures has the central theme of introducing us to this vital and necessary silence. It is not easy to keep silent. Even in church where enquiring after the health of our neighbour has often taken over from finding more of God which is the real medicine to help us all grow in the necessary sincerity and spiritual depth which means so much more than the casual enquiry which is so much better taking place to take place outside church. The Carthusian spirit demonstrates uniquely the importance of finding God through being quiet. The author calls it a language. He mentions in order to help us that we often find ourselves speechless in the face of beautiful things. There is the speechlessness of spouses or close friends who often have passed beyond the need to talk. Among the Carthusians there is the speechlessness to find more of God summed up in Psalm 46:10 and sometimes sung in church: "Be still and know that I am God".

Purpose of life

He summarises the point by quoting a priest friend who said to him, "The purpose of life is to silence the outer voices so that you can hear the inner ones; then you can begin to uproot those that draw you away from loving God and others and encourage the good ones to grow." The author confesses, as we must do too, that

this language is a very difficult one to learn. Yet of course it's the one most important to learn because it leads us in the direction of the first Commandment which Our Saviour tells us is the most important one of them all. It is the language which brings us to magnificent love and joy surpassing all other joys in life and finding peace unbounding.

Unnecessary words

In the unusual situation of not being able to talk at times due to an effect of Parkinson's disorder, I am discovering how many words I have used in my life which were quite unnecessary. I think often of St Thomas à Kempis's saying in *The Imitation of Christ* that we go out to meet others in hope that we will return more human only to find that so often we are less human in view of what we have said and the way we have said it.

Silence

I do not doubt that we can all benefit from more silence to help surpass all understanding. I am convinced that in this the Carthusians have much to offer and that we owe this Priest a debt of gratitude in bringing it to our notice.

Father Bryan Storey is priest-in-charge of the Catholic mission church in Tintagel, Cornwall.



DVD Review – Uplifting Grace

Grace by Fr. Marcus Holden & Fr. Andrew Pinsent, DVD published by St. Anthony Communications, 33 mins £9.95.

reviewed by Carol Ann Harnett



In just over thirty minutes, Frs Marcus Holden and Andrew Pinsent give a good overview of grace, without which we could not live our lives as Christians. Beginning with a clear definition of grace as sharing in the divine life, the "talking heads" style is broken up with images of the modern world and of sacred art. The DVD explains that it seems impossible to share in God's divine life but that grace enables us to enter into the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Throughout the DVD, we are shown how grace is received and its impact on Christian life. Finally the presentation turns to Our Blessed Lady as the one creature who is Full of Grace and as such, she shows us what grace means.

Beyond the ordinary

The DVD opens with scenes of frost and snow, a rather strange opening to such a positive presentation. The scenes are beautiful, but it could recall (as it did for me) C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the scenes of Narnia before it was rescued by Aslan. Maybe the link was deliberate as it led me to think that it is by grace that our hearts are softened and made capable of receiving the gifts that God wants to give us. However, this is not stated. Instead the commentary begins by

noting the secular understanding and use of the word *grace*, such as implying beauty of character, giftedness, being graceful, all pointing beyond the ordinary. It is suggested that these uses of grace could help us to understand the theology of grace, which is indeed something beyond the ordinary.

The history of salvation is presented as the history of divine grace from Genesis to the book of Revelation; from the loss of divine grace through original sin to the coming of Christ who introduces grace into the human world so that we can be sharers in the divine life (cf. II Peter 1:4). The impact of the Incarnation on man is explained that, as the ancient Fathers said, God became man so that man might be like God (sharing in His divine life). The Incarnation, it is explained, builds the bridge between God and man, but grace is crossing it.

Christ the Vine

It was good to see how Christ's teaching is used visually to explain the mystery of grace at work, such as the vine and the branches and the parable of the sower. It is grace at work in us binding us to Christ as in the vine and producing a harvest by making us into a rich soil. It is by grace that

we become what we are meant to be and can contribute fruitfully in the society in which we live.

It is mentioned that we receive sanctifying grace through the sacraments, but there is not a systematic explanation of the different types of grace and how they work in us. For a catechetical parish group, this is a shame as it could be the starting point of discussions, especially for those undergoing the RCIA process. It means that the catechists would have to supplement this aspect of the DVD.

Without grace we are nothing

What is encouraging is the discussion of the fact that grace can be lost through mortal sin which is described as an act of “spiritual adultery” but that by repentance and the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, grace is restored in us. The DVD emphasises that for grace to be restored, repentance is necessary. All too often our modern society paints an image of a loving God who forgives regardless. It is good to see this error redressed. In this light, mention was also made of Pelagianism, that we can save ourselves by hard work (a fifth-century heresy that has sadly not gone away), and of St Augustine’s response, that without grace we are nothing, with grace we are everything.

The effects of grace on our Christian life are discussed: how do we behave at Mass? Are we aware of God’s gift of supernatural grace? Do we allow His grace to enter into our prayer life? (And here the film illustrates this by showing a black and white scene turning to colour). Grace makes us compatible with God. Grace changes us as it builds on our nature enabling us to live “supernatural” lives. (Natural lives are ones lived according to our nature and therefore supernatural lives are lived

in ways that extend or go beyond our nature). There is a comparison between the cult of the superpower and “super-grace” with the latter enabling us to enter into the Trinitarian life with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Action


We are urged that knowing about grace is not enough. We need to live a life of grace by God’s grace, and this requires action on our part. We need to respond to grace as did the saints and above as did Mary. She, as an “icon” of grace, more than anyone shows us what the perfection of a life lived by grace means. Our baptismal birthright is being in a “state of grace” and this must be preserved at all costs – by God’s amazing gift of grace!

This is a very uplifting DVD with references to Scripture and Tradition. It touches on all four dimensions of the Faith: the Church’s teaching on grace; liturgy and the sacraments as sources of grace; the impact of grace on the way we live; and how grace enables and deepens the life of prayer. Some on-screen subtitles would have helped when key teachings were introduced. The DVD is one continuous production, and for the purposes of catechesis mini breaks with subheadings would enable it to be stopped and a useful discussion of the points raised could be made. Overall though, it is a comfortable half hour’s viewing which could be used for an adult or more mature teen group in a parish.


Carol Ann Harnett is Course Leader for the Foundations in Faith and the New Evangelisation Course, School of the Annunciation.

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