Spiritual but not Religious ...

by Francis Cardinal George

It’s somewhat fashionable these days to describe oneself as “spiritual but not religious.” This is supposed to mean that one is open to an experience beyond the commercial or the political but not tied to “institutional” religion. In this, one claims an experience of transcendence that is bound by no one else’s rules.

People can always make claims to any kind of experience. The question is always: Who cares? Why should anyone care where someone else gets a spiritual high? Because no one really cares, the claim to be spiritual but not religious is always safe. It’s never a threat and can be dismissed quite easily. The claim to be religious is different. It is a claim that God himself has taken the initiative to reveal himself to us and tell us who he is and who we are. Religion binds us to God according to his will, not ours, in a community of faith that he has brought into existence. Being religious can therefore be threatening.

Meeting the risen Christ spiritually therefore depends upon believing in him religiously. We are given the gift of faith in the sacrament of baptism, in which we are configured to the risen Christ. Faith takes seriously everything that comes from God. The faith-filled person is sure of God and distrustful of himself. Unlike faith in God, experience is often wrong in religious matters.

Our personal faith needs strengthening by the community of believers (the Church), lest it degenerate into an individual spirituality. One solid and sure means of corroborating our personal faith is to check it against the faith of the Church, the community founded by Christ upon the apostles. One way to make that check is to go to Peter, the apostle Jesus called to be a rock. Peter and his successors confirm our faith and keep us on the path of true religion.
Every age has its predominant fault. A good argument can be made that the greatest weakness in today’s culture is the exaltation of sex. God gave us the gift of sexuality, and we, like the prodigal son, have squandered it. The Church has stated that “in the present period, the corruption of morals has increased, and one of the most serious indications of this corruption is the unbridled exaltation of sex.” Only a hardened heart would not be shocked at the ease with which matters of sexuality are publicly discussed and joked about today.

It is claimed that to deny this kind of openness smacks of prudery, of denouncing the good of sexuality itself. Yet, the modest treatment of sex, like a richly covered box enclosing a precious gem, is what preserves its dignity. Everyday experience bears this out. What a joy it is to meet a person with a happy smile and pure intention, whose modesty shines forth and acts like a window to reveal his or her personality and particular beauty.

Modesty is important because it is the defense of purity, or chastity. It is the fort that protects the castle, but it is also the frame that enhances the picture. Modesty is defined as “the virtue that moderates all the internal and external movements and appearance of a person according to his or her endowments, possessions, and station in life.” In a document on the proper kind of sex education, the Church has stated that modesty “tends to react to certain attitudes and to curb behavior which stains the dignity of a person. It is a necessary and effective means of controlling the instincts, making authentic love flower, integrating the affective-sexual life in the harmonious picture of the person.”

... Today’s media—newspapers, magazines, radio, television, movies, videos and music, which are so often seductive and deceiving rather than newsworthy, wholesome and artistic—are probably the greatest enemies of modesty.

... The kind of virtue needed to remain pure in today’s world is a stubborn virtue, one that does not give in to sin. St. Paul says: “Among you there must not be even a mention of fornication or impurity in any of its forms or promiscuity; this would hardly become saints! ... For you can be quite certain that nobody who actually indulges in fornication or impurity or promiscuity—which is worshipping a false god—can inherit anything of the kingdom of God.”

A true love of God is necessary to grow in modesty. One must also keep in mind that the punishment for rejecting the moral law is real. In 1917, Our Lady of Fatima showed the three shepherd children a vision of hell. One of the children, Blessed Jacinta, replied when she was near death, “The sins that lead most souls to hell are sins of the flesh!” and “Certain fashions will be introduced which will offend Our Divine Lord very much. Those who serve God ought not to follow these fashions ...”

A chaste life is achieved by discipline of the senses and the mind, watchfulness and prudence in avoiding occasions of sin, the observance of modesty, moderation in recreation, wholesome pursuits, assiduous prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. We need in our Church and society a vast return to the virtue of modesty.

Excerpted from the Eternagram on Modesty from Eternal Life
**Vatican Conference on “Just War” Theory**

Pax Christi International, with the backing of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, recently concluded its three-day conference on non-violence, which brought together 80 theologians and peace activists from around the world. The conference drafted a statement which will be presented to Pope Francis by Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The statement says, in part, “Any war is a destruction and there is no justice in destruction of life, of property … so no spending of resources for the destruction of life.” The statement calls on the Church to no longer use or teach “just war theory,” which recognizes war as morally justifiable in certain circumstances. Conference participants believe that modern methods of warfare make “just war” an impossibility.

St. Augustine of Hippo lived in Africa from 354 to 430 A.D., and served as bishop of Hippo Regius, in what is now Algeria. Augustine was one of the first Christian theologians to defend the idea of “just war.” According to Augustine, individuals should not immediately resort to violence; but God has given the sword to government for good reason. The Bible, in Romans 13:4, says that government “ … is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.”

According to Augustine, one could be a soldier and serve God honorably. Augustine argues that Christians as part of government should not be ashamed to protect peace and punish wickedness.

The Catechism outlines strict conditions for the legitimate use of military force. The guidelines are divided between when conditions exist which justify engagement and the conditions for conducting a war in a just manner. According to the Catechism, all of the following criteria must be met at the same time in order for a war to be considered just:

- The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain.
- All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective
- There must be serious prospects of success
- The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition

Nine hundred years after Augustine first wrote of the possibility of “just war,” St. Thomas Aquinas built on the work of the earlier theologian to lay out the conditions under which a war could be just. He identified three guiding principles:

- **Proper Authority.** A “just war” must be waged by a properly instituted authority such as the State.
- **Just Cause.** War must occur for a good and just purpose, rather than for self-gain. (“In the nation’s interest” would not be a sufficient reason. Oil interests in the Middle East, for example, would not be a reason to employ the weapons of war.)
- **Right Intention.** “The purpose of all wars,” said St. Augustine, “is peace.” And Aquinas understood that even in the midst of violence, the central motive must be peace. (Stopping attacks by ISIS would be an appropriate use of lethal force.)

The statement released by the non-violence conference calls upon Pope Francis

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It is an indisputable fact that people can be appealed to on the basis of self-sacrifice. Many persons get a greater thrill or sense of reward out of this than out of anything else in their lives. There is a strong psychological attraction in the idea of strenuousness and self-discipline. You do not have to promise every man a feather bed at the end to get him to do something that requires vigorous and disciplined effort. The sense of achievement and of good accomplished may be quite enough.”

He believed the communists to be “ahead of us” on that score, but not for a good cause. In 2015, we are seeing youth attracted to radical jihadism in part because it seems to offer a thrilling prize for sacrifice. What is there today in western liberalism worth dying for?

For Christians, of course, there is no greater cause than the Gospel. It would be odd if the Church did not also embrace this “ascetic” perspective, especially in light of her own Lord’s perfect example of servanthood, humility, and sacrifice. Yet how often do churches timidly shy away from the call to repentance and endurance and self-control, and promote instead their brand as the most successful and affluent and personally fulfilling, appealing to comfort.
Choosing Godparents

[The Catholic Answer ~ February, 2016]

Is a Catholic couple permitted to choose godparents who have not been confirmed? What is the age limit for godparents? Is there a minimum and a maximum age?

The godparent, or sponsor, has the serious responsibility of raising the child in the faith should the parents be unable to do so. For that reason, the godparents should be good and strong practicing Catholics. At least one of the godparents/sponsors should be a confirmed practicing Catholic over the age of 16, but there is no maximum age limit.

Here is what the Code of Canon Law states on the subject: “Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it. There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

[1] Be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister.

[2] Have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause.

[3] Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on.

[4] Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared [i.e., living a life in harmony with the teachings of the Church. Meaning, if the person is married, that person must be married according the laws of the Church. If unmarried, not cohabitating].

[5] Not the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community [a Protestant] is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a Christian witness of the baptism” (Canons 872–874).

Non-baptized persons are not permitted to act as sponsors or witnesses.

Serve (continued from page 4)

and self-satisfaction? Who preaches: Come to Jesus, read the Bible, and let the Spirit of God reveal your myriad sins so you may repent and become more like Christ?

Two impulses, then: the desire for more, to consume, to take ease, or to labor, to give of oneself, to be poured out. We have a God-given capacity to find true fulfillment in giving rather than receiving, not to be served, but to serve. Culturally (and politically), Weaver’s 1959 talk was followed on January 20, 1961 with John F. Kennedy’s famous challenge: “Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.” Who would dare make such an appeal today to self-sacrifice? In Chicago, as in many places in the nation, the motto seems to be at times, “Where’s Mine?”

Worth Reading: J.I. Packer in this interview, “Losing His Sight But Seeing Christ,” seems to fit the pattern of a godly Christian man not full of himself, who has served his fellow Christians and seeks to serve Christ.

January 22, 2016, Friday E-Letter.
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tremendous resources and energy are poured into the events surrounding the wedding day while more important aspects of marriage get neglected

An Accurate Understanding of the Nature of Marriage

Excerpts from Marriage, 2014, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City State

Marriage, a short work by Jorge Cardinal Medina Estevez, presents a concise summary of the Catholic perspective on holy matrimony, with an emphasis on practical considerations for marriage preparation and on a Christian spirituality for those in the midst of married life. It also addresses some of the many challenges to marriage in modern times.

Why should this be important to us? Marriage has a human, biological, psychological and social basis that goes far beyond the phenomenon of relationships between the sexes in the world of living things. Viewed from a faith perspective, the biological difference between man and woman acquires a deep spiritual meaning, which does not exclude the material but raises it to a higher and unexpected level. (page 9)

The proper understanding of marriage is of utmost concern because the success of marriage not only affects human flourishing in this life, but also has a tremendous impact on the next life. While the original Italian title for the booklet—Are you married or thinking of getting married?—suggests a very specific audience, the text is also a useful resource for those who are involved in catechesis. In particular, what is said here about courtship is something that could be of great service if it were interiorized by the young and those who are discerning the vocation to marriage.

Cardinal Medina describes key characteristics to look for in a potential spouse, things far more profound than physical attractiveness or wealth. These qualities include sincerity, generosity, industriousness and a balanced character. Attention is also drawn to the importance of noting the way the other person loves his or her own family and to his or her ability to admit to mistakes.

The liturgical celebration of matrimony gets little treatment here, as is appropriate. It is well known that it is too often the case that tremendous resources and energy are poured into the events surrounding the wedding day while more important aspects of marriage get neglected. What deserves emphasis in the ceremony is the simplicity and nobility that should accompany a Catholic wedding, and the conviction that the sacrament joins them in a special way to the grace of Christ and inaugurates a beautiful new “domestic Church.”

Cardinal Medina provides an interesting analogy for the grace that comes to a couple through marriage: “It is like a solar battery: every time it comes into contact with the light, it generates energy” (page 12). The sacrament received on the wedding day has a long-lasting effect, and this is a good reminder to those who are already married.

Many false ideas about human relationships have taken hold in much of Western culture, and some of these are confronted here in a forthright manner. Through an explanation of the harmfulness of various sins that tempt people during the period of courtship and that can tempt married couples, the Cardinal shows that these sins not only endanger the soul, but also have temporal ramifications. While there are many struggles in the present time, there have always been challenges to the truth of marriage, and believers must not lose heart. In fact, he insists that “to ignore [the present situation] is foolishness” (page 5).

Sadly, due to the difficulties many have experienced with regard to marriage, many people today lack confidence and hope when they contemplate entering into the marriage bond. Cardinal Medina offers

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Acting on Forgiveness
by Monsignor Charles Pope, Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

Forgiveness involves letting go of the need to change the past. Through forgiveness, we are able to let go of our resentments, our desire for revenge and wrathful anger that often accompanies hurts or injustices we experience. In most cases, forgiveness does permit us to resume or stay in relationships with people. That’s not to say that we have “abandoned” Gospel living. The situation forced upon us carries consequences. At times, the hurts are slight, and the issues are more of the moment rather than involving ongoing and very unhealthy aspects of our relationships with others. But, sometimes, the one who has wronged us shows no remorse, no apology is offered, and the damage inflicted continues to be part of their “modus operandi.”

And so, there are times when it is simply not wise to continue in relationships where there is ongoing sin, injustice or harm. A woman may forgive her husband for the repeated physical abuse he has inflicted on her in the past. She may understand that his anger comes from the fact that he himself was abused as child. She may, by the grace of forgiveness, harbor no anger or resentment. But it does not follow that forgiveness means she should resume a common household with him. This might further endanger her and her children. It might also deepen the husband’s pathology and delay him getting the help he needs. Gospel living does not demand that we place ourselves in “harm’s way” over and over again.

Unfortunately, there may be reasons to stay clear of people who cheated, defamed, insulted and abused you. You would not be rude or wrathful to them, but it does not mean you are required to be jovial and pretend that nothing happened. Especially if no attempt at contrition/apology is received. How can you forgive someone who does not admit their wrong, does not ask for forgiveness or want it? Especially when the hurt, insult and slander they inflict continues. On the other hand, what is to prevent a conversation about what happened? Too often, enough effort is not made to find greater understanding.

Forgiveness does often mean that the parties involved share this gift in order to further and deepen the relationship. But, there are exceptions to this, and forgiveness does not always require resuming unhealthy situations that really benefit neither party. Sometimes, the best you can do is stay away, and keep that “poison” away from you. Gospel living, forgiveness, while it includes mercy ... it also demands “justice.”

Excerpted from Our Sunday Visitor.

Capacity to Be a Saint

“Even among saints differences, discord and controversies arise. And I find this a consolation because we see that saints have not ‘come down from heaven.’ They are people like us, with problems, even complicated problems. Sanctity does not consist in never having made mistakes or sinned. Sanctity grows in the capacity for conversion and penance, of willingness to start again and, above all, in the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness.”—Pope Benedict XVI

Marriage (continued from page 6)

beautiful and encouraging words about the meaning and goodness of marriage, and the ideas he presents are precisely the sort of thing needed if we are to begin to rebuild a healthy culture of Christian marriage.

Papal Infallibility

The Catholic Church’s teaching on papal infallibility is one which is generally misunderstood by those outside the Church. In particular, Fundamentalists and other “Bible Christians” often confuse the charism of papal “infallibility” with “impeccability.” They imagine Catholics believe the pope cannot sin.

Given these common misapprehensions regarding the basic tenets of papal infallibility, it is necessary to explain exactly what infallibility is not. Infallibility is not the absence of sin. Nor is it a charism that belongs only to the pope. Indeed, infallibility also belongs to the body of bishops as a whole, when, in doctrinal unity with the pope, they solemnly teach a doctrine as true. We have this from Jesus himself, who promised the apostles and their successors the bishops, the magisterium of the Church: “He who hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16), and “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matt. 18:18).

Vatican II explained the doctrine of infallibility as follows: “Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter’s successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively.

Infallibility belongs in a special way to the pope as head of the bishops (Matt. 16:17–19; John 21:15–17). As Vatican II remarked, it is a charism the pope “enjoys in virtue of his office, when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (Luke 22:32), he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals. Therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly held ir-reformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter.”

The infallibility of the pope is not a doctrine that suddenly appeared in Church teaching; rather, it is a doctrine which was implicit in the early Church. In fact, the doctrine of infallibility is implicit in these Petrine texts: John 21:15–17 (“Feed my sheep ...”), Luke 22:32 (“I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail”) and Matthew 16:18 (“You are Peter ... ”).

Christ instructed the Church to preach everything he taught (Matt. 28:19–20) and promised the protection of the Holy Spirit to “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). That mandate and that promise guarantee the Church will never fall away from his teachings (Matt. 16:18, 1 Tim. 3:15), even if individual Catholics might.

Infallibility is not a substitute for theological study on the part of the pope. What infallibility does do is prevent a pope from solemnly and formally teaching as “truth” something that is, in fact, error. It does not help him know what is true, nor does it “inspire” him to teach what is true. He has to learn the truth the way we all do—through study—though, to be sure, he has certain advantages because of his position.

It is the Holy Spirit who prevents the pope from officially teaching error. If, as Christ promised, the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, then it must be protected from fundamentally falling into error and thus away from Christ. As Christ told his disciples: “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16).

Excerpted from a Catholic Answers tract on papal infallibility.
Conscience is one of those words that gets thrown around by people with surprising regularity. And it usually involves a firm declaration that “I am following my conscience” when they want to reject the teachings of the church that make them uncomfortable or that they don’t want to follow.

The conscience has been described as the judgment of the practical intellect in choosing a course of action that is good or bad when facing a specific decision. It is a basic capacity for moral discernment that responds not to subjective feelings but to objective principles, making a concrete decision in light of those principles. Emotions, our “feelings” should flavor, motivate and influence our Conscience, but not rule it!

Sadly, Conscience often seems, in the hands of those who wish to manipulate it for their own purposes, a pretty slippery objective. And apparent so often in the rationales of those who claim such recourse to their conscience is that “conscience” for them is a law into itself and a teacher of moral truth. Conscience, of course, is neither.

Rather, it is subject to moral truth and must be formed and informed through experience and critical investigations of the sources of moral wisdom. Seen in this way, here is the true definition of conscience: In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience … For man has in his heart a law written by God. (Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in our Modern World, #16)

We must act on our conscience, it is true, but first we must form that conscience properly. The conscience must be informed by sound, objective moral truths, based on the Gospel and firmly grounded in the tradition and teaching of the Church. It’s not a matter of the emotions or personal likes and dislikes. In order to act on the conscience, that conscience must be properly formed and informed by the light of Christ, shining in his Church, and written by the hand of God in our hearts. A great place to start is by reading the section on Christian Morality in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The End of Christendom

by Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen in 1974

“The world in which we live is the battleground of the Church. I believe that we are now living at the end of Christendom. It is the end of Christendom, but not of Christianity. What is Christendom? Christendom is the political, economic, moral, social, legal life of a nation as inspired by the gospel ethic. That is finished.

Abortion, the breakdown of the family life, dishonesty, even the natural virtues upon which the supernatural virtues were based, are being discredited. Christianity is not at the end. But we are at the end of Christendom. And I believe the sooner we face up to this fact, the sooner we will be able to solve many of our problems.

Thirty or forty years ago, it was very easy to be a Christian. The very air we breathed was Christian. Bicycles could be left on the front lawns; doors could be left unlocked. Suddenly, all this has changed; now we have to affirm our faith. We live in a world that challenges us. And many fall away.

Dead bodies float downstream; it takes live bodies to resist the current. And this is our summons. We will have to begin a different church. We are for a moment on a trapeze. We are in between the death of an old civilization and culture and the swing to the beginning of the new.

These are the times in which we live. They are therefore wonderful days; marvelous; we should thank God that we live in times like this.”
The Angel of Portugal

This year marks the centennial of the Apparitions of the Angel of Portugal to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. On three occasions in 1916, the three children were visited by this celestial messenger. The world was in chaos. World War I was tearing Europe apart. The Mexican Revolution brought a string of horrors in its wake. Eugenecists such as Margaret Sanger were pushing birth control and forced sterilization. Pope Benedict XV appealed to heaven. He entreated all Catholics to invoke Our Lady under the title of Queen of Peace.

The Queen of Peace sent the Angel of Peace to three unknown children in a tiny village in rural Portugal. On his first appearance to the children he taught them to say: “My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love Thee. I beg Thee, for forgiveness for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love Thee.”

On the second visit of the Angel, he urged them to “Pray a great deal! The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary have merciful designs concerning you. Offer prayers and sacrifices constantly to the Most High!” He identified himself as the Angel of Portugal and urged them to draw peace upon their country by sacrifices.

The third apparition occurred in the autumn of 1916. There appeared a chalice with drops of blood falling into it. The angel prostrated himself before the chalice, saying this prayer three times: “Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly and offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the insults, sacrileges and indifference with which He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred heart and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg Thee for the conversion of poor sinners.” After rising up he took the chalice and the host. He gave the host to Lucia and the contents of the chalice to Jacinta and Francisco.

The three children were totally transformed by the last apparition of the angel. It was the final preparation for the coming of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917. It was years later that Lucia would relate the apparitions of the Angel of Portugal in 1916.


It’s Not about the Priest

by Cardinal George Pell

The most obvious day-to-day change following Vatican II took place in the liturgy, where the transition into the vernacular for the celebration of the sacraments was not explicitly mandated by the Council itself. I suspect that not many of the Council Fathers anticipated that our liturgies would so quickly resemble, at least on the surface, Protestant Eucharists rather than the Tridentine Mass. Pope John XXIII had only expected that a portion of the Mass would be celebrated in the vernacular.

On that point, it has been pleasing to see, some 40 years later, how the new translation has improved the quality and fidelity of the English text of the liturgy to the Latin original. More importantly, this more sacral language has helped turn us more towards transcendence, the worship of the one true God. Christ should always be at the center of the Mass, rather than the priest.

As a consequence, I strongly support placing a crucifix between the people and the officiating priest and would support a return to the practice of the celebrant facing east, with his back to the people. This would make it abundantly clear that whoever is at the center of the celebration, it is not the priest.
Upcoming Speakers for Catholic Forum Luncheons—Spring, 2016

June 10—Dr. Alan Carlson is founder and president emeritus of The Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society. He also created the World Congress of Families project. Full congresses have been held in Prague (1997), Mexico City (2004), Warsaw (2007) and Madrid (2012), among other cities. The Vatican’s Pontifical Council on the Family has been an active partner in all of these events. Dr. Carlson has written 15 books on marriage and family issues, most recently The Natural Family. His articles have appeared in hundreds of periodicals. Currently, he is editor-in-chief of The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy and a senior editor of Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity. The subject: Does the American Family Actually Have a Bright Future?

NO LUNCHEON IN JULY

August 12—Nick Costello, president of Home to Enhance African Life, Inc. (HEAL), serving orphans, widows and rural villagers in Nigeria and Cameroon. Nick’s sales background, with accompanying skills, now serves his mission work for these disadvantaged members of the Body of Christ. He graduated from Notre Dame with a degree in business administration as is a former seminarian of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The subject: Following Jesus to Africa.


Are Catholics Christians?

[The Catholic Answer ~ February, 2016]

For years, Protestants, especially Evangelical Christians, have been telling people that Catholics are not Christians. The fact is: Catholics are Christians. In fact, we are the very first Christians. And we who call ourselves Catholic are no less Christian than Lutherans who call themselves Lutherans, or Methodists who call themselves Methodists, etc.

A primary argument is historical. The Protestant denominations are all less than 500 years old in terms of their founding. The human founders of these denominations such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, et al., broke away from Catholicism, “protesting” the Church (hence the self-imposed name, “Protestant”), and/or each other. Furthermore, their existence is a relatively recent historical phenomenon in the more than 2,000 years of Christian history.

The Catholic Church, which includes Roman (Latin-rite) Catholics and Eastern-rite Catholics were not founded by mere human beings, but by the Lord Jesus Christ, and built on the rock of St. Peter (see Matthew 16). In Acts 11:26, we are told, “It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.” This declaration and description was made of the Church more than 1,500 years before any Protestant denominations ever existed. Hence, the Catholic Church has borne the title “Christian” long before any breakaway groups ever used the term to describe themselves. We do not deny they are Christians and neither should they deny that of us, for the reasons stated. Catholics are Christians to be sure, the first Christians.

St. Isaac Jogues Bulletin—March 6, 2016
There was a recent article about Fr. Hans Kung, whose license to teach in a Catholic Institution was withdrawn in 1979, expressing his excitement about receiving a personal reply from Pope Francis. Fr. Kung had asked for an “open and impartial discussion on infallibility of the pope and bishops.” He said the Church has exhibited an “incapacity for reform at all levels, the ‘decisive reason’ is still the doctrine of infallibility of church teaching, which has bequeathed a long winter on our Catholic church.” A curious subject in these times! I have included a brief definition of infallibility in this newsletter. Without infallibility protected by the Holy Spirit, wouldn’t the Catholic Church become just another protestant sect? Wouldn’t such a discussion and its results undermine Pope Francis’ own papacy? I can’t wait to see what happens with that suggestion!

2017 will be the centennial of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima to three children in a rural town in Portugal. The children were prepared for the Blessed Mother’s visits by the Angel of Portugal in 1916—not as well-known and only related much later by Lucia. We will be revisiting the history of Fatima in the coming months.

Our annual dinner will be on September 28th. Mark your calendar! Our featured speaker, Archbishop Timothy Broglio, will be speaking on religious freedom in the military and in our society in general. Don’t forget to do your Father’s Day shopping on Amazon.Smile.com. You only have to designate Catholic Citizens of Illinois one time, on your first visit to the site, and we will receive 0.5 percent of all qualified purchases. We are grateful for your support!