

Into the Deep

Issue 167

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No One Could Have Imagined It!

Pope Benedict XVI, 21-12-2006

The birth of Jesus is not a fable. It is a story that really happened, in Bethlehem, 2,000 years ago. Faith brings us to recognize in that little Child, born of the Virgin Mary, the true Son of God who, out of love, chose to become man.

In the face of the little Jesus, we contemplate the face of God, which is not revealed through force or power, but in weakness and the fragile constitution of a child.

This Divine Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger with maternal care by his Mother, Mary, reveals all the goodness and infinite beauty of God. He demonstrates the faithfulness and tenderness of the boundless love with which God surrounds each of us.

For this reason we rejoice at Christmas, reliving the same experience as the shepherds of Bethlehem. ...We celebrate because with Jesus' birth the Father has responded to the desire for truth, forgiveness, and peace of our hearts. And he has responded with such enormous love that he astonishes us. No one could have imagined it, if Jesus had not revealed it!

The newborn who comes into the world in Bethlehem is the same Jesus who walked on the roads of Galilee, and who gave his life for us on the cross; it is the same Jesus who resurrected and, after his ascension to heaven, continues to guide his Church with the strength of his Spirit. This is the beautiful and great truth of our Christian faith!

Empty Hands

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the Pontifical Household

This emptying of one's hands and pockets of every pretension, in a spirit of poverty and humility, is the best way to prepare for Christmas.

We are reminded of it by a delightful Christmas legend that I would like to mention again. It narrates that among the shepherds who ran on Christmas night to adore the Child, there was one who was so poor that he had nothing to offer and was very ashamed. Reaching the grotto, all competed to offer their gifts. Mary did not know what to do to receive them all, having to hold the Child in her arms.

Then, seeing the shepherd with his hands free, she entrusted Jesus to him. To have empty hands was his fortune and, on another plane, will also be ours.

Zenit.org 12-12-2008

Constancy and Patience

Pope Benedict XVI, 12-12-2010

"Be constant, my brothers, until the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7).

I believe it is important, in our time, to underline the value of constancy and patience, virtues which were part of the everyday baggage of our forebears, but which seem less popular today in a world which exalts change and the capacity to adapt to new and diverse situations. Without detracting from these aspects, which are also human qualities, Advent calls us to strengthen that inner tenacity, that resistance of heart which enables us not to lose hope as we wait for a good that is late in coming, but to await it – indeed, to prepare for its arrival – with confidence.

Vatican Information Service 12-12-2010

All issues of *Into the Deep* are at www.stoneswillshout.com/wp

Death, Judgement, Hell or Glory

Pope Francis, Morning Mass, 22-11-2016

We'd do well to think: 'But what will the day be like when I will be in front of Jesus? When He asks me about the talents that he gave me, what use I made of them, when He will ask me: how was my heart when the seed was dropped, like a path or like thorns: that Parable of the Kingdom of God. How did I receive His Word? With an open heart? Did I make it germinate for the good of all or in secret?' ...

I remember as a child, when we went to catechism we were taught four things: death, judgement, hell or glory. After the judgement there is this possibility. 'But Father, this is to frighten us...' No, this is the truth because if you do not take care of your heart, because the Lord is with you and (if) you always live estranged from the Lord, perhaps there is the danger, the danger of continuing to live estranged in this way from the Lord for eternity. And this is a terrible thing! ...

Fidelity to the Lord does not disappoint. If each one of us is faithful to the Lord, when death comes, we will say like Francis (of Assisi) 'come sister death...' we won't be afraid. And when the day of judgement comes, we will look at the Lord: 'Lord I have many sins but I have tried to be faithful.' And our Lord is good. I give you this advice: 'be faithful until death - said the Lord - and I will give you the crown of life.' With this fidelity we won't be afraid of death, when we die we won't be afraid of the day of judgement.

Zenit.org 22-11-2016

Please and Thanks

Thank you for the icon of Our Lady of the Southern Cross. I will treasure this as it stands on my bedside table. Also please find a donation enclosed so you can keep up the good work. The money is from myself and my friend Teresa who loves reading ITD and passes it on to friends.

When reading in the November issue I was wondering about the letter from Richard Earle (Defend the Voiceless, p.3). The Catholic Life edition sounds very interesting and I have not seen it in my church. If you can find out how I could get this Catholic Life I would be most grateful.

Linda Hill, Woree, Queensland

Catholic Life is the diocesan newspaper of Sale Diocese, PO Box 1410, Warragul 3820. - Ed.

For Repentant Hearts

Pope Francis, *Misericordia et misera*, n.11,12

The Sacrament of Reconciliation must regain its central place in the Christian life. This requires priests capable of putting their lives at the service of the "ministry of reconciliation" (2Cor 5:18), in such a way that, while no sincerely repentant sinner is prevented from drawing near to the love of the Father who awaits his return, everyone is afforded the opportunity of experiencing the liberating power of forgiveness. ...

Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God's forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion. The provision I had made in this regard, limited to the duration of the Extraordinary Holy Year, is hereby extended, notwithstanding anything to the contrary. I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father. ...

For the Jubilee Year I had also granted that those faithful who, for various reasons, attend churches officiated by the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, can validly and licitly receive the sacramental absolution of their sins. For the pastoral benefit of these faithful, and trusting in the good will of their priests to strive with God's help for the recovery of full communion in the Catholic Church, I have personally decided to extend this faculty beyond the Jubilee Year, until further provisions are made, lest anyone ever be deprived of the sacramental sign of reconciliation through the Church's pardon.

Next Issue of ITD

As the end of the year approaches, I will again take some time to rest and relax over Christmas and New Year. This means there will be no January issue of ITD (also saving a month's worth of printing and postage costs). Please keep the donations coming for the new year. Thank you to all who have already donated - you literally keep ITD going and I am very grateful to you all. The next issue of ITD should be out in late January. May you all enjoy a blessed Christmas season!

- Ed.

Unfair Criticism

I need to respond to the criticism heaped on our Catholic clergy by Pat O'Brien in your October issue of ITD (p.5).

Pat, you are an intelligent man and very knowledgeable on a wide range of issues. Very articulate, able to string words together to lift people up or bring them down.

You start your letter to a believing audience/subscribers, fellow believers, condemning and accusing dare I say, your and my bishop and parish priests for twiddling their thumbs while a crisis is upon us.

We have many crises in our Church. We always have, which means we are an ever-challenged changing institution and rightly so as nothing stays the same. One current crisis upon us, as I am sure you are familiar with, is the one in question. In case you are not, it is the clergy/religious sexual abuse of children in our church, the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, your and my Church. To me this is a crisis and will be long after compensation has been paid to the victims and survivors. Other survivors are those who have dedicated their lives to God in service as priests and religious who have not offended against anyone yet are suffering accusations and labelling and a stigma because some of their fellow priests/religious have betrayed and offended against children and God.

I need to remain calm and rational as I am stringing these words together as I personally know priests and brothers deeply traumatized by this sorry mess and some who are falsely accused. Yes you are correct when you state "a crisis is upon us".

These requirements for all kinds of checks imposed upon us are not parish/diocesan driven as you so flippantly claim. If they were, it would still be prudent and responsible to do so in light of what has happened during many past years. This will not fix any wrongs but it may prevent just one child being sexually abused and do you feel some simple checks are not worth it? You and other like-minded critics need to ask yourself this question, Pat, and answer it honestly and rationally.

Pat, you state that our diocese and parish are imposing this 'smart' solution on us. You only have to ask any politician who is in the know, who would tell you this is a government requirement and if you care to ask and listen you will have this confirmed as this has been in place in volunteer organizations for some time. If you do need to blame, heap it on politicians if you have the courage.

I wish these checks were not necessary but sadly they are and on the bright side we still are a free people who can choose to take it or leave it, make good choices or criticise and condemn unfairly. Pat, I urge you to use your talents to build up not destroy as you are doing.

May God bless us all in our daily struggles and challenges.

Bill Smolenaars, Parishioner of St Mary's Parish, Sale

Working With Children

The following are excerpts from the Victorian Government's 'Working With Children' website:

- The Working with Children Check (Check) helps protect children from physical and sexual harm. It does this by screening people's criminal records and professional conduct and preventing those who pose an unjustifiable risk to children from working with or caring for them.
- Not everyone who has contact with children needs a Working with Children (WWC) Check.
- Under the Working with Children Act 2005 (the Act), only people who are doing **child-related work** and who are not exempt need a WWC Check. This applies to both paid and volunteer workers.
- You are doing **child-related work** if you work within one or more of the occupational fields defined in the Act, *and* your contact with children is direct, *and* unsupervised, *and* part of your duties (i.e. not incidental to your work).
- All ministers of religion are now required to get a Check unless the contact they have with children is only occasional and always incidental to their work.

www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Can We Be Optimistic About the Future?

Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia, to the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation, Sept 2016

... Evil cannot bear the counter-witness of truth. It cannot co-exist peacefully with goodness, because evil insists on being seen as right, and worshiped as being right. Therefore, the good must be made to seem hateful and wrong.

The very existence of people who refuse to accept evil and who seek to act virtuously burns the conscience of those who don't. And so, quite logically, people...who march and lobby and speak out to defend the unborn child will be – and are – reviled by political leaders and news media and abortion activists who turn the right to kill an unborn child into a shrine for personal choice.

Seventy years ago, abortion was a crime against humanity. Four decades ago, abortion supporters talked piously about the “tragedy” of abortion and the need to make it safe and rare. But not today. Not anymore.

Now abortion is not just a so-called “right,” but a right that claims positive dignity, the license to demonize its opponents and the precedence to interfere with constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, assembly and religion. We no longer tolerate abortion. We celebrate it. We venerate it as a totem.

People sometimes ask me if we can be optimistic, those of us who are religious believers, about the future of our country. My answer is always the same. Optimism and pessimism are equally dangerous for the believer because both God and the devil are full of surprises. But the virtue of hope is another matter. We have every reason to hope. Scripture tells us we must live in hope, and hope is a very different creature from optimism. Hope is the grace to trust that God is who He claims to be, and that in serving Him, we do something fertile and precious for the renewal of the world.

Our lives matter not because of who we are. They matter because of who God is. His mercy, his justice, his love – these are the things that move the galaxies and reach into the womb to touch the unborn child with the grandeur of being human. And we become more truly human ourselves by seeing the humanity in the poor, the weak, the elderly and the unborn child – and then fighting for it.

LifeSiteNews.com 19-10-2016

The Liturgical Celebration of Advent

Fr Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy and dean of theology at Regina Apostolorum university Zenit.org 15-11-16

Our present system of organizing the liturgical cycle begins with Advent. This is perfectly logical as everything in the Church begins with the coming of Christ. ...

It would appear that the liturgical celebration of Advent originated in southern France and Spain, at times with a marked penitential character. In Rome we find the first traces of this liturgical celebration in the sixth century. ... Under the influence of Spanish and French liturgical practice the Roman Advent began to slowly take on a penitential character with fasting, the use of violet vestments, the omission of the Te Deum and the Gloria, the silencing of the organ and the removal of flowers. The penitential character, however, did not enter into the liturgical texts of Mass and Divine Office which generally express the desire to receive the Lord who comes. ...

The current reforms of the calendar and missal, while retaining some of these elements as required for the spiritual preparation for Christmas, have toned down somewhat the penitential aspect, permitting a moderate use of flowers and a wider use of the organ. Thus the General Instruction of the Roman Missal 305 says: “During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this season, without expressing prematurely the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.” And GIRM 313: “In Advent the organ and other musical instruments should be used with a moderation that is consistent with the season’s character and does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.”

Therefore although Advent is no longer to be considered as a penitential season, the retention of some of the earlier elements such as violet vestments and the suppression of the Gloria help to emphasize the contrast the period of preparation with the festive joy of Christmas.

With respect to the spirituality of Advent the general norms for the liturgical calendar state: “39. Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ’s first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation.”

In The Meantime

Pope Francis to Christian World Communions, 12-10-16

So often we think that the ecumenical work is only that of theologians. It is important that theologians study, come to an agreement and express their disagreement; this is very important.

However, in the meantime, ecumenism is done by setting out – and setting out with Jesus: not with my Jesus against your Jesus, but with our Jesus.

The way is simple: it is done with prayer, and with helping others. To pray together: the ecumenism of prayer, for one another and for unity. And then, the ecumenism of work for so many needy, for so many men and women who today suffer injustices, wars ... such terrible things. All of us, together, must help; charity to our neighbour. This is ecumenism. This is already unity – unity on the way with Jesus.

There is another ecumenism, which we must recognize and which is so timely today: the ecumenism of blood. When terrorists or world powers persecute Christian minorities or Christians, when they do this, they do not ask: But are you Lutheran? Are you Orthodox? Are you Catholic? Are you reformed? Are you Pentecostal? No. "You are Christian." They recognize only one: the Christian. We are witnesses, and I am thinking, for instance, of the Coptic Orthodox brothers beheaded on the beaches of Libya: they are our brothers. They gave witness to Christ and they died saying: "Jesus, help me!" With the name: they confessed Jesus' name.

So, ecumenism of prayer, ecumenism of the way; and the enemy teaches us the ecumenism of blood.

Zenit.org 13-10-2016

Christmas Commitments

Pope Benedict XVI, 11-12-2011

Today, preparing for Christmas is very difficult. I know that people have many commitments, but getting ready for Christmas does not only mean shopping and making preparations, it means being in contact with the Lord, going out to meet Him. I feel it is important not to forget this dimension. ... This is not an additional burden, but the power that enables us to do all we need to do. I hope you maintain permanent contact with Jesus, that His joy and strength might help you to live in this world.

Vatican Information Service 11-12-2011

Follow Your Conscience

Fr Shenan Boquet, President, Human Life International

The attack on the family would not have so much success, even among Christians, without the misrepresentation of the role of conscience.

The catchphrase "Follow your conscience" is used to justify one's ability to do almost anything one chooses or believes is good. This misunderstanding of freedom of conscience is an exceptionally clever way of ending all discussion on what is morally good from evil: "Who are you to tell me what I can or cannot do?"

Try telling a judge or jury that your conscience allowed you to steal from your neighbour or kill your boss because he wouldn't give you a raise. Try convincing a police officer that you ran the red light because you were "following your conscience." It sounds ridiculous because it is ridiculous!

The weapons of this battle on marriage and the family...are the tools of propaganda and illusion aimed at transforming the minds and hearts. They use television, radio, film, the internet, and music as their primary media to promote a radical and distorted worldview. They further their grasp through perverted sex education programs imposed upon our youth, beginning as early as grade school. ...

What is our response to this war? Return to the Creator's plan. Matrimony and family are God's design, and as divine institutions they are not open to renegotiation or revision – there are no substitutions. Fundamentally, our global cultures and societies need a moral counter-revolution to replace the Culture of Death.

This is now up to us. Be Not Afraid!

Spirit & Life newsletter, 29-10-2016

Death Destroyed

St Basil, Homily on the Birth of Christ

God assumes flesh to destroy death within it hidden. Just as antidotes to poison, when ingested, eliminate the poison's effects, and as the shadows within a house clear with the light of the sun; so death, which had dominated human nature, was destroyed by the presence of God. And as ice remains solid in water as long as night endures and shadows reign, but melts at once by the sun's heat, so death – which had reigned until the coming of Christ – as soon as the grace of God our Saviour appeared, and the Sun of Justice arose, 'was swallowed up in victory' (1Cor 15:54), for it cannot coexist with Life.

Where Suffering Lays Down Its Weapons

Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, in an interview in the French newspaper *La Nef*, October 2016

God does not will evil. Nevertheless, He remains astonishingly silent in the face of our trials.

In spite of everything, suffering does not call God's almighty power into question – far from it; rather, it reveals it to us. I still hear the voice of the child who through his tears asked me, "Why did God not keep my father from being killed?" In His mysterious silence, God manifests Himself in the tear shed by the child and not in the order of the world that would justify that tear.

God has His mysterious way of being close to us in our trials. He is intensely present in our trials and sufferings. His strength makes itself silence because it reveals his infinite tact, His loving tenderness for those who suffer. External manifestations are not necessarily the best proofs of closeness. Silence reveals God's compassion, the fact that He takes part in our sufferings. God does not will evil. And the more monstrous the evil, the clearer it becomes that God in us is the first victim.

Christ's victory over death and sin is consummated in the grand silence of the cross. God manifests all His power in this silence that no barbarity will ever be able to sully.

When I travelled to countries that were going through violent, profound crises, sufferings and tragic miseries, such as Syria, Libya, Haiti, the Philippines after the devastating typhoon, I observed that silent prayer is the last treasure of those who have nothing left. Silence is the last trench where no one can enter, the one room in which to remain at peace, the place where suffering for a moment lays down its weapons. In suffering, let us hide ourselves in the fortress of prayer.

CatholicWorldReport.com 03-10-2016

No Maps, No Destination

Recently in an article in the *National Catholic Register*, Bishop Robert Barron asserted that one of the major problems the Church has in evangelising culture is that many Catholics do not walk with Jesus personally.

Well, this is precisely what happens when dioceses sacramentalise people without first evangelising them, that is, converting them. Not being engaged in a process of ongoing conversion themselves, how could these Catholics possibly be expected to convert anyone else, let alone the prevailing culture?

The hierarchy are the ones who have been entrusted with the duty of first converting them, and preparing them thoroughly for baptism and the other sacraments of initiation. They have been entrusted with the duty of catechising and forming them in the faith, and the ways of the Gospel and holiness. And, to put it bluntly, they have catastrophically failed in their Apostolic duty and mission to do this. As a result, we have two generations who do not have a relationship with Christ in His Church, who do not know what it means to be a Christian daily, or to be a disciple and to be authentically Catholic.

Apart from thwarting the Church's mission, these leaders have robbed two generations of discovering what they have become through the grace of the sacrament of baptism, and what their essential purpose in life is as a child of God. They have deprived them of knowing that the first mark of true discipleship in this life is faithfully assisting at Sunday Mass, the Lord and Master's Prayer, followed by the second mark, regular Confession.

The Church's history is full of examples of men and women who were effective evangelisers mainly because they themselves were profoundly evangelised and engaged in ongoing evangelisation; people who answered God's call to holiness, and became through grace all that God created them to be in the very beginning. In the Church we call them saints.

Sacramentalising people without first converting them is not forming them to be saints but leaving them to be followers of their own will, and to become victims of the prevailing culture. It's simply producing spiritual children and tossing them into the world to find their own way home with no directions, maps or description of their destination. And it is certainly one way of making sure the fruits of the sacraments are not realised. Yet to this very day, the Church's hierarchy persists 'pastorally' in this devastating and process.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria

Mary, Mother of God

Fr John Flader, Question Time (Connor Court Publishing, 2008), Question 31

Q: I know that we call Mary the “mother of God” but I find it difficult to understand this teaching. It seems to me that God, who is eternal and who created everything, including Mary, cannot possibly have a mother. How could Mary be the mother of her creator? Does the Bible have anything to say about this?

A: As you say, we do call Mary the “mother of God”. We call her by that title, for example, in the “Hail Mary” when we say “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners...”

In simple terms, what we mean by this expression is that Mary is the mother of Jesus, who is God the Son, a divine person. Therefore she is the mother of God. Naturally we do not mean that Mary gave birth to God the Father, the creator. There are various relevant passages in Scripture.

When the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary in the Annunciation, he told her that, if she accepted, she would conceive and bear a son, “and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High...” (Lk 1:31-32) That is, Jesus is the eternal Son of the Most High God, he is God the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

The Angel went on to say: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.” (Lk 1:35)

Some days later, Mary’s kinswoman Elizabeth, moved by the Holy Spirit, acknowledged that Mary was indeed the mother of God, calling her “the mother of my Lord”. (Lk 1:43)

And in reply, Mary herself, in the “Magnificat”, was moved to say that, because God in this way “has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant... all generations will call me blessed.” (Lk 1:48)

Mary thus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah: “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.” (Is 7:14) The name Emmanuel, of course, means “God is with us”.

While it is true that Mary gave Jesus only his human nature, not his divine nature, nonetheless in Bethlehem she gave birth to a divine person, the second person of the Trinity, so that she can truly be called the mother of God.

This truth is a dogma of faith, proclaimed in the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD. That council condemned the errors of Nestorius, who maintained that in Jesus there were two persons, a human person and a divine person, and that Mary was the mother only of the human person.

The Council proclaimed: “If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel (Christ) in truth is God and that on this account the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God – since according to the flesh she brought forth the Word of God made flesh – let him be anathema.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly ‘Mother of God’ (Theotokos).” (CCC 495)

St Cyril of Alexandria, who intervened powerfully in the Council of Ephesus, wrote: “It has amazed me that some people should be in doubt as to whether the holy Virgin should be called Mother of God. If our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how can the holy Virgin who bore him not be Mother of God? This is the belief that the divinely inspired disciples have handed down to us, even if they have not recorded the term. This is what we have been taught by the holy fathers. Indeed Athanasius, our father of famous memory, in his book on the holy and consubstantial Trinity, in the third discourse, calls the holy Virgin throughout Mother of God. (Epistle 1, 27:30)

*“Mankind is a great, immense family...
This is proved by what we feel in our hearts at Christmas.”*

Pope John XXIII

Disunity and Division

Towards the end of the Church's liturgical year, some of the Mass readings, from Ephesians and Philippians, speak of the divisions and disunity within those communities. Disunity exists, not only within the Catholic Church but within Christianity in general and "openly contradicts the will of Christ" (Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism n.1). It will continue to exist because truth which proceeds from the mouth of love cannot co-exist with sin and error. In his prayer for unity (Jn 17) Jesus prayed for those given to him by the Father, who are in the world but not of the world. He asked his Father "to consecrate them in the truth – your word is truth" and to protect them from the evil one – the master of deception and distorter of the truth (Gen 3:1).

No one was more loving, compassionate or merciful than Jesus and while he tolerated those who were sinners, ate and drank with them, he never tolerated sin and he corrected misunderstandings; whether it was one of commission or omission, what they failed to do.

If we have come to accept that love, compassion, etc. are enough, we should read chapters two and three of Revelations. Even though John was bidden to write to the seven churches of Asia Minor, "I know of your works, your love, faith, service and your patience" (Rev 2:18), each case was accompanied with a stern admonition for not doing everything they were supposed to do. The First and the Last, who is alive and was dead, who holds the keys of death and hell, is reminding each of us today of his divinity and that every teaching he gave to his apostles, and handed on by them through the teaching Church he founded, is not subject to alteration or omission.

Without objective truth delivered by infallible authority, to which we can then either freely conform or freely ignore, we become relativists. The philosophy of Relativism is the theory that all truth is relative to the individual and to the time or place in which he acts. Apply this thinking to the person of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings, including those hard uncomfortable teachings, by denying or causing doubt concerning his divinity and hence his divine authority which he gave to his Church or to ourselves personally, then truth, be it religious, moral or ethical, is simply reduced to subjective personal opinion – man-centred.

Holy Scripture tells us that "Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). The devil can take refuge in his favourite element, anonymity (Ratzinger Report, 1985 p.148). That same report makes it perfectly clear there is no "pre-Vatican II Church" or "post-Vatican II Church" although some have seen the Council in this way. Pope Benedict XVI criticized this "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture" which has caused so much confusion (address to Roman Curia 22/12/2005). The apostle of Divine Mercy, St Faustina Kowalska notes "Satan can even clothe himself in a cloak of humility, but he does not know how to wear the cloak of obedience" (Diary, 939).

We acclaim freedom, but we love the word "freedom" more than the fact, for freedom has a price tag as those three crosses on Golgotha testify.

John M. Royal, Bundaberg West, Queensland

Christmas Trees in the Sanctuary

Answered by Fr Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at the Regina Apostolorum university Zenit.org 11-12-2012

Q: In our church it has become the custom in recent years to have a large lighted Christmas tree at the side of the sanctuary during the Advent and Christmas season. ... It is quite distracting during holy Mass. An approach to the parish priest to turn off the lights has been unsuccessful, as it is seen opposing the spirit of the season. Is there anything which supports this view in the rubrics? - M.T., Wellington, New Zealand

A: ... The general principles involved are that the seasonal decorations enhance prayer and understanding of the parish community. I would say that a decorated Christmas tree in the sanctuary can hardly be billed as moderate decoration, even if the flashing lights are turned off. Rather than "enhancing prayer and understanding," the faithful are more likely to share our reader's experience of being distracted during Mass. ...

Christmas trees are preferably located outside the sanctuary and church proper, and are best left in vestibules or church grounds. This has been the practice in St Peter's Square from the time of Pope John Paul II. ... Within the church proper, apart from the crib, Christmas may be evoked by using, for example, traditional poinsettias, holly and other traditional elements according to the culture. ...

I have no difficulty with Christmas trees, but ... I think that placing them in the sanctuary is not a common practice in the Church. It is not advisable because, as a ubiquitous symbol, it no longer has an exclusively religious meaning and can easily evoke the more material and commercial aspect of the holy season.

Nostalgia For The Good

Pope Francis, Angelus Address, 30-10-2016

Sometimes we seek to correct and convert a sinner by reprimanding him, reproaching him, his mistakes and his unjust behaviour.

Jesus' attitude with Zacchaeus shows us another way: that of showing one in error his value, that value that God continues to see despite everything, despite all his mistakes.

This can cause a positive surprise, which makes the heart tender and drives the person to bring out the goodness he has in himself. It is about giving individuals confidence, which makes them grow and change.

God behaves this way with all of us: He is not blocked by our sin, but overcomes it with love and makes us feel nostalgia for the good. We have all felt this nostalgia for the good after a mistake. And God Our Father, thus acts, and then Jesus acts. There is no person who does not have something good. And God looks at this to bring him out of evil.

May the Virgin Mary help us to see the good there is in the persons we meet every day, so that all are encouraged to have emerge the image of God imprinted in their heart. And so we are able to rejoice over the surprises of the mercy of God! Our God, who is the God of surprises!

[Translation by ZENIT] Zenit.org 30-10-2016

Make It Illegal

Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia, to the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation, Sept 2016

[I have never] heard anyone suggest that the best way to deal with murder, rape or domestic abuse is to improve people's access to psychotherapy and job training. We make sexual assault illegal – even though we know it will still sometimes tragically occur – because it's gravely evil. It's an act of violence, and the law should proscribe it. Of course, we also have a duty to improve the social conditions that can breed domestic and sexual violence. But that doesn't change the need for a law.

Likewise, if we really believe that abortion is an intimate act of violence, then we can't aim at anything less than ending abortion. It doesn't matter that some abortions have always occurred, and that some abortions will always occur. If we really believe that abortion kills a developing, human life, then we can never be satisfied with mere "reductions" in the body count.

LifeSiteNews.com 19-10-2016

Not a Happy Thought

We have a parish where Mass attendance is below 4%. If the rest of Australia is like this, Catholic Australia is headed for extinction. It could be argued that Catholics don't know that they have to attend under pain of mortal sin, or that dying in mortal sin leads to damnation.

If this is true, then those responsible for teaching them may have to take the eternal consequences. That is, bishops and priests who failed to teach will be held accountable. Not a happy thought.

Bishops and priests have the Catholic media to help them. They also have Catholic schools, but even here we see failure, with 98% of children leaving Catholic schools also leaving Mass. What on earth are they teaching?

Perhaps I am mistaken. I have heard priests say that we are all going to be saved. But if I am right, the personal judgement of these priests is going to be a most uncomfortable affair. And for bishops who fail to teach, frightening beyond their worst imagining.

Richard Stokes, Burpengary, Queensland

“Forgiveness is surely the greatest gift we can give to others, because it is the most costly. Yet at the same time, it is what makes us most like God.”

Pope Francis, 03-11-2016

History to Be Written

Pope Francis, Homily at Jubilee for Prisoners, 06-11-16

We know that in God's eyes no one can consider himself just (cf. Rom 2:1-11). But no one can live without the certainty of finding forgiveness! The repentant thief, crucified at Jesus' side, accompanied him into paradise. So may none of you allow yourselves to be held captive by the past! True enough, even if we wanted to, we can never rewrite the past. But the history that starts today, and looks to the future, has yet to be written, by the grace of God and your personal responsibility. By learning from past mistakes, you can open a new chapter of your lives. Let us never yield to the temptation of thinking that we cannot be forgiven. Whatever our hearts may accuse us of, small or great, “God is greater than our hearts” (1 Jn 3:20). We need but entrust ourselves to his mercy.

Zenit.org 06-11-2016

Why I Never Wash

1. I was forced to as a child.
2. People who wash are hypocrites – they think they are cleaner than everybody else.
3. There are so many different kinds of soap, I can't decide which one is best.
4. I used to wash, but I got bored and stopped.
5. I wash only on special occasions, like Christmas and Easter.
6. None of my friends wash.
7. I'll start washing when I get older and dirtier.
8. I can't spare the time.
9. The bathroom is never warm enough in winter or cool enough in summer.
10. People who make soap are only after your money.

(Thanks to John Bohan, Geelong West, for sending this in.)

Midnight Mass

Dates for the diary: Everyone welcome!

2016 Christmas Midnight Mass: St Brigid's Catholic Church, Cowwarr: 24th December 11.30pm Carols; 12.00am Mass.

2017 Four day Retreat: Marlo, 5.00pm 19th February (Start) - Lunch: 23rd February (Ends).

**Fr Ken Clark, Parish Priest,
Ordinariate Parish of the Most Holy Family, Gippsland**
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Listen to One Another

Pope Francis, Jubilee Audience, 22-10-2016

Dialogue enables individuals to know each other and to understand the needs of one another.

This is, first of all, a sign of great respect, because it puts individuals in an attitude of listening and in the condition of receiving the best aspects of the interlocutor.

In the second place, dialogue is an expression of charity because, although not ignoring the differences, it can help to seek and to share the common good.

Moreover, dialogue invites us to place ourselves before the other, seeing him as a gift of God, who challenges us and who asks to be recognized.

Often we do not meet brothers, even though we live beside them, especially when we make our position prevail over the others. We do not dialogue when we do not listen sufficiently or tend to interrupt the other to prove that we are right. True dialogue, instead, needs moments of silence, in which to receive the extraordinary gift of God's presence in a brother.

Dear brothers and sisters, dialogue helps individuals to humanize relations and to surmount misunderstandings. There is so much need of dialogue in our families, and how issues would be resolved more easily if we learned to listen to one another!

Zenit.org 24-10-2016

Silence in the Mass

Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, in an interview in the French newspaper La Nef, October 2016

Vatican Council II stresses that silence is a privileged means of promoting the participation of the people of God in the liturgy. The Council Fathers intended to show what true liturgical participation is: entrance into the divine mystery.

Under the pretext of making access to God easy, some wanted everything in the liturgy to be immediately intelligible, rational, horizontal and human. But in acting that way, we run the risk of reducing the sacred mystery to good feelings. Under the pretext of pedagogy, some priests indulge in endless commentaries that are flat-footed and mundane. Are these pastors afraid that silence in the presence of the Most High might disconcert the faithful? Do they think that the Holy Spirit is incapable of opening hearts to the divine Mysteries by pouring out on them the light of spiritual grace?

Saint John Paul II warns us: a human being enters into participation in the divine presence "above all by letting himself be educated in an adoring silence, because at the summit of the knowledge and experience of God there is His absolute transcendence."

Sacred silence is the good of the faithful, and the clerics must not deprive them of it!

Silence is the cloth from which our liturgies ought to be cut out. Nothing in them should interrupt the silent atmosphere that is their natural climate.

CatholicWorldReport.com 03-10-2016

Wasting the Master's Goods

Homily of Fr John Speekman, 25th Sunday Year C, homiliesfromaustralia.blogspot.com.au

...[T]oday's Gospel image of the steward *giving away* the master's property to make himself popular speaks to me also of the dangers inherent in the vocation of the priest.

When I was first ordained it was my habit to invite parishioners to call me by my first name rather than say Father. It seemed like a jolly good idea. It showed people I was not 'hierarchical' which was code for 'power hungry'; it showed them that I didn't want them to think I was better than they were; and, all in all, and perhaps most importantly, showed them what a nice, friendly, approachable guy I was.

To be honest, I have now come to see that what I was really doing was saying to my parishioners 'Please like me!' What is apparent to me, after thirty-two years of priesthood, is that I was wasting, or giving away the Master's property in order to win a welcome for myself. I was giving away what didn't belong to me. At the time I didn't realize that the familiarity I then sought, even in this seemingly trivial way, would one day become an obstacle for those who needed *Father* John Speekman and not John Speekman. I guess that's why so many parishioners, especially the older ones, resisted me. They understood this title was not *mine* to give away. It had been placed on me at ordination and represented who I had become. Another group of parishioners, however, was only too ready to acquiesce to my invitation.

A little smarter now, I have begun to cast the light of this self-understanding on all sorts of areas of priestly ministry, some minor and some gravely serious. Take the wearing of the Roman collar, for example. Patients and staff at the hospital where I served as chaplain were always grateful to see me wearing clerical attire and occasionally told me so. A religious sister in lay clothes who sometimes visited the wards once chided me and suggested it was a little overdone. She asked 'What difference does it make?' and I answered, perhaps too abruptly, 'When I walk down the street I make people think of God and the Church, and you don't.' Let me hasten to add that there was a time when I didn't wear clerical clothes either, but I have learned.

Rome has repeatedly requested priests to wear clerical attire. ... Why then should we not comply with this requirement? For only one reason: *it's easier for us when we are not so conspicuous*. And because people have a right to the example of priestly obedience, and of *visible* priests, I propose this as another example of wasting the Master's property.

We priests need you to love us, though, depending on circumstances and life situations, some priests more than others. But this need can run very deep and often causes us to balk at making difficult decisions: 'Father, is it OK for me to be on the Pill?'; 'Father, can I still go to Holy Communion even though I'm married outside the Church?'; 'Is it OK to sing "She'll be coming round the mountain" as the first hymn at Mum's funeral Mass?' The more a priest needs to be loved the more difficult it is for him to say no. Then we find that awful temptation to give away more of the Master's property. Our loyalty shifts from the Master to his debtors and the consequences are tragic for the Church; it becomes a Church ruled by the wishes of the people rather than the rights of the Master, and there is no place where this becomes more apparent than in the pulpit.

Have you noticed that there are some pulpits from which you never hear anything challenging? There is lots of affirmation, lots of thanking, lots of congratulating, lots of humour, but almost no teaching of prickly truths. It's not that heresy is preached, it's just that the difficult teachings of the Faith are somehow 'left out'. As one Catholic man put it recently, 'Our priest gives us nothing to take home. All he does is talk about climate change, refugees, and progress on the school hall.'

We priests are called to set the hearts of our people aflame, not to blow smoke in their eyes. There will be many to love us today for not challenging them – but tomorrow – they will quietly despise us. We priests are called to use the Master's riches to make friends who will welcome us 'into the tents of eternity.' I haven't always understood this and have been as guilty as most of self-serving 'wastage'.

Nowadays I deliberately *never* tell a joke at Mass; I am so conscious of how this destroys the (Lord's) sacred atmosphere which should surround it. I don't make use of extraordinary ministers unless it's absolutely necessary. I don't just let the choir sing whatever they want but try to direct them more to appropriate hymns and music. Above all, I never deliberately change the words of the Mass.

All this is learned behaviour, acquired wisdom. If it is essential that we priests, stewards of the Master, remain accountable for our use of the Master's goods, it is equally necessary that religious and lay persons be attentive also. The steward in the Gospel was not a thief, he was just wasteful – but the master still gave him the sack.

Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

in Gippsland

Bass	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Bairnsdale	1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass
Cowwarr-Heyfld	1 st Friday alternately: Cwr 7.30pm–8.30pm Heyfield 10.00am – 4.30pm
Cowwarr Ord.	Wednesday (Low Mass 10am) 10.30 – 11.00am
Churchill	Saturday (9.30am Mass) 10.00am – 11.00am
Cranbourne	Fri & Sat in church: (9.30 Mass) 10am – 11am Adoration Chapel accessible 24 hours by PIN available at parish office.
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11.00am First Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Dec on)
Heyfield Ord'te	4 th Sunday 4pm Evensong & Benediction
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9.30am – 11am
Maffra	Wednesday (5pm Mass) – 6pm
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) 9.30am – 10.30am
Morwell	Friday 10am – 6pm (Sacred Heart Church)
Orbost	Wednesday (9.30am Mass) 10am – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Sale	Friday 11.30am – 12pm First Friday 11.30am – 4pm
Trafalgar	Wed & First Sat: (9.30am Mass) – 10.45am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10.00am – 11.00am First Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Jan on)
Wonthaggi	First Friday 7.00pm – 8.00pm

Mary, our mother

And mother of the Redeemer,
Gate of heaven and Star of the sea,
Come to the aid of your people,
Who have sinned,
Yet also yearn to rise again!
Come to the Church's aid,
Enlighten your devoted children,
Strengthen the faithful throughout the world,
Let those who have drifted
Hear your call,
And may they who live as prisoners of evil
Be converted!

Pope John Paul II

“Let us not forget those who have loved us and have preceded us in faith, and also those whom no-one remembers; the Eucharistic celebration is the best spiritual aid we can offer to their souls.”

Pope Francis, 16-11-2016

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The purpose of ITD is to provide a forum for those who:

- no longer have a voice in Catholic Life, and other diocesan newspapers,
- wish to understand and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church,
- wish to support and defend those who are unjustly treated by Church bureaucrats and organisations,
- wish to campaign for the renewal of our Catholic schools,
- wish to promote Eucharistic adoration in all parishes,
- wish to have a means of support and contact for one another in remaining true to our Catholic faith.

Letters to the Editor:

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters. There is no guarantee that every letter will be published, and we reserve the right to edit letters. Name and contact details must accompany letters, however, if there is sufficient reason, anonymity will be preserved when publishing. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of ITD.

Watch

Pope Benedict XVI, 30-11-2008

“Watch,” Jesus says to us in Luke’s brief parable of the master of the house who goes but whose return is not known.

To watch means to follow the Lord, to choose what he has chosen, to love what he has loved, to conform one’s own life to his; to watch means to spend every moment of our time on the horizon of his love without letting ourselves be overcome by the inevitable daily difficulties and problems.

We ask the Lord to give us his grace so that Advent will stimulate all of us to walk in that direction.