

Teresa, Teacher Of Prayer

While many presume that time committed to prayer distracts from the important responsibilities of life, for St. Teresa of Avila, prayer is no obstacle, but a source of interior strength for service to others and holy friendships in the mission of the Church. Entering into silence before the mystery of God's presence became the animating principle of her own apostolic fruitfulness.

Five hundred years after her birth, this spiritual mission continues to send waves of grace throughout the Church and the broader culture.

Teresa Sanchez Cepeda y Ahumada is given the title "of Avila" not as her family name, but, instead, to indicate where she lived as a Carmelite nun, reformer and mystic.

Born in 1515, she grew up in a wonderful Catholic household in a beautiful, walled medieval city



ANTHONY LILLES

in the very heart of the Iberian Peninsula. At that time, Spain saw itself as a Catholic kingdom and an emerging political power. The royal family were people of not only great industry, but personal prayer, envisioning a society built around the Eucharist and entrusted with spreading the Gospel to the farthest ends of the world.

A sense of confidence that comes from this flourishing Spanish culture gives her teachings a certain freshness and charm. While her brothers went forth as Conquistadores in America for personal fortune and the glory of Spain, she herself entered a nearby convent, the Incarnation, without her father's permission. Yet her father was a man dedicated to prayer and gave his consent as he carefully discerned God's will.

Religious life did not automatically make her a saint. As a nun, she kept up appearances even when struggling with prayer, and many thought her to be a model religious. She was dissatisfied with her mediocre life but did not know what to do. At 39 years of age, a moment of grace caught her by surprise.

On a stairway on her way to the chapel, her eyes fell on a statue of Christ, scourged and crowned with thorns. She had probably passed by this image before without really noticing it. This time, however, she felt Jesus — rejected and despised out of love for her — look at her with a personal tenderness that pierced her to the heart. She fell down and wept in prayer, begging Christ not to allow her to backslide again.

This renewal of her friendship with Christ disposed her to further conversions. When she felt stuck in emotional attachments that distracted her from the spiritual life, a Jesuit spiritual director invited her to sing the *Veni Creator Spiritus* as part of her prayer. She did and found herself caught up in an encounter with the Lord that raptured her into a heavenly reality. Her heart was pierced with the love of God in an even more profound manner, and this gave her a deeper confidence to let go of what was holding her back.

Through contemplative prayer, her Bridegroom freed her from every attachment that was not worthy of her Christian dignity.

St. Teresa of Jesus desired to build up the Church through promoting a way of life completely centered in prayer. She discovered sacred doctrine to be the key to her mission.

Then, as now, very few had appreciated the relationship of scientific theology and mystical wisdom. Many were trying to renew the spiritual life of Spain without rooting their insights in sound doctrine — and this with catastrophic moral and spiritual results.

At the same time, many theologians viewed contemplation as dangerous and limited to those in the most rigorous forms of religious life. St. Teresa believed this assumption was false. Faith without reason is vulnerable to grave deceptions, and study

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New Prenatal Screens' Seek-and-Destroy Mission

BY REBECCA TAYLOR

In December 2014, the New England Center for Investigative Reporting (NECIR) released its research into the new non-invasive prenatal-screening tests that are now being offered to pregnant women.

These tests look at minute amounts of placental DNA that are in the mother's blood. This small amount of fetal DNA can be detected as early as 10-weeks' gestation. The tests only require a blood sample, and they give a couple a non-invasive, early look at the genetic health of their unborn baby.

The NECIR exposé, titled "Oversold and Misunderstood," is shocking. While many of the companies offering these new screens, which are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, tout that the tests are "99% accurate," the center uncovered that these tests gave false alarms nearly half the time, especially for rare chromosomal abnormalities like trisomy 13.

This means that perfectly healthy fetuses are being aborted because of the results of these screens. The NECIR reports: "And at Stanford University, there have been at least three cases of women aborting healthy fetuses that had received a high-risk screen result." "The worry is women are terminating without really knowing if [the initial test result] is true or not," said Athena Cherry, professor of pathology at the Stanford University School of Medicine, whose lab examined the cells of the healthy aborted fetuses. In one of the three Stanford cases, the woman actually obtained a confirmatory test and was told the fetus was fine, but aborted anyway because of her faith in the screening company's accuracy claims. "She felt it couldn't be wrong," Cherry said.

The NECIR concludes that "companies are overselling the accuracy of their tests." It is a tragedy when any child is aborted, for sure, but it seems particularly horrifying that babies are being torn from their mothers' wombs because of misleading, even predatory, marketing.

How has this happened? When did we become a society where the lives of the next generation hinge on the results of a single test that is not even regulated by the FDA?

As someone who has performed genetic testing for thousands of patients, I can say that the problem is deep and multifaceted.

On the surface, there is a general lack of understanding about the limits of genetic testing by both the public and by medical professionals. These new non-invasive prenatal tests are only screens. They are not diagnostic tests and should not be used as such.

What is the difference between a screen and a diagnostic test? A screen is given to a general healthy population and usually is highly sensitive, so that any potential problems are identified. Because of the high sensitivity, false positives are more



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common. A screen is always supposed to be confirmed with a diagnostic test. A diagnostic test is designed with high specificity for a particular condition. It is often more invasive and is meant as a tool to make a definitive diagnosis.

Because these new prenatal screens are advertised as having "near-diagnostic accuracy," women are skipping the diagnostic test or, in the Stanford case mentioned above, disregarding the diagnostic results in favor of the screen. Either way, if companies are presenting these screens as good as or better than diagnostic tests to doctors and patients, then these businesses are seriously negligent.

But the distinction between a screen and a diagnostic test is only a small issue on top of a much larger and more systemic problem: the use of prenatal testing in conjunction with abortion as a seek-and-destroy mission to kill anyone with a genetic abnormality.

In general, prenatal testing is not inherently immoral. Ideally, prenatal testing would only be used to find out more about the life growing in the womb in order to give that new life the best possible medical care. There will likely be a time when gene therapy has progressed to a point where the effects of chromosomal abnormalities can be treated in utero, and babies with genetic diseases can be born to live healthy lives, thanks to early intervention.

Prenatal testing is, and should be, an

essential component to treating the unborn.

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in the late 1980s, asked, "Is prenatal diagnosis morally licit?" and then answered, "If prenatal diagnosis respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed towards its safeguarding or healing as an individual, then the answer is affirmative."

Unfortunately, abortion on demand has spoiled the fruit of the prenatal-testing tree. Instead of focusing on cures or treatment, the medical community has turned instead to making sure no one with a genetic abnormality ever makes it out of the womb. This is not medicine; it is simply getting rid of the sick. And yet many medical professionals truly believe this is a valid method for dealing with genetic disease.

This misguided approach is analogous to killing all the patients with cancer and then proclaiming that cancer has been "eliminated." Prenatal testing followed by abortion is no different: No disease is actually treated; the patient is eradicated instead. It is quite literally throwing the baby out with the genetic bath water.

Even more pernicious is the pervasive idea that abortion is the compassionate option once an adverse prenatal diagnosis is made. Our society has the erroneous belief that it is better to be dead than disabled. Also, there is the short-sighted

assumption that if there is no treatment now there never will be. Together, these fallacies give medical professionals the perceived obligation to bully vulnerable women into abortion.

There is ample evidence that this is a common occurrence. Look on any website that supports those with genetic abnormalities, and there are countless stories of families that were given very little relevant information about their unborn children's conditions and then were repeatedly encouraged to terminate their pregnancies.

Lori Andrews, a lawyer, wrote in her book *The Clone Age*:

"A woman I know was told by her obstetrician that her fetus had Down syndrome. The doctor ordered her to abort; she refused. ... Another woman was similarly coerced. Her doctor told her that her baby would be more like a fish than a human and would only be as smart as a baboon."

A Special Mother Is Born, by Leticia Velasquez, is a compilation of stories from families of children with special needs. It seems that in every story the medical community is guilty of some dereliction of duty. In a disturbing undercurrent, the book chronicles mistreatment of parents and children by doctors, nurses and genetic counselors. These medical professionals have pressured women into aborting their children with special needs and have neglected these children if they were lucky enough to be born.

Not only is the idea that it is better to be dead than disabled wrong-headed, it is flat out wrong. Researchers at Children's Hospital in Boston surveyed more than 2,000 families where a member had Down syndrome. They found that nearly 80% of parents said their outlook on life was more positive because of their child with Down syndrome.

In addition, 99% of adults with Down syndrome report that they are happy with their lives. Such a statistic would never be found in "normal" adult populations.

New prenatal tests will continue to be developed. They will tell us more about the unborn at even earlier stages. These tests have the capacity to accomplish great good. But unless we acknowledge that the most important thing they tell us is that an actual human being is growing and developing inside the womb, their effect will continue to be poisonous to the unborn and to society as a whole.

A massive shift is needed. We as a society need to abandon the fallacy that abortion is an appropriate medical treatment for genetic abnormalities. Medical professionals need to get back to sound medical principles, namely caring for the unborn, instead of simply discarding them.

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She writes about bioethics on her blog *Mary Meets Dolly*.

Pope Francis' Catechism for Economics

In a Jan. 11 interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, Pope Francis spoke again and at some length about issues regarding the economy. From his words, in clear continuity with his predecessors, we can deduce five practical implications.

The core problem with our economy, according to Pope Francis: "When money, instead of man, is at the center of the system, when money becomes an idol, men and women are reduced to simple instruments of a social and economic system."

When we idolize money, our economy is reduced to a consumerist outlook dedicated to the pursuit of material things, which "sustains itself through a culture of waste": waste of time, waste of God's creation and waste of human lives — because we "labor for the food which perishes" instead of "for the food which endures to eternal life" (John 6:27). The Pope highlights, in particular, two serious aspects of the culture of waste: "that which leads people to discard babies through abortion ... [and] to a hidden euthanasia of older people, who are abandoned."

What should we do? Pope Francis' predecessor St. John Paul II

wrote in *Centesimus Annus* (The 100th Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*):

"It is, therefore, necessary to create lifestyles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments" (36).



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The first practical implication is therefore: Strive, in however small or humble a way, to ensure that our work — the products and services we help produce and sell — and our investments serve to promote "truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others," rather than false illusions, ugliness, harm or division.

If reorienting our work and investments in this way seems difficult, it is. Indeed, it is impossible without God's help. The virtue of charity (to will and act for the good of others) is a theological virtue, one that comes as a grace from God. And, thus, Pope Francis reminds us: "We need, as Benedict XVI recalled in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), men and women

with their arms raised in prayer to God; conscious that love and sharing, which engender genuine development, are not a product of our hands, but a gift to ask for."

Our second practical implication is then: Pray to God for the gift of charity to transform our work and investment activity into acts of service.

Pope Francis affirmed, "We need ethics in the economy, and we also need ethics in politics." Too often, he is interpreted as calling for statist solutions to social ills. The Pope is not so naïve; he realizes that corruption and greed exist among politicians and public servants as well as among business people.

The interviewer from *La Stampa* asked Francis what he thought of his predecessor Pope Pius XI's "strong and prophetic words" about the international imperialism of money. His response: "Pius XI only sounds extreme to those who feel struck by his words and hit where it hurts by his prophetic condemnations."

What are those "prophetic condemnations," and who should feel struck by them? In 1931, after the Great Depression, Pius XI wrote in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (The Reconstruction

of the Social Order):

"In the first place, it is obvious that not only is wealth concentrated in our times, but an immense power and despotic economic dictatorship is consolidated in the hands of a few, who often are not owners but only the trustees and managing directors of invested funds, which they administer according to their own arbitrary will and pleasure. This dictatorship is being most forcibly exercised by those who, since they hold the money and completely control it, control credit also and rule the lending of money. Hence, they regulate the flow, so to speak, of the lifeblood, whereby the entire economic system lives, and have so firmly in their grasp the soul, as it were, of economic life that no one can breathe against their will" (105-106).

What and who does Pius XI, and now Pope Francis, refer to here? It is the collusion between big business and big government that promotes concentration of wealth: through subsidies that benefit the rich at the expense of the poor, "corporate welfare," mandates and regulations that favor special-interest groups. It is also any effort that focuses more on rent-seeking (capturing wealth created by others) than on actual wealth creation.

The condemnation falls on all who participate in this kind of activity — particularly on those who, as Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Caritas in Veritate*, instead of using finance as an "instrument directed towards improved wealth creation and development," use it according to "their own arbitrary will and pleasure," for personal gain.

A third practical implication: In my work, ask: "Am I creating wealth? Or am I engaging in rent-seeking behavior?" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Vocation of the Business Leader," p. 26).

The interviewer asked Francis whether Pope Paul VI's claims about private property not being an absolute right are still valid. The Pope responded, "Not only are they still valid, but the more time goes on, the more I find they have been proved by experience."

The social doctrine of the Church has taught consistently that there are two aspects to private property. The first is that it is legitimate and indeed "wholly necessary for the autonomy of the person and the family" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 71). The second is the "universal destination of created goods": God created the world for

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Surrogacy's Incredibly Dark Side

The hidden camera footage reveals the Indian restaurant is crowded, and the ambient noise of fellow diners all around makes it hard to hear. But Gianna Toboni, an investigative reporter from HBO's documentary show *VICE*, slowly begins to understand what is being offered to her by a woman sitting across the table. Toboni is in India to get a firsthand look at the country's booming international surrogacy industry. She has heard rumors of "extra" Caucasian babies for sale, so she meets a surrogacy broker for dinner. On camera, the broker, holding a swaddled infant, tells Toboni she can take the baby home tonight — for a price.

The source of these "extra" babies is beyond horrifying. Western couples are taking advantage of the discounts international surrogacy offers. They get a baby gestated for them at a low price, and the women in third-world countries get more money than they could make in several years.

To make the process more efficient, doctors often transfer more than one embryo to a surrogate. If she



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gets pregnant with multiples, sometimes the commissioning couple is not told. Nine months later, they fly in and get the one baby they paid for. The "extras," however, are peddled on the black market. While the couple thinks they're getting a miracle at a bargain price, they are unaware that their "extra" children are being sold to whoever is willing to pay.

International surrogacy is often touted as a win-win, a free market where everyone benefits. When we take a closer look, however, the whole facade quickly falls apart.

We know the surrogates are being exploited. They sign contracts they cannot read. They're kept in dorms, isolated from family and friends and forced to deliver by cesarean section. Some aren't paid the full amount they're promised. A few surrogates have suffered the ultimate complication: death. Many of the contracting couples simply don't care. If they did, the industry wouldn't be booming.

Toboni, in an interview with *New York* magazine, exposes the ethical apathy she uncovered:

"There are cases where American couples feel a little strange about what is happening, and the ethics of it, but turn a blind eye because they don't want to pay the higher rates in the States. Many couples don't want to know what's behind the scenes, they want their baby fast, and they want it done cheaply."

Yet the market for "extra" babies is a new revelation — proof that it's not just the surrogates being exploited.

When asked if she was shocked by the existence of such a black market, Toboni admits, "I wasn't surprised that it existed, but I was surprised by how easily we were able to find it."

What may be equally shocking is the silence. One would've expected national headlines after the *VICE* exposé warned Western couples about the chance their "extra" babies may be hustled to the highest bidder, but the discovery has produced barely a whisper.

Other international surrogacy horror stories have also failed to gain media traction. One particularly traumatic tale involves Baby Dev, a boy born of an Indian surrogate, along with his twin sister. When the commissioning parents, a couple from Australia, came to pick up their children, they decided they couldn't afford to raise both. They took the girl home to "complete" their family, which already had a boy. Baby Dev was left behind. The couple was aware that, because of Indian surrogacy law, Dev could be left stateless, meaning without citizenship in either India or Australia.

Australian reporter Samantha Hawley traveled to India to try to find Baby Dev. She was unsuccessful. Relatives of the Australian couple insist Dev was adopted by an affluent family and will be fine. Australian author-

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Pulling Back the Curtain On Planned Parenthood

Life



Video Series Puts a Human Face on the Unborn

CRE077/SHUTTERSTOCK

BY JOHN M. GRONDELSKI

At the very end of the Church's traditional "corporal works of mercy" is the call "to bury the dead." In antiquity, there was no greater injustice than to deprive someone of a grave.

That's why Joseph of Arimathea's burial of Christ is an act of mercy — the crucified were often buried in a common grave or just left to rot off their crosses. Antigone's providing a decent burial for her brother Polynices, in defiance of Creon, is a classic example of the demands of human decency.

For modern Americans, that command may seem strange. Soup kitchens "feed the hungry." The St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Salvation Army "clothe the naked." More and more cities provide shelters to "shelter the homeless." Parishes organize groups "to visit the sick." But we don't seem to have many forlorn corpses in need of burial.

Then came Planned Parenthood.

One of the visceral reasons why the ongoing series of videos showing just how much Planned Parenthood profits from its blood business makes people angry is that it puts a face on the unborn.

Abortion has managed to maintain a certain degree of social acceptability precisely because its grislier side has been methodically kept under wraps. "Nothing to see here, folks," declares the man behind the curtain, and when that man (or woman) is dressed in a white coat, the declaration acquires an even greater measure of credibility from a society that flatters itself for being "scientific."

Till, sometimes, the curtain is pulled back, and the man in the white coat adds the disclaimer: "I'm not a doctor, but I play one ..." for Planned Parenthood.

One reason the culture of death has managed to prevail is that, paradoxically, it depends on hiding death. "Assisted suicide" takes place behind drawn curtains in a hospital, alone or with another killer (also playing caring "doctor"). Jack Kevorkian's suicide machine was

designed to enable someone to kill himself completely alone. Contemporary funerals are hidden. We keep young people from the "trauma" of seeing a dead body. We even hide the dead body: The growing acceptance of cremation, even among Catholics, turns the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, into freeze-dried flakes, powder to be scattered as we play *Dust in the Wind*.

Then Planned Parenthood gives us a detached arm or leg or talks about an intact "calvarium" (i.e., head), and the body comes right back, front and center.

But if abortion has been largely practiced "out of sight, out of mind," that doesn't mean the human costs disappear. You have to put the 56 million bodies since *Roe v. Wade* somewhere. Monica Migliorino Miller's Citizens for a Pro-Life Society (ProLifeSociety.com) has tried to throw light on the post-abortion question: What happens to the bodies? Her book, *Abandoned: The Untold Story of the Abortion Wars* (St. Benedict Press, 2012) will inform you about what is found in abortion-facility dump-

sters, on loading docks, in storage warehouses or consigned to incinerators — if you have the guts to face it. Her most grisly account relates to the story of an animal cemetery in Milwaukee, where your little kitten gets a lovely coffin but also where Milwaukee's abortion businesses used to dispose of their "waste." When she confronted them with the fact that the remains of the unborn were ending up with animals, Miller was struck by the twisted logic: For the contractors, "it could not be wrong to bury the remains of the unloved aborted with those of cats and dogs that were good to their masters."

There is also an eerie parallelism to the current Planned Parenthood disclosures: After initially being caught off guard, the cemetery came out swinging. "The public is fine as long as they don't know what's going on,' ... [and] 'the public should not be so outraged, given that the firm accepts fetuses only from a few sources and can't be two percent of our business,'" for which they only charged a flat incineration fee.

Maybe they also do mammograms.

Kermit Gosnell, the Philadelphia abortionist now serving a life sentence for murder, manslaughter and other grisly practices, also kept the bodies of many unborn babies that he killed in a refrigerator or specimen jars.

You have to admit abortionists have a problem: 56 million bodies since *Roe*, and, as the Planned Parenthood videos show, you can't keep the bodies buried ... especially when to make a buck you don't bury them.

This year is shaping up to be a bad one for the abortion giant. Montana tried to add an element of humanity to prenatal killing by stipulating that any unborn child aborted after 20-weeks (i.e., five months) gestation be anesthetized before execution, since a fetus is pain-capable at that point. Reliably pro-abortion Democrat Gov. Steve Bullock vetoed that bill April 30, and, so far, it seems other states have not followed Montana's lead.

Kansas earlier this year passed a ban on abortion after 20-weeks gestation, when the unborn are "pain capable," as did Wisconsin last month, and similar legislation is pending in the Senate. Planned Parenthood and other abortionists have quietly worked behind the scenes against such legislation but really have not wanted to take the fight public: How do you oppose bills framed to prevent or at least mitigate excruciating pain? The default abortionist response is: "What pain?" If a fetus is not human, it cannot have pain.

But people in their gut know that an unborn baby at five months of pregnancy feels. And having to debate that question risks bringing into view the one thing the abortion establishment has sought assiduously to hide: the humanity of the unborn.

Now, Planned Parenthood is faced with pictures: pictures of its callousness, pictures of its charnel trafficking.

And a picture is worth a thousand words. Especially if it ignites discussion of questions they'd like kept off the table.

"To bury the dead" is a corporal work of mercy. Because — Planned Parenthood's denials notwithstanding — everyone has a right to rest in peace in a grave, especially those consigned there as victims of injustice.

John M. Grondelski writes from Shanghai, China.

Can an Americanized Christianity Sustain Itself?

Bruce Jenner, America's most famous man-turned-woman, regards himself a Christian. Damon Linker, writing at *The Week*, asks: Who are we to judge?

Linker's was the latest contribution to a discussion begun by Will Wilkinson in his essay on now-Caitlyn Jenner and American Christianity. Channeling Harold Bloom, Wilkinson suggests that Jenner's transformation is emblematic of American religion, which forever quests after a kind of authentic inner self.

The drive to be the "real me" is, in the American understanding, more than sheer self-creation. It's a spark of divinity that can be found within each of us, which both prece- des and surpasses any objective laws of "nature," such as Aristotle or St. Thomas Aquinas might champion. American spirituality is marked by a thoroughgoing optimism about the individual's ability to access God directly, without the mediation of churches or patriarchs or perhaps even a Bible. As Wilkinson puts it, "You can just feel Jesus."

This way of understanding the American sense of self and spirituality adds an interesting element to the standard analysis of the present culture wars, wherein traditional religion is pitted against an aggressive, bullying secularism. By Wilkinson's interpretation, Jenner and his apologists may actually be the standard-bearers for authentic American religion, while religious conservatives

defend an increasingly defunct and indeed *un-American* alternative.

Christianity isn't being vanquished so much as Americanized — and Catholics (together with some of the more orthodox Protestants and Eastern Orthodox) should worry less about the secular left and more about the "further evolved" offshoots of their own faith.

There are some defects in Wilkinson's essay. As Ross Douhat points out, he may be overconfident about the inevitability of



RACHEL LU

Christianity's further Americanization. Mainline Christianity has been declared to be on its deathbed on multiple occasions but has proven quite resilient over the long term. Further, Wilkinson fails to draw appropriate connections between the soft spirituality of personal discovery and the hard secularism professed by much of America's cultural elite. They're more compatible than he seems to realize, in large part because "God within" spirituality is so metaphysically undemanding that it can be grafted onto an enormous range of philosophical views without obvious contradiction. (And if it does contradict, what of it? I am large; I contain multitudes.)

At the same time, Wilkinson's essay makes some compelling points. Secularists wouldn't have

advanced so far so quickly if they hadn't developed some sort of unholy alliance with branches of American religious life, making the overthrow of traditional norms palatable to the less-committed middle — which might range from "not religious but spiritual" types to "I was raised Catholic, but I'm not that kind." In this sense, progressive incursions into mainstream culture do have a quasi-religious cast to them, which religious conservatives may be inclined to overlook.

From the standpoint of an orthodox Christian, this is a helpful insight into the nature of the threat. Yet others, like Linker, are basically content to embrace our free-wheeling, ever-evolving American Christianity. They argue Christ's message itself — "among the most radically subversive ever uttered" — paved the way to a radically egalitarian and anti-authoritarian religion, which has adapted itself to a dizzying array of cultures and political orders precisely because it finds its core in something more personal than structural.

Judaism and Islam are built around a complex set of divinely given laws which believers must somehow incorporate into their society and culture. Christianity, by contrast, is "explicitly founded in a declaration of independence from Jewish law," and all that matters for the Christian is "loving God and one's neighbor and maintaining a pure heart before the eyes of God." Linker

goes on to imply that the Church betrayed the spirit of Christ's message by modeling itself "on a form of imperial Roman legalism with no warrant at all in the text of Gospels."

The upshot, naturally, is that we should feel free to embrace, in the spirit of authentic Christian egalitarianism, an Americanized version of Christianity that has room for tinkering with family structures (Linker has long been a vocal proponent of same-sex "marriage") and for gender-bending Bruce/Caitlyn Jenners.

These are old arguments, however. The Church's detractors have long been cursing Constantine for corrupting the Christian message with his soul-destroying institutionalism. Every reformer since the first century has claimed warrant for his proposed innovation in Christ's "radically subversive" message. But the context of the current discussion highlights the importance of answering these old canards with renewed vigor.

If our calls for greater religious freedom and more tolerance of Christian practice are falling flat, it might be due to our compatriots' failure to see the tensions between the progressive agenda and Christian faith. What's wrong with a Christianity that can adapt itself to changing times and customs? Isn't malleability the very strength that has enabled Christ's teachings to resonate across two millennia?

Yes and no. The truth is, it's fairly easy to develop a religion

that is either malleable or uncompromisingly rigid. What's hard is to manage a religion that is both at the same time.

This point becomes particularly obvious when we examine the myriad of Christian heresies that have arisen over the centuries. Generally speaking, heretics start small. There is one particular element of mainline orthodoxy that just doesn't sit right. It might be the dogma of the Trinity. (Three in one? What sense does that make?) It might be the hypostatic union. (How could Christ be fully God and fully man? Surely one was more real than the other.) Some have wanted to solve the problem of evil by postulating a bad spirit equal and opposite to the one true God. And then, of course, there are those who just can't quite believe the institutional structure of the Church we see in Rome is the same Church founded by Christ on the rock of Peter.

In most cases, a heresy's particular point of departure seems on its face to be more reasonable than the orthodox position. The dogma of the Trinity is, frankly, quite strange; how can three things also be one? It makes more intuitive sense that there should be either three separate gods or just one (perhaps with two deputies or just three different names). And the idea of an omnipotent God taking on the form (and limitations) of a mere human raises all sorts of problems. It's easier to

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Clear-Sighted

It's important for Catholics today to see through the steady flow of cultural poison and to counteract it with hope.

Hope "is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (Catechism, 1817).

Our page-one story, looking back 10 years at Hurricane Katrina, focuses on how the Church in New Orleans helped Louisianans recover and find hope after the worst natural disaster on U.S. soil. On page three, the pastor of Holy Cross Church in Las Cruces, N.M., speaks with confidence in his belief that God saved his parishioners from being injured in a bomb blast that rocked his church earlier this month.

And on page two, our obituary of Cardinal William Baum reflects the hope modeled in one Catholic priest's long life of service to Christ and his Church.



MICHAEL WARSAW

The Catechism says, "The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness, which

God has placed in the heart of every man. It keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude."

I pray we all will embrace that hopeful clarity of vision that our Catholic faith inspires. For true hope is the antidote to the epidemic of despair in our society today.

God bless you!

EDITORIAL

Divorce's Many Victims

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn — the archbishop of Vienna, the chief editor of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a Church leader who was considered a *papabile* during the 2013 conclave that elected Pope Francis — just celebrated his 70th birthday.

But despite his long and storied personal history, he still points to the childhood trauma of his parents' divorce as a critical turning point in his emotional and spiritual life.

"It is so obvious that the first victims of divorce are always the children," notes the cardinal in his page-one interview. When the father and mother separate, "something is always broken in the life of the child."

Referencing the ongoing discussion within the Church about pastoral outreach to divorced-and-civily-remarried Catholics, which will be a major issue at the October synod, he added: "I fully agree we have to speak about mercy and be merciful to the divorced and remarried, who often experience many sufferings and troubles. But before speaking about the suffering of the parents, we must speak about the suffering of the children."

Cultural tolerance of divorce and self-justifying behavior that puts adult desires first are nothing new. Indeed, Jesus diagnosed our tendency to condone the need for divorce and whitewash its human toll in strikingly harsh terms: "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8).

The Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage marked the redemptive power of Christ's suffering and death on the cross for the salvation of the world, and his Church offered the body of Christ the abundant graces that fused the bond between spouses joined through the sacrament of holy matrimony. The Church has never denied the brutal reality that some marriages cannot endure without inflicting greater harm on the entire household. Pope Francis acknowledged that truth in his June 24 catechesis on the family. The separation of the parents may be needed, he said, "when it comes to saving the weaker spouse or young children from more serious injuries caused by intimidation and violence, by humiliation and exploitation, by lack of involvement and indifference."

But for most families, a commitment to permanence and fidelity also secures emotional, spiritual and financial stability. In tough times — sickness, joblessness and the frailty of old age — husband and wife know they will be side by side. Fifty years ago, our culture began to challenge the value of bearing with a spouse in a difficult marriage. The sexual revolution, the women's movement and the rise of no-fault divorce all played a role. Within decades, however, the same turmoil that roiled the life of the young Christoph Schönborn forced many Americans to reassess the option of divorce.

"Research shows that two-thirds of divorces now end low-conflict marriages, where there is no abuse, violence or serious fighting. After those marriages end, the children suddenly struggle with a range of symptoms — anxiety, depression, problems in school — that they did not previously have," Elizabeth Marquardt explained in a 2005 *Washington Post* column that summarized the study's findings. Further, she learned that the children's early struggles with their parents' divorce would later shape their adult expectations: Many feared their own marriages would break apart and delayed making permanent commitments. While researchers like Marquardt have focused on the emotional toll that lingers long after a child's parents have separated, other specialists have documented the economic and social impact of divorce. In his important study, "Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010," Charles Murray showed how divorce shapes children's future prospects. A rising divorce rate and a declining marriage culture among working-class white people over the past half century have handicapped the next generation's chances of moving into the middle class.

Murray noted in his report that the rate of divorce among high-income whites with college degrees also increased in the wake of the '60s. But afterward, as cultural elites experienced the toll of family breakups, divorce rates began a steady decline among the top 20%.

Now, more than ever, the Church must make sure its catechesis on marriage is effectively presented in Catholic schools and in CCD and marriage-preparation programs. Those efforts should feature practical information about the many unintended consequences of filing for divorce.

And Pope Francis is calling us to do something equally challenging. Since the beginning of his papacy, he has wanted the Church to function as a "field hospital" for all the broken families that have already experienced the hardship of divorce. So parishes should provide solid pastoral programs designed for divorced Catholics, but each Catholic should take personal responsibility for guiding these families into the center of parish life.

When the moment is propitious, that invitation includes parents who have divorced and civily remarried. They will not be able to receive Communion, but the Pope has emphasized that they are "not excommunicated" (see story on page nine and related column in "Culture of Life"), and he wants their children to see that the entire family is welcome.

"If we also look at these new unions through the eyes of young children — and the young are watching — we see even more the urgency to develop a real welcome in our communities towards people who are living in such situations," said Francis. "This is why it's important that the style of the community, its language, its attitudes are always attentive to people, beginning with the smallest. They are the ones who suffer the most in these situations."

The Holy Father presents us with a challenge that will not be easy to meet. Pastors, catechists and parents are asked to deepen the faithful's commitment to marriage. Yet we must find a way to touch the lives of those who most need the healing power of God's love and forgiveness.

This task requires a new attentiveness from the parish community, but also from the relatives of families that have been shattered by divorce.

The young Christoph Schönborn received love and support from an extended family and what he described as an already "intense, personal religious life." With the knowledge that the children of divorce may be most in need of the grace of the sacraments, the warmth of a vibrant parish and the care of loving relatives, let us work together to construct a field hospital for broken families who yearn for healing and hope.

LETTERS

Prayerful Antidote

After retiring from a career in the Air Force, I began a militant spiritual career, so to speak, in the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, now the World Apostolate of Fatima, and I am hoping to make it to 90 to celebrate the apostolate's approaching centennial.

I appreciated very much your editorial "The Rosary's Power" (May 17 issue). Changing a sword into a rosary seemed to add credibility to Padre Pio's description of the Rosary as the weapon for these times. In these dark times, with ISIS and Boko Haram wreaking havoc in the world, it is encouraging that help is on the way.

There is no common ground between good and evil, or between a god of violence and a God of peace and mercy.

It breaks my heart when I think of what might have been, were the words and promises of our Blessed Mother at Fatima for praying the Rosary every day taken to heart.

But we did have the new and more terrible war, and even that had no impact on the increasingly faithless world. The centennial is almost here, and the world is no better off than in 1917.

Thank you for your valiant effort to promote the power of our Blessed Mother and the Rosary.

Bob Rowland
Kaufman, Texas

Luther and Cardinal Marx

Relative to your coverage of the push of various forces within the Church to alter Catholic teaching on marriage and the sacraments:

Has Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Germany ("German Prelate Breaks Ranks With Cardinal Marx, Insists on Fidelity to Rome," April 5 issue) never heard of Martin Luther's rebellion and disassociation from Rome and where his path ended? Is the Church in Germany so desperate that he and his followers want to follow a similar

Christianity

CONTINUING PAGE 11 COLUMN

wrap one's head around the notion of a god who looks like a man or a Superman who perfectly obeys the one, true God.

In short, it's usually pretty easy to understand why a particular heretic was inclined to dissent from the orthodox position. On the microanalysis, the Church often looks like the unreasonable or obstinate party, maintaining an inscrutable old dogma in the face of a fresh and more accessible modification. And yet, once we

step away from the path, heresies can unravel with remarkable speed. Often, within a few years, we find reasonable-seeming dissenters jettisoning most of the sacraments or advocating suicide by starvation or telling people they can become gods.

The Christian package, as it turns out, is quite delicately balanced, and the apparent madness of the early Church councils bequeathed us a faith (and institution!) that has survived two millennia and spanned the globe. That kind of rigid flexibility is painfully difficult to achieve (as our Islamic cousins have discov-

Surrogacy

CONTINUING PAGE 11 COLUMN

they believe, however, that money changed hands and fear Baby Dev was sold.

Such abandonment doesn't only happen in Asian countries, however. The U.S. has plenty of its own cases of surrogacy gone wrong. Sherri Shepherd, celebrity host of *The View*, and her now-ex-husband, Lamar Sally, hired surrogate Jessica Batholomew to carry a child conceived with Sally's sperm and a donor egg. Before Batholomew could give birth to Lamar Jr., however, Shepherd filed for divorce and abandoned the boy both socially and financially. Batholomew was legally considered Lamar Jr.'s mother. She was left to cover her own medical expenses and was on the hook for child support.

After a long legal battle, Shepherd was officially placed on the child's birth certificate and ordered to pay monthly child support. With all of the celebrity gossip coverage, sadly there is no doubt Lamar Jr. will someday learn how Shepherd tried to wash her hands of him.

A lesser-known case involves surrogate Crystal Kelley. Kelley was offered \$10,000 to abort the baby she was carrying when the intended parents found out the baby had abnormalities. Kelley refused. The commissioning couple hired an attorney who insisted she was "obligated to terminate this pregnancy immediately." Kelley continued to object. The struggle took place in Connecticut, where surrogates have no parental rights, and there's a safe-haven law

that allows couples to hand their babies over to the state without fear of prosecution for child abandonment.

The couple told Kelley if she refused to abort, upon the birth, they would simply take custody and give the baby up as a ward of the state. Seven months pregnant, Keeley moved to a state where she would be considered the legal mother. The baby was adopted by a couple Keeley met through support groups for families with children who have special needs. There is a twisted thread that runs through each of these cases: Surrogacy has clearly turned each of these children into products, unwanted merchandise parents try to return or surplus inventory that can be sold.

The Catholic Church asserts that surrogacy is morally wrong for very simple reasons. Surrogacy turns women into breeders, children into commodities and procreation into a business transaction. Even if done with altruistic intentions, surrogacy still violates the rights of children and fails to uphold the sanctity of motherhood.

In the *Instruction on Respect for Human Life (Donum Vitae)*, the Church teaches:

Surrogacy "offends the dignity and the right of the child to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up by his own parents." Additionally, surrogacy involves an "objective failure to meet the obligations of maternal love."

Contracting to carry a child for another couple and then surrendering the child to those who commissioned the pregnancy is, thus, a failure of

Letters Welcome

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B.J. Martin
Fort Collins, Colorado

road to spiritual destruction?

Thank God Cardinal Paul Cordes has objected to the pronouncements of Cardinal Marx and Bishop Franz-Josef Bode and has insisted on fidelity to Rome. In a time of so much discord and disconnect to moral and religious teaching, as taught by the magisterium of the Church, the world needs more clear teaching and faithfulness to Rome, not less.

B.J. Martin
Fort Collins, Colorado

Parable's Relevance

As a number of articles in the Register show, the recent Sunday Gospel on the Parable of the Mustard Seed is extremely relevant to the Church today.

This parable states: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, it is the largest garden plant and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches" (Matthew 13:31-32).

Clearly, the tree is the institutional Church. But what most people do not realize is that the birds perching in the branches are the devil's messengers.

Today, the Church has more than its share of birds perching in its branches. These are Churchmen who are trying to turn settled Church teaching upside down by legitimizing homosexuality.

ered in recent years).

Innovations like same-sex "marriage" or Jenner-esque gender fluidity really don't reflect any new discoveries about sexuality or the human condition. They are fashions, mirroring a new social consensus that can best be explained by the advance of both secularism and the pseudo-Christian spirituality described by Wilkinson and Bloom.

Christianity has survived as long as it has by holding to its core principles — especially when the world maintains these principles are cruel, mad or both. And historically, those who chase after

the right side of history tend to peter out, while the foolishly orthodox remain to tell the tale.

Can Americanized Christianity remain Christian? Can it even remain? Right now, progressive reformers have the wind at their backs, but winds have a way of changing.

My money is on the people who haven't set themselves adrift on the breezes of cultural approval. They have a way of sticking around, even when the very gates of hell seem to be against them.

Rachel Lu teaches philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

I personally find it both amazing and appalling how open and bold these efforts are.

It is said that before the Church can come into its full glory, it — like Christ — must first pass through a final Passover. And who is to say that this demonic attempt to exterminate the Church will not be by Nero-like persecution, but instead by the gentle seduction of secularization — i.e., accommodating the Church to the modern world? Isn't this what we are witnessing today?

Many years ago, when I first read Jesus saying, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8), I couldn't fathom that happening. Now I can.

Peter Skurkiss
Stow, Ohio

The editor responds: It's also important to keep in mind Christ's promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. That is not to say that we should sit back and let everything happen around us, but that reassurance should be foremost in the minds of the faithful to boldly proclaim the Good News in our words, our example and our prayers.

Grace Abounds More

With the U.S. Supreme Court's June 26 ruling to make same-sex "marriage" legal in the United States, we have entered the latest round of secular persecutions of the Church by this age's version of Herod, unfortunately greatly enabled by high-profile unfaithful Catholic legislators and jurists.

To remain faithful will come at a high cost, and time will show who is willing to pay it.

But when sin abounds, grace abounds more. We are guaranteed by our Father that the Church will prevail against all assaults, as it has for 2,000 years.

Those who remain in the barque will be able to joyfully proclaim, like Paul: "I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith."

Jim Takach, M.D.
Little Rock, Arkansas

Praising God's Blessings

I have a confession. As a Catholic writer, I have many times been guilty of acts of cruelty. What's worse, I am aware of this — but I'm not planning to stop.

It's like this: I'm a Catholic convert, wife and mother of four healthy boys. My life is good. I'm happy. And I make sure the whole world knows it. Like a Catholic peacock (I'd say peahen, but they're less, well, cocky), I strut around announcing that, basically, it's pretty awesome to be me.

Why is this cruel? Because I know perfectly well there are others out there, better women than I, who never received these same blessings. Some dreamed about marriage and motherhood from early childhood but never had chances to marry. Some married but struggled with infertility. Perhaps they hoped for 10 children but only had one. Perhaps they never even had one.

I know so many good people who've encountered these kinds of challenges. I'm confident many could handle my life much better than I do. If they were me, their houses would be cleaner and their children would be better disciplined.



RACHEL LU

Their husbands would more regularly come home to joyful greetings and hot meals. I'm not being modest here. I'm confident this is just the unvarnished truth.

I cause these people pain with my exultant odes to life, marriage and motherhood. Sometimes they admit it to me; sometimes they're too nice for that, and I read about it in beautiful pieces like "Learning Prudence From Miscarriage, Postpartum Depression and NaPro," by Constance Hull (Catholic Exchange).

And yet, I keep strutting around, showing off my awesome Catholic life.

Truly, I don't wish to be cruel. I have so much sympathy for the unhappily single or childless, for those whose marriages have gone or ended badly, for the lonely and the infertile. I even have a small measure of insight into how they might feel, because the early years of my marriage were also infertile, and I remember the bleakness of constantly shopping for baby gifts but never for birth announcements. It felt like I'd submitted my motherhood application to heaven and had been rejected. Every time I write about my family, I think about the people who might read it and feel similarly downcast.

I carry on anyway for three reasons.

First, the world is so dark nowadays, and we all need a little relief. As a cultural critic, I do a fair amount of wallowing in gloom and doom, but it seems perverse to let that dominate my whole perspective when I'm, frankly, ridiculously blessed. Happy reflections on marriage and family help me to find the lighter side of life. I think many readers also appreciate hearing how, despite everything, married couples are still holding hands, children are still being born and loved, and families are still getting up on Sundays so they can worship God together in the most holy sacrifice of the Mass. I write for those people: to remind them all is not lost.

Second, I want younger Catholics to develop a strong sense that this sort of life is both normal and expected. Unless they feel "called out" of that ordinary path (and into religious vocations), young people should see the central features of my life (husband, children and household) as likely components of their own futures. They should prepare themselves from childhood to assume these roles, as husbands and fathers or as wives and mothers. Given the radically confused messages of our culture, it's hard to stress this too soon or too clearly. Raising a family is a momentous and challenging task, which many people need to undertake. When I'm crowing about how fabulous it is to have four healthy boys, you might think of me as a recruiter for the "Faith and

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Catholic Social Teaching And Human Dignity

BY MARK SHEA

Catholic social doctrine mystifies many people. Is it political or theological, spiritual or practical, left or right, modern or ancient?

Rather like the moment Jesus asked his apostles, "Who do people say that I am?" and got a wide diversity of opinions and guesses in response, so today the Church's social teaching is regarded with tremendous confusion.

It's good, then, to take a look at how the Church herself understands her social doctrine and to see how she traces the roots of this doctrine back to the teaching of the Twelve Apostles.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church does this and is the indispensable basis for understanding everything that follows from it. In the words of Pope St. John Paul II: "The theological dimension is needed both for interpreting and for solving present-day problems in human society" (*Centesimus Annus*, 55).

The first thing to notice is that the Church's teaching on social doctrine is indeed rooted, as all of her teachings are, in the apostolic Tradition — particularly as it is expressed in Scripture. This, in itself, is often a revelation to many moderns, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who often seem to be under the impression that Catholic social doctrine is an attempt by the Church to be hip, not an attempt to be faithful to the teaching of Christ.

In reality, however, Catholic social doctrine springs not from some social, economic or political theory of recent vintage. Rather, it arises from the often-uncomfortable fact that God has given us not one, but two, great commandments. The first is, of course: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). If the faith simply consisted of this commandment, we would be able to go to some sort of private worship ceremony in our prayer closet and pay no attention to anybody but God. It would be the perfect "Me and Jesus" sect of one.

But Jesus forever complexified matters when he immediately added: "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:39-40). Yet he complexified it further still, when he ratcheted up the command to love others as we love ourselves — which gave us enough slack to treat others as badly as we treat ourselves — to the command that we love one another as he has loved us (John 15:12).

It is from the demand of perfect love, not merely for a perfect God, but for highly imperfect neighbors, that all of Catholic social teaching springs. The whole doctrine is plainly impossible and absurd without the grace of God, of course — like expecting a horse-



CHRISTLIKE LOVE. Fresco of Mother Teresa at St. Augustine Cathedral in Tucson, Ariz. meunier / Shutterstock

whipped and crucified man to walk out of a tomb in a miraculously glorified body.

But since the confidence of the Church is that this is precisely what has occurred, let's take a look at Catholic social teaching anyway.

Catholic social teaching sits on a throne with four legs:

- The Dignity of the Human Person
- The Common Good
- Subsidiarity
- Solidarity

Catholic social teaching begins at the beginning, with the fact that God is the origin of all that exists and the measure of what should be. Every social reformer, even an atheist, who cries in outrage, "That's not the way it is supposed to be!" — when a child starves, or an oppressed worker commits suicide, or a war breaks out, or a poor mother is bled white by tyrannical taxes or a lunatic dictator starves his people — has in the back of his mind, however dimly, a notion of what the Church calls "the dignity of the human person."

That dignity is rooted in the fact that each and every human person is not a mere animal and still less a mere thing. This is why slavery is evil: It reduces persons to things called property. It is why prostitution is evil: It reduces persons to things used to gratify a particular sensation. It is why murder is evil: It reduces persons to things called corpses.

Each human person is a creature made in the image and likeness of God: an animal with a rational soul, capable of communion with God, able to love, to think creatively, to see,

think and feel beyond mere appetite. We are not a means to an end. We are, according to the Church, the only creatures in the universe that exist for our own sake (*The Church in the Modern World*, 24): made out of the sheer love of God and intended for free union in the love of God.

In short, Catholic teaching on our dignity begins with the fact that creation — especially the creatures called *homo sapiens* — is entirely gratuitous. Out of sheer love, God created both the universe and us and calls us to share in his divine life. He forgives our sins, generously pouring himself out to us while calling, teaching and enabling us to do as he does and to become participants in his divine life.

All authentic religious experience takes us toward this reality, which is why the Golden Rule — "Do unto others as you would have them do to you" — is universally recognized. Cats see no reason to be fair to mice, but humans grasp that everybody is owed fair dealing, justice, etc. — even when they won't admit it. Some will try to deny this, but the fact is that when people selfishly try to deny it to others, they always claim it for themselves and complain that they are being treated unfairly. This elemental demand for justice and human rights is the giveaway that we intuit something different about the nature of human beings: the fact that we are creatures made in the image and likeness of God.

This primordial recognition of the moral

law is called "natural revelation" and is at the root of subsequent supernatural revelation, which begins to take place through the call of Israel as God's chosen people.

Israel's expression of this primordial insight about the dignity of the human person comes (as is typical for this ancient people) in imagery that is profoundly liturgical. So we see, for instance, in the creation narrative of Genesis 1, a description of creation that is redolent of the liturgical imagery of Israel. Creation is pictured as the construction of a gigantic temple, just as the Temple in Jerusalem was festooned with decorations to recall Eden.

And just as ancient temples had an image representing their peoples' god or gods, so the Temple of Creation built by God in Genesis has an image of God as well: man and woman — any man and woman, every man and woman. Everything else in all of creation exists for their sake. Even the very law of God himself is made for man, not man for the Law (Mark 2:27).

Man and woman are placed in the Garden as priest-kings and queens, tasked with tending the garden of creation. (Genesis uses Hebrew words to describe the work of Adam in the garden identical to those used to describe the work of the Levitical priests in the Temple.) Adam and Eve's primordial task is union, fruitfulness, rule, work and worship — all reflections of the love, creativity, lordship, power and beauty of the God whose image they reflect.

To be sure, sin enters into the picture with the Fall. But sin is, nonetheless, not the most basic fact about us. Sin is always parasitic on the most basic truth: that we remain creatures in the (damaged, but not destroyed) image and likeness of God.

That puts Catholic anthropology at odds with American culture, which comes out of a Calvinist and Puritan ethos — and which, therefore, sees original sin and the Fall, not the image of God, as the most fundamental truths about us. The simplest way to describe the difference is to say that our culture sees virtue as the mask and sin as the horrific face of the person, while Catholic anthropology sees sin as the anonymizing mask and virtue as the true face of the person, made in the image of God and, in Christ, exalted to participate in divine nature.

Because our dignity comes from our created nature — from the kind of creatures we are — and not from what we do, we retain our human dignity despite our sins. And since God is love, his intention for us remains in love, despite whatever sins we commit. And God's will is always bent on our salvation: a salvation that involves the whole person (body, soul and spirit) and God's relationships with every person and with all of the created world.

Mark Shea is a Register columnist and blogger.

Same-Sex 'Marriage' and the Death of the Birth Certificate

The news on the day the U.S. Supreme Court released *Obergefell v. Hodges* was filled with same-sex couples standing in front of microphones expressing their joy at the court's decision to redefine marriage in all 50 states. One interview struck me more than the others: two women making a statement on how they could finally change their children's birth certificates to include both women's names — and only their names.

In the months that have followed, I have noticed more and more mention of something I have honestly thought little about — the birth certificate. There is a push to revise birth certificates to legally institute two men or two women as birth parents. An op-ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times* argued that, in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling, "The battle over LGBT equality is far from over." Douglas Nejaime regrets that "marriage equality doesn't immediately erase all attachments related to biological, dual-gender child-rearing."

Traditionally, states have made the assumption that any child born to a married woman was fathered by her husband. So married couples automatically had their names placed on a birth certificate as biological parents to a child born to a married woman. Of course, there were certainly cases when a woman's husband was not

the genetic father, but it was a reasonable assumption by the state that a woman's husband was the father of her children.

Nejaime contends that because married same-sex couples are not automatically placed on a child's birth certificate in every state, this is relegating same-sex couples to "second-class status." He points out that this "marital presumption"



REBECCA TAYLOR

tion is emerging as a battleground."

Nejaime is right that marital presumption for same-sex couples is developing into a battleground.

Parenting magazine reported the story of Utah couple Angie and Kami Roe. They sued the hospital where their daughter was born because the hospital did not allow the listing of both mothers on the girl's birth certificate. Judge Dee Benson ruled in favor of the women.

The Utah attorney general's office pointed out that it is biologically impossible for a woman to be the genetic father of a child and argued that "listing non-biological parents on a birth certificate could throw off state recordkeeping and disrupt the ability of authorities to identify public-health trends."

Benson justified his ruling by saying that married men that use donated sperm to conceive a child

are still listed on the birth certificate as the father. The same situation should apply to women. Benson commented, "The state has failed to demonstrate any legitimate reason, actually any reason at all, for not treating a female spouse in a same-sex marriage the same as a male spouse in an opposite-sex marriage."

It is true that married husbands or wives that use a third party in reproduction are still assumed by the state to be the genetic parent to any child born while they are married, and they are listed as such on a child's birth certificate. With the marriage presumption, there has always been a percentage of cases where the presumption is wrong, whether due to donated sperm or egg or infidelity.

It is also true that, at this point in time, listing two men or two women as the biological parents of a child will always be an erroneous assumption.

Marriage presumption for same-sex couples means that birth certificates won't be inaccurate a fraction of the time, but every time.

In the case of adoption, states have been issuing "amended" birth certificates since the 1920s and '30s, where the biological parents are removed, and the adopted parents are listed instead. This was done to protect all parties involved, especially the child, from the shame of "illegitimacy." In the case

of the amended certificates for adoptees, the original records remain intact, but they are sealed. In some states, the adopted child can access his or her original birth certificate after turning 18. Some adoptee advocates are pushing to make this the law in all states. Others want to get rid of the amended birth certificate all together, calling it antiquated in a modern society where out-of-wedlock births are no longer stigmatized.

But if the marriage presumption extends to same-sex couples, the original, and only, birth certificate will list parents who cannot possibly be the biological progenitors of the child.

The public comments on the Utah couple's victory were similar to those regarding *Obergefell*. Anyone who dares questions the wisdom of marriage presumption for same-sex couples is a bigot, and listing two people of the same sex as biological parents on a legal document means that "Love Wins!"

Yet in all of the coverage on birth certificates for children of homosexual couples, there is one perspective that is conspicuously missing — that of the person who it affects the most — the one to whom the birth certificate belongs.

Just like adoptees before them, children of anonymous sperm and egg donation are coming of age, and they are telling us that having

an accurate birth certificate, one that has their actual biological parents listed, is very important to them. Some prefer "unknown," "donor" or even a blank space to the name of a person that is not his or her biological parent.

Emma Cresswell, a British woman, fought for six years to get her "social father" removed from her birth certificate after she found out she was conceived with donor sperm. In 2014, she won her battle, and this has opened the door for other donor-conceived adults to do the same.

Damian Adams, an Australian man, is also suing to have his birth certificate changed. He wants "unknown" listed instead of the man he called dad because his genetic father is an anonymous sperm donor. Adams told ABC in an interview:

"I'm doing this because I want an accurate and factual record of my conception, of birth. I just want it to be what the birth certificate is supposed to be. It's something that some animals have a more accurate birth record than I do, and I find that completely dehumanizing and wrong."

Hope Catricala, an adult adoptee, says that the practice of issuing amended birth certificates for adopted children treats adoptees as second-class citizens. Cresswell and Adams would likely agree

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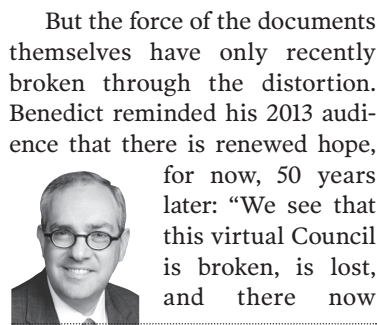
PUBLISHER'S NOTE

'The True Council'

In his Feb. 14, 2013, meeting with the priests of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI used the occasion to express his thoughts on the Second Vatican Council, for which then-Father Joseph Ratzinger served as theological adviser to the archbishop of Cologne, Germany.

"There was an incredible sense of expectation," he said. "We were hoping that all would be renewed, that there would truly be a new Pentecost, a new era of the Church."

However, with the hijacking of the Council by those who sought to change the Church — what he called "this Council of the media" — it created "so many disasters, so many problems, so much suffering: Seminaries closed; convents closed; [there was] banal liturgy ... and the real Council had difficulty establishing itself and taking shape; the virtual Council was stronger than the real Council."



MICHAEL WARSAW

But the force of the documents themselves have only recently broken through the distortion. Benedict reminded his 2013 audience that there is renewed hope,

for now, 50 years later: "We see that this virtual Council is broken, is lost, and there now appears the true Council, with all its spiritual force."

With that in mind, the Register offers a symposium analyzing many of the documents that were promulgated in the final year of Vatican II, along with an analysis of the half century since the Council ended on Dec. 8, 1965. Afterward, read the documents for yourself, and see that this sense of hope for our Church shines through.

God bless you!

EDITORIAL

Models for Marriage

The mostly hidden lives of faithful married couples finally got the world's attention when Pope Francis canonized Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. The Martins' Oct. 18 canonization secured a new landmark for the Church: It was the first time a married couple with children were canonized in the same ceremony.

Pope Francis, in his homily for the canonization, celebrated the Martins' practice of "Christian service in the family, creating day by day an environment of faith and love, which nurtured the vocations of their daughters, among whom was St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus."

"The radiant witness of these new saints inspires us to persevere in joyful service to our brothers and sisters, trusting in the help of God and the maternal protection of Mary," the Holy Father said. "May they now watch over us and sustain us by their powerful intercession."

Every canonization offers inspiration to Catholics who struggle to be more committed, generous and wise in their marriages and in family life. But the Martins' canonization seems especially well-timed because it specifically celebrates the heroism of Catholic spouses, who quietly accept responsibilities and hardships that can seem overwhelming or even unjust.

The Martins' own story of suffering is staggering, with the couple facing the deaths of four of their nine children before the age of 6. We need not sugarcoat their trials, but we should allow their faith and fortitude to inspire our own marriages and to remind the Church and the world that the beauty of their witness should be shared, not ignored.

Why should we ponder and celebrate their example? Because our world appears inclined to shrug off, even dismiss, the priceless gift such couples offer their own families, the wider community and the Church. "These wonderful people today often feel themselves a minority, certainly in culture, but even, at times, in the Church," noted Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York in an Oct. 12 column he published while serving as a delegate at the recently concluded Ordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family. "I believe there are many more of them than we think, but, given today's pressure, they often feel excluded." These couples, noted Cardinal Dolan, are among the 50% of cradle Catholics who still "enter the sacrament of matrimony." They are the faithful who "have persevered through trials; couples who welcome God's gifts of many babies; a young man and woman who have chosen not to live together until marriage; a gay man or woman who wants to be chaste; a couple who has decided that the wife would sacrifice a promising professional career to stay at home and raise their children."

Cardinal Dolan's comments highlight another pivotal moment in our culture and a particular challenge for the Church. On social media, Americans collectively have developed a taste for shaming the people they view as hypocrites — those who set high standards and then fail to live up to them. Many gush over celebrities and try to follow the ever-shifting etiquette of the politically correct. But many seem bored with the husbands and wives who have never lost sight of their marriage vows and are committed to raising children who believe in the transcendence of the good, the true and the beautiful and allow that to inform their engagement with society.

Meanwhile, Pope Francis' call for a missionary Church that serves as a field hospital for alienated Catholics has stirred hopes that our parishes will be more welcoming, while at the same time affirming the faithful. But to meet that goal, we need an array of missionaries, including faithful married couples who are capable of advancing the Church's mission in their homes, parishes, workplaces and communities. Cardinal Dolan reminds Church leaders, pastors and catechists to recognize, encourage and solicit the help of Catholics who humbly receive their faith as a priceless gift from God and are eager to share it with others. Each of these couples are saints in the making. At the synod, the fathers discussed how the Church should meet and strengthen families, whether they are active in parish life or still on the fringes, as well as how to sow the seeds for stronger formation of future spouses. In small groups, they considered whether to drop marriage-preparation programs in favor of a lengthier marriage catechuminate that supports young couples during the transition from single to married life (see front page). They weighed introducing a chastity curriculum while Catholics are still young and less formed, rather than waiting until they are poised to tie the knot. Faithful Catholic spouses need pastoral accompaniment that fosters a burning desire for the Lord. That support will fortify their efforts to share the Gospel and embrace the universal call to holiness, even as the world dismisses this work as laughably unrealistic. "In Jesus, the fulfillment of God's revelation, the family uncovers its calling within the universal call to holiness," stated the report released by one English-language group at the ordinary synod moderated by Cardinal George Pell of Sydney and Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, Ky. "We are called to communion, and we are called for mission."

The synod fathers debated the best model for pastoral accompaniment of families, with some emphasizing the need to listen to those on the margins, while others, including Cardinal Thomas Collins of Toronto, pressed for a more robust and confident call to conversion. Referencing Jesus' meeting with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, Cardinal Collins noted the Lord's distinctive and unambiguous path of "accompaniment."

"Jesus drew near and accompanied his downcast disciples as they walked in the wrong direction, into the night. He started by asking questions about their present disposition and by listening to them, but he did not stop there. Instead, he challenged them with the word of God: 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!' (Luke 24:25). His presentation of the objective vision of Scripture broke through their subjective self-absorption and, along with his loving presence, brought them to conversion," noted the cardinal.

"The disciples of Emmaus accepted the word of God that challenged them, and ... they changed direction and, with burning hearts, raced through the night to Jerusalem to bear joyful witness to the community gathered there." May we all be inspired by Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin and the faithful couples in our midst to bear that joyful witness to the Gospel in a world that sorely needs it.

LETTERS

Right-to-Life Priority

Thank you, Father Raymond de Souza and the Register for the astute analysis in "The Consistent Ethic of Life and Archbishop Cupich" (Sept. 6 issue). Father de Souza articulated well my own concern how "the consistent ethic of life" is too often misapplied to make it appear that abortion is just one of many equally immoral issues, such as economic injustice. While "the consistent ethic of life" is good and just, its application is distorted when it is used to make the barbaric practice of abortion morally equivalent to a man losing his job or some such other social injustice.

The horrific dismemberment and murder of millions of innocent and defenseless infants in the womb is an evil of far greater magnitude than economic injustice; and the two issues should not be lumped together and made to appear morally equivalent. They are not! As St. John Paul II made clear, the right to life has a priority over all other rights and must be defended first and foremost:

"The promotion of the culture of life should be the highest priority in our societies. ... If the right to life is not defended decisively as a condition for all other rights of the person, all other references to human rights remain deceitful and illusory."

As for "obsessing" over abortion, John Paul dismissed that fallacy in a 1994 interview:

"It is difficult to imagine a more unjust situation, and it is very difficult to speak of obsession in a matter such as this, where we are dealing with ... the defense of the right to life of an innocent and defenseless human being."

As Father de Souza points out, Archbishop Blase Cupich and others are insistent upon tacking other issues onto abortion, but often are silent on abortion when talking about other social injustices, as Archbishop Cupich said in three recent high-profile addresses. The archbishop's "consistent ethic of life" should work both ways, but it does not. It is inconsistently applied, and "mainly used to downplay the urgency of abortion."

It is also worth noting that speaking out against abortion is far more unpopular than speaking out against other social injustices. Fighting abortion quite often brings ridicule, derision and hate from powerful pro-abortionists in the media and the current government. But everybody loves and admires politicians and bishops who speak out against other social injustices.

Margaret Owens
Palm Harbor, Florida

False Dichotomy

Your excellent article on the Iran "deal" ("Division Over Iran Nuclear Deal," Aug. 23 issue) was slightly marred by its provocative sub

headline: "Must Catholics Back It?" The answer, of course, is certainly not.

The U.S. bishops' unfortunate letter to Congress posed a false dichotomy: either Obama's Iran deal or, in the letter's words, "armed conflict." More sensible comments are recounted in your article — by Bradley Lewis, Robert Royal and Tom Farr — and are all grounded in the recognition that there are other policy options and, in any event, how we confront Iranian hostility is a matter of prudential judgment, not doctrine as to moral and social teaching.

The Church appropriately teaches principles with respect to self-defense, just war, et al., but, to put it bluntly, the U.S. bishops and the Vatican have no military/political/economic expertise and should not be endorsing this very dubious Obama-Iran "deal."

Charles Molineaux
McLean, Virginia

Letters Welcome

To maximize your chances of publication, be concise (400 words) and stay on point. You also help us hear you when you point out which Register item you're responding to. (Headline and issue date will do.) Write: National Catholic Register, Attn: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 100699, Irondale, AL 35210. Or e-mail editor@ewtn.com.



No Support

Bradley Lewis has it absolutely correct: The kind of evaluation of this nuclear deal is beyond the competency of the Vatican and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The Holy See and the U.S. bishops have offered steady support for the nuclear deal without having full knowledge of all the components of the deal, especially the "side deals with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]," and without questioning the Obama narrative that war is the only alternative. The position on the accord has been labeled by the Holy See and the USCCB as a matter of "prudential judgement." Unfortunately, the article did not define "prudential judgment" (using your best wits to figure out *how*, not whether, to obey the Church's guidance).

With all the facts and the realization that this deal is like a carton of milk with an expiration date — that Russia will sell them their S-300 anti-missile defense system, that part of the \$100 billion a year that they will receive by dropping the sanctions will be used to sponsor terrorism, that the new book by the Ayatollah proclaims their first priority is to destroy Israel and death to all Americans, that the king of Saudi Arabia has recently stated that if Iran obtains a nuclear bomb so will we, and the historical fact that the same diplomatic measures were carried out with North Korea, which now

Birth

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about inaccurate birth certificates for those conceived with donor gametes. And yet Nejaime argues in the *Los Angeles Times* that denying the marriage presumption to same-sex couples makes the parents the second-class citizens. Many who commented on the Roes' case in Utah would agree with Nejaime.

Once again, in our overly politically-correct society, it is the rights of the children that are being overlooked in favor of what parents want. We are not listening to the people who are uniquely qualified to comment on this latest social experiment.

Blessings

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Family Squad." I have to sell it a little to be effective.

Unfortunately, there's no way to project the message "this is normal" without making someone else feel inadequate. If I'm "the norm," what does that make the single, the childless and the unhappily married? There's really no neat solution to this problem. It can only be "solved" through a better and more complete appreciation of the worth of individual souls and of the myriad contributions people can make to their communities and to the Church. Abolishing *normal* is not

Complicating the issue is the fact that birth certificates serve a dual purpose. Not only are they a vital record of birth, proof of identity and ancestry, they also establish who is legally responsible for a child.

Ideally, the people who created the child would also be the ones to care for and raise that child. But with the increasing incidence of third-party reproduction and the advent of same-sex "marriage" across all 50 states, the birth certificate as we know it is going to have to change. Our modern society, where parental desires trump the best interests of the children, has created familial chaos. In its current form, the birth certificate can no longer be accurate and still

serve as both a document that records biological parentage and also one that establishes legal guardianship.

Wendy Kramer, co-founding and director of the Donor Sibling Registry and a producer of MTV's *Generation Cryo* and the Style Network's *Sperm Donor*, argues that it is time for birth-certificate reform. She insists that the "best interests of the child be paramount," and she proposes birth certificates that include space for genetic parents, legal parents and even surrogates. Of utmost importance is that all information is included about the child's biological origins.

If the marriage presumption is extended to same-sex couples, and

there is no reform in how birth certificates are issued, tragically, children of same-sex couples will likely have pets that have more accurate biological records than they do. And unlike adoptees, who at least have original documentation of their biological parent or parents somewhere, the only vital record these children will have will say they were begotten of two women or two men. Time will tell if they, like Damian Adams, will also find their boldly inaccurate birth certificates "completely dehumanizing and wrong."

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With that kind, though, you can't be too subtle and still stand a chance of getting through. Accordingly, I'm not subtle.

I hope I do make the right impression, at least every now and then. You never really know, do you? We do what we can and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. And the truth, of course, is that everyone's life is hard in some way. With four boys under the age of 6, there are quite a few days I get through only by reminding myself, "It won't always be like this. Someday you'll be able to chat on the phone without ear plugs and wear pants for a whole day without collecting stains." We all need some graces to get us from one week to the next.

Today though, I don't want to complain. I just want to apologize to everyone I (knowingly but inadvertently) hurt by bragging about my wonderful life. I see you. I know you're there. I admire your many gifts and the grace with which you offer up your struggles and disappointments. You may not realize how many people you're inspiring from day to day, just by faithfully living the life you have. It's the hardest and most important thing that any of us can do.

I pray for you. I hope you'll pray for me, too, because I surely need it.

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