Fr. Rutler’s Weekly Column

FEBRUARY 3, 2019—The mayor of a French town commissioned a statue of the rationalist Emile Zola and, intent on provocation, he ordered that the bronze for it be from the bells of a church. Similarly, Governor Andrew Cuomo chose to sign into law our nation’s most offensive abortion bill on the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, to ecstatic applause in the state capitol. Then he ordered that the Empire State Building, the Freedom Tower and the Alfred E. Smith Building in Albany be lit in pink. The ancient Caesars dressed in red as the emblem of victory; Cuomo drapes himself in pink.

Mark the ironies: The Freedom Tower is at the site of the memorial to the dead of 9/11 and listed on it are eleven “unborn babies” killed with their mothers. And Al Smith would have resigned rather than endorse infanticide.

In Orwellian “Newspeak,” just as a concentration camp was called a “Joycamp,” the killing of innocent unborn infants is sanctioned by a “Reproductive Health Act.” Now it is legal to destroy a fully formed baby one minute before birth and, should it survive a botched attempt to cut it up, there is no requirement to provide medical help. The abortionist does not even have to be a medical doctor.

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The legislation was deferred over years by politicians who, if not paragons of empathy, were appalled by its excess. It has only passed because the Democrats now control both houses of the New York state legislature. Politics aside, the governor teased a religious question. Not only does he mention that he once was an altar boy, but he concluded the signing celebration by telling the legislators, “God bless you.”

Perhaps he is succumbing to the temptation that some of the senators of Rome detected as evidence of decadence: the apotheosis, or divinizing of emperors in an Imperial Cult complimentary to the traditional deities. Andrew Cuomo, over the objections of more than 100,000 petitioners, named the Tappan Zee replacement bridge in honor of his father. In the dark ages, there was a superstition that a bridge could only be safe if a sacrificial victim was buried in its foundation. There are many innocent bones that could be buried under the Mario Cuomo Bridge, and his son perpetuates the cult.

Doctor Edward Peters, one of our nation’s most venerable canon lawyers, has written: “Penal jurisdiction in this matter rests with the bishop of Albany (as the place where some or all of the canonically criminal conduct was committed, per Canon 1412), and/or with the archbishop of New York (as the place where Cuomo apparently has canonical domicile, per Canon 1408).”

These matters are beyond the ken or jurisdiction of a parish priest, but it is clear that it is not sufficient for Churchmen blithely to suppose that an adequate response to the massacre of innocents by the inversion of reason is nothing more than an expression of “profound sadness.”
Cardinal Burke Condemns Alpha Program

Cardinal Raymond Burke has condemned the Alpha Program now used in thousands of Catholic parishes in 70 countries as a tool for evangelization and catechesis.

As the international director of the Marian Catechist Apostolate, Cardinal Burke was asked in December of 2015 to review the Alpha Program for its possible use by Catholics. After doing so, the cardinal issued this sobering warning: “Having studied the program, both from the perspective of doctrine and methodology, I must make it clear that the program may not be used, in any form, in the Marian Catechist Apostolate and that Marian Catechists are not to become involved with it.”

Cardinal Burke, former head of the Apostolic Signatura, added that gimmicks and new-fangled programs aren’t what’s needed in drawing souls to Christ. “While, like so many similar programs,” said the cardinal, “Alpha may seem to offer a more attractive and effective form of evangelization and catechesis, it does not have the doctrinal and methodological foundations required for the teaching of the Catholic Faith.” He also recalled that Pope St. John Paul II had warned against trying to make converts or reverts by using new programs that don’t rely on the inspiring power of Christ’s teachings.

The cardinal was referring to the 2001 Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte in which John Paul II wrote, “We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you!”

The sainted pope added:

“It is not, therefore, a matter of inventing a ‘new programme.’ The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its center in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in Him we may live the life of the Trinity and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures … This programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium.”

Note: Alpha was first introduced in the Archdiocese of Chicago in October of 2018 as part of the Renew My Church initiative of Cardinal Blase Cupich.

Wise Advice from an American President

“We should insist that if the immigrant who comes here does in good faith become an American and assimilates himself to us he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed or birthplace or origin. But this is predicated upon the man’s becoming in very fact an American and nothing but an American …. There can be no divided allegiance here.

Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn’t an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag …. We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language …. and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.”

—Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919)
26th President of the United States of America
I guess there is a new ad campaign by a shaving company that explains to us how men and women should be to each other. Actually, I think it is about something called “toxic masculinity.” I cannot define “toxic masculinity”—because that is a phrase invented by the same people who have spent the last 100 years poisoning men and women and making them toxic to each other—with their vulgar movies—dirty television, obscene comedians with their relentless pursuit of sterile sex—and when all else fails—their devotion to abortion.

And now these corporations—our erstwhile masters—are going to tell us all about men and women and how they should relate to each other? I don’t think so. I do not intend to accept the teachings of a soap company about how men and women should be.

I will listen to the Bible which is the Word of God. And I will listen to Jesus, and I will learn the teachings of His Catholic Church including her teachings against contraception. That is how I will learn how God wants us to be with each other.

Look at our Gospel today, the Wedding Feast at Cana (January 17, 2019). This is where Jesus turned the water into wine. I never tire of saying that the ultimate reason that Our Lord performed miracles was to prove that He was God so that we would understand that what He teaches is not just a bunch of words—not just some theory or some opinion of some itinerant preacher—but teachings from God Himself.

Therefore, you could look at Jesus’ miracle at the wedding feast of Cana as God’s approval of the human institution of marriage. It was God saying that faithful, permanent marriage, between a man and a woman, for the purpose of having children is from God Himself. Eventually Our Lord would make marriage a sacrament.

But it is clear: marriage is central to human life. Not just adjunct—not just an afterthought. But central. It is the institution which God has given to us that we might continue the human race.

Marriage tells us the reason there are genders—why there are men and women. Marriage tells us how men and women must be with each other and for each other—not only during courtship—but after marriage itself for their sake and the sake of their children.

So, what does marriage and the Bible and Jesus and the Church teach us about men and women? The teaching is simple. The man—including young men who are not married but one day will be married—must always look upon the woman—as his future partner who will be the future mother of their children. He must respect her and treasure her and learn to use his manly strength and his male instincts to take care of her and to protect her.

Oh yes—he must even put her on a pedestal—to make sure that no harm comes to her. For she is the mother—or potential mother—of the human race. If you are old enough, you will remember a time when this attitude was common. You will remember when men opened doors for women and allowed them to go first—when men tipped their hats as they passed a woman on the streets—when men would stand up the moment a woman entered the room.

This was the sacred and beautiful deference that men paid to women as the bearers of life—the linchpin of the family—the keeper of humanity and the first teachers of all of us in the ways of God.

If there is toxic masculinity anywhere—it is where there is no religion—no church—no prayers—no understanding about family and marriage and the need for marriage—and—ultimately—no... continued on page 4
Did you know that there are today in this country more children born out of wedlock than are born to intact families? That more children than not are being raised in homes without a father. What that means is that while men and women are coming together and having children—they are not staying together.

He leaves as soon as he wants. The woman for such a man has become the person with whom he relieves his tensions. She is no longer the mother of his children—the heart of the family, she is simply the female to whom—at this fleeting moment—he is attracted.

When marriage is no longer part of the program—when men do not commit to the woman—in respect and duty and sacrifice—and love—for life and faithfully—neither do they commit to the children of their numerous unions. Men learn from this kind of modern selfish pleasure-driven society of ours that all that is ok—that they can go from house to house and apartment to apartment and bed to bed—and there are no ties—no bonds—no promises—just taking.

That’s when you have the modern spectacle of no family—no marriage—and you really end up with no future. That’s when we see this thing called toxic masculinity—and—why not? Toxic femininity. And what is it? That is the way of life where men and women treat each other not as potential spouses and father of my children! and mother of my children!—but as objects, objects of pleasure—objects of desire—and take it as you can!

When there is no father to discipline the children and show them how a man is supposed to be—that’s when you get gangs and drugs and shootings and dysfunctional high schools and out-of-control children who are wild in the streets—and why are they in the streets? Because there is no home for them!

And there is no home without a family and there is no family without a father to pull the children in and bring them home and sit them down in the kitchen and tell them—especially the boys—right from wrong—and how they must be virtuous and decent and caring and protective of all the females in their lives—first their mothers and then their sisters and then their girlfriends.

That’s what a father does, and he teaches his sons best by the way he treasures their mother. No we don’t need soap companies to tell our men how to be men. We have God—who gave us marriage. We have Jesus who made marriage a sacrament. We have baptized men and women—who make marriage and family a reality. We don’t need more than that.
Nine Tips for a Faith-filled 2019

Want a deeper bond with God? Spend time with the saints, confess and say “thank you” … Looking for a great New Year’s resolution? How about doing something to strengthen your faith in the coming year. Here are nine ways to begin …

1. Deepen your relationship with Jesus: The best way to strengthen your relationship with Jesus is through attendance at Sunday Mass and a frequent Confession. And, spend time with Jesus, alone. Establish the habit of making frequent visits and holy hours in the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. Also … read the gospels. Read a passage. Reflect on what the passage says about Jesus. Ask yourself how the passage speaks to your life. But, make sure you have the entire Bible … be sure your Bible is a Catholic Bible.

2. Allow the Lord’s Spirit to guide you: Sometimes, we’re too distracted to hear the Spirit of God speaking to us and leading us. Start “listening” by jotting down any spiritual insights that came to you in the readings, homily, prayers, music or in your Communion meditation. Before long, you will begin to see how the Holy Spirit is guiding you.

3. Study and emulate the Saints: In spite of the same trials and tribulations we all face, the saints remained faithful. They are spiritual heroes. Read their stories for inspiration.

4. Pray: Set aside a specific time each day for prayer. Prayer is conversation with God.

5. Use a spiritual journal: Take a few moments at the end of each day to keep a spiritual journal. Imagine that you are writing a letter to God. Record the ways you experienced Him during the day. Keep track of special intentions, the names of people who need special prayers, and make a list of virtues to cultivate and habits to break.

6. Go to Confession: The Sacrament of Penance helps you to let go of whatever guilt, doubts or sinfulness you have been carrying. You’ll come away from the sacrament with a deep sense of peace and well-being.

7. Do something for someone: When you do something for someone else, give to the Church or charity, you are putting your faith in action. Reaching out to others is so important that Jesus says that anything we do for someone else, we do for him.

8. Forgive: Forgiveness is good for you. The other person may not want or deserve your forgiveness. Forgiveness does not even mean that you condone what happened. It means that you make a conscious decision to let go of anger, resentment and desire for revenge. It is not easy. It begins with the desire to forgive [because God is forgiving of you], and the commitment to God that you don’t want your life to be defined by something bad that happened in the past.

9. Say thank you: Cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Be thankful for all the good God has done for you. Grateful people develop a deep sense of faith because they see that everything in life is a gift from a gracious God.

Good Lent to All!

by Pope Benedict XVI

While we hasten to undertake the austere Lenten journey, we want to invoke with particular confidence the protection and help of the Virgin Mary. May she, the first believer in Christ, be the one who accompanies us in these 40 days of intense prayer and sincere penance, to be able to celebrate, purified and completely renewed in mind and spirit, the great mystery of her Son’s Easter. Good Lent to all!
The waters have risen and severe storms are upon us, but we do not fear drowning, for we stand firmly upon a rock. Let the sea rage, it cannot break the rock. Let the waves rise, they cannot sink the boat of Jesus. What are we to fear? Death? Life to me means Christ, and death is gain. Exile? The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord. The confiscation of goods? We brought nothing into this world, and we shall surely take nothing from it. I have only contempt for the world’s threats; I find its blessings laughable. I have no fear of poverty, no desire for wealth. I am not afraid of death, nor do I long to live except for your good. I concentrate therefore on the present situation, and I urge you, my friends, to have confidence.

Do you not hear the Lord saying: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst? Will he be absent, then, when so many people united in love are gathered together? I have his promise; I am surely not going to rely on my own strength! I have what he has written; that is my staff, my security, my peaceful harbor. Let the world be in upheaval. I hold to his promise and read his message; that is my protecting wall and garrison. What message? Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!

If Christ is with me, whom shall I fear? Though the waves and the sea and the anger of princes are roused against me, they are less to me than a spider’s web. Indeed, unless you, my brothers, had detained me, I would have left this very day. For I always say “Lord, your will be done”; not what this fellow or that would have me do, but what you want me to do. That is my strong tower, my immovable rock, my staff that never gives way. If God wants something, let it be done! If he wants me to stay here, I am grateful. But wherever he wants me to be, I am no less grateful.

Yet where I am, there you are too, and where you are, I am. For we are a single body, and the body cannot be separated from the head nor the head from the body. Distance separates us, but love unites us, and death itself cannot divide us. For though my body die, my soul will live and be mindful of my people.

You are my fellow citizens, my fathers, my brothers, my sons, my limbs, my body. You are my light, sweeter to me than the visible light. For what can the rays of the sun bestow on me that is comparable to your love? The sun’s light is useful in my earthly life, but your love is fashioning a crown for me in the life to come.

Concluding Prayer

Lord God, strength of those who hope in you, by your will Saint John Chrysostom became renowned in the Church for his astounding eloquence and his forbearance in persecution. Grant that we may be enriched by his teaching and encouraged by the example of his unconquerable fortitude. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Office of Readings, Feast of St John Chrysostom, 13-09-2018

“History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline.”

—Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964)

supreme commander of the Allied Forces in the Pacific during WWII.
Called to Bear Witness

by Archbishop William E. Lori, archbishop of Baltimore (Columbia Magazine / June 2018)

Preach always, and when necessary, use words .... One of the most effective ways to spread the faith is to live the faith with integrity and joy whether we are in public or in private. But good example, important as it is, is not enough. Words are almost always necessary—let me illustrate why this is so.

What if you complained that your spouse never said the words “I love you”? If your spouse responded, “I don’t have to—I show my love to you every day,” I’m going to guess you wouldn’t be satisfied with such an answer. Husbands and wives need to say “I love you.” Wouldn’t life at home be better if, every day, parents told their children of their love and vice versa? Just saying so makes a difference—especially on a day when nothing has gone right. So too, when it comes to the Lord and the Gospel, we are sometimes tempted to use the words ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi as a cop-out: Preach always, and when necessary, use words ....

We tell ourselves that if we lead good lives we’ve done our part to support the Church and its mission. No need to engage in discussions about religion, which can sometimes be heated. No need to challenge those who no longer practice the faith, including members of our own immediate family. “Why harangue them?” we ask ourselves. “It’ll do more harm than good.” Well, let’s take haranguing off the table. Pester and berating those who do not take their faith seriously is not likely to succeed. But we are called to speak about the faith to others with accuracy, confidence and joy. St. Paul puts it this way: “for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?” (Rom 10:13-14).

Thinking about St. Paul’s words, one might say, “Great! I’m off the hook. I’m a layperson, not a priest. I don’t have to preach. Priests are supposed to do that.” My reply: “Not so fast!” Didn’t St. Peter exhort the whole Church, “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope”? (1 Pt 3:15). His words were not limited to priests and religious; they were addressed to every member of the Church.

Nevertheless, we may still be reluctant to speak about our faith to others. After all, fewer people these days identify themselves as believers. Some feel they can get through life just fine without God or at least without any form of organized religion. Others think that all institutions, especially large ones such as the Catholic Church, are corrupt and out of touch. So, we ask ourselves, “What can I possibly say to such people?” In a recent meeting, a colleague lamented how difficult it is to spread the Gospel in the current cultural climate. Another colleague agreed but added, “Spreading the Gospel in the pagan culture of the Roman Empire wasn’t exactly a picnic!”

Like those who went before us, we may experience ridicule and rejection when trying to share the Gospel. But let’s not forget two things. First, the Lord promised he’d never leave us (cf. Mt 28:20). In the power of the Holy Spirit, he walks with us and empowers us. Second, in spite of the hard veneer of our culture, people are desperately searching for meaning and trying to make sense of their lives. Let us be confident that the Lord and the Gospel have something critically important to say to such people. He really does want us to be his messengers of hope and joy. For in becoming one of us and in dying to save us from our sins, the Son of God has shown us the ultimate meaning
Our Most Important Work

Bishop Thomas Olmstead, in his introduction of “Complete My Joy: An Apostolic Exhortation to the Husbands and Wives, Mothers and Fathers of the Diocese of Phoenix”:

When I consider the blessings that God has bestowed on me in my life, second only to my Baptism into Christ’s family is the blessing of being raised in a faithful and united Catholic family. My parents, Patrick and Helen, committed themselves to God in the vocation to Holy Matrimony, and this provided a stability for me to grow as their son and as a son of God. I, and my brothers and sisters, never worried about their commitment to God, to each other or to us. For this I am eternally grateful. Their motherly and fatherly acceptance of my life, that of my five siblings and the common, simple home life that we lived allowed God to form us and prepare us to follow His will.

Likewise, throughout my life as a priest, I can say that some of the most meaningful moments are those when God sent me to walk with and minister to families amidst the ups and downs of life. Family is likely where we feel the deepest joys as well as the deepest pain. This is because of the deep love that comes with family; it echoes our deep human need for love. In fact, I am convinced that the priestly work that we spiritual fathers do for the upbuilding of the family is our most important work. I think this more today than ever.

Restoring and Preserving the Sacred

by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (from Spirit of the Liturgy)

I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is, to a large extent, due to the disintegration of the liturgy. It is also worth observing here that the “creativity” involved in manufactured liturgies has a very restricted scope. It is poor indeed compared with the wealth of the received liturgy in its hundreds and thousands of years of history. Unfortunately, the originators of homemade liturgies are slower to become aware of this than the participants ....

Witness continued from page 7 and destiny of our lives.

Maybe we hesitate to speak of our faith to others because we feel unprepared. We may feel that our formation in the faith was inadequate, that there are “holes” in our religious education. Or we may feel that we are not sufficiently advanced in the spiritual life to invite others to consider, or reconsider, the faith. So, we’d rather leave spreading the Gospel “to the experts”—that is, to priests and religious.

The fact is, though, we all have to do our part. We need to equip ourselves for the work of spreading the Gospel. We don’t need a theology degree, but we do need to pray every day, read Scripture prayerfully, take part in the Mass attentively, go to confession regularly, and know and love our faith more deeply. As we speak about the faith, our deeds have to match our words; it’s no good to speak about the faith and not to live it. And if we are living the faith, we should be willing to speak of it.
In the House of Prayer
St Pio of Pietrelcina

In order to avoid irreverence and imperfections in the house of God, in church—which the Divine Master calls the “house of prayer”—I exhort you in the Lord to practice the following:

Enter the church in silence and with great respect, considering yourself unworthy to appear before the Lord’s Majesty. Then take Holy Water and make the Sign of the Cross carefully and slowly.

As soon as you are before God in the Blessed Sacrament, devoutly genuflect. Once you have found your place, kneel down and render the tribute of your presence and devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Confide all your needs to Him along with those of others. Speak to Him with filial abandonment, give free rein to your heart, and give Him complete freedom to work in you as He thinks best. Be modest in your glances; don’t turn your head here and there to see who enters and leaves. Don’t laugh, out of reverence for this holy place and also out of respect for those who are near you. Try not to speak to anybody, except when charity or strict necessity requests this.

On leaving the church, you should be recollected and calm. Firstly, take your leave of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; ask his forgiveness for the shortcomings committed in his Divine presence, and do not leave him without asking for and having received his paternal blessing.

Pray Unceasingly …
The Catholic Custom of lighting Votive Candles

Votive Candles are an ancient symbol in the Church for watching and waiting. We say a prayer for a particular intention when we light a votive candle in our church. The candle continues to burn after we leave as a sign that God has not forgotten nor have we, and our prayer continues to rise toward heaven. Our continuous prayer is left in God’s house. The candle burns, its light piercing the darkness—it is spent spreading light and keeping our prayer “alive.” So, we spend ourselves spreading the light of Christ in the world and keeping our faith-life alive and active. That’s why we make an offering to light a candle: the element of sacrifice, of some sort, is part of a votive offering. This beautiful and ancient tradition helps to strengthen our faith and our hope, because in love we come to the Lord with all our needs. He will never abandon us. When you light the candles, make your offering, and say your prayer. Pray, also, for the strength of faith to accept God’s will in your life. We ask the intercession of the saints; we ask them to pray for us and with us that we, like them, will be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

A Prayer for Lighting a Votive Candle

Blessed Lord, accept this burning candle as a sign of my faith and love for you. Like this candle, I am ready to be used in your service, without asking why and to what purpose. Even as this candle, I wish to stand in your presence to be consumed in the light and warmth of your love. Hear my prayer and, if it is your will, grant my petition. But above all make me loyal and faithful to you in my life. Amen.
The March for Life and the Boys from Covington Catholic

by Mary Anne Hackett

The annual March for Life took place in Washington, D.C. As usual, even though the two Women’s Marches the next day received round-the-clock coverage, very little was said about the March for Life. One report said a few thousand attended the March for Life—the actual count was around 600,000.

Despite ignoring the March for Life, the media spent plenty of time on the confrontation between Native American agitators, Black “Israelites” and a group of high school boys from Covington Catholic High School. A misleading video portrayed Nathan Phillips, Native American activist, as the victim who was peacefully protesting until being mobbed by kids in Make America Great Again hats—nearly the opposite of the truth.

Later and more complete videos showed the full story and exonerated the boys. It soon became clear that these young men from Covington showed remarkable respect and restraint to a group of agitators. Behavior that all parents could be proud of.

Before completing this story, let me tell you about the March for Life. My husband and I have attended over 35 of the marches in the 46 years since Roe v. Wade. In the early years, most of the marchers were in their forties or older, but faithful year after year to the cause of life. The March has been growing every year, but the difference now is that it is overwhelmingly young people—young families, high school and college students, young adults. These people love life; they defend the unborn and their mothers—people they will probably never meet—because defending the innocent is the right thing to do. They learned it in their home; they learned it in their schools, and they learned it from their Church. They know what babies are, and they know it is wrong to kill them.

Many of the young people were probably taken by their parents to the March for Life in a stroller or as a grade-school child. They are ready now to take their places in the battle for life.

But that is the frightening thing for the media and the pro-abortion organizations. They look at the March for Life, and they see the future of the pro-life movement—young, willing to stand for Life and dedicated to overturning Roe v. Wade and putting an end to abortion in America.

We know what the media wants to do—connect the March for Life to the despised Donald Trump by referring to the MAGA hats and the supposed bad behavior of the marchers. We know the motives of the media, but what about the Church?

The young boys from Covington Catholic showed respect and restraint to the people who were “in their faces.” But what about the Church? What about Covington Catholic School? Criticism and threats of expulsion were the order of the day. This is the school that knew the boys as students but immediately believed the worst.

What about the bishops of Kentucky, so eager to give the “right” answers to the deceitful media, so eager to distance themselves from boys wearing MAGA hats, so strong in their dislike of President Trump, they jumped on the bandwagon. They forgot they were “shepherds of the flock” and quickly threw the boys “under the bus.”

I hope and pray that this inglorious display of cowardice by the school and bishops will not diminish the faith of these young men in their Church. I hope they will understand that the courage they themselves showed is not always the order of day. May their faith be strengthened for future battles they will face in the life ahead. God bless them and their families!
Upcoming Speakers

March 8—Dr. Paul G. Kengor is professor of political science at Grove City College and executive director of the college’s Center for Vision & Values. A New York Times best-selling author of over a dozen books, Kengor is also a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. His most recent book is A Pope and a President: John Paul II, Ronald Reagan and the Extraordinary Untold Story of the 20th Century. He also published Takedown: From Communists to Progressives, How the Left Has Sabotaged Family and Marriage, a shocking chronology of how the far left has sought to take down natural-traditional-biblical marriage and family, culminating in its embrace of same-sex marriage as the long-sought vehicle—one that has mainstream public support—to finally succeed in redefining marriage and family, as well as attacking religion. That will be the subject of his talk.

April 12—Mary Rice Hasson is the Kate O’Beirne Fellow in Catholic Studies at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. She also directs the Catholic Women's Forum, a network of Catholic professional women and scholars seeking to amplify the voice of Catholic women in support of human dignity, authentic freedom and Catholic social teaching. She was the keynote speaker for the Holy See during the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in both 2017. She speaks frequently at national conferences as well as at regional family conferences and diocesan women’s conferences.

May 10—Rachel Fulton Brown, associate professor of medieval history at University of Chicago, focuses on the intellectual and cultural history of Europe in the Middle Ages, with particular emphasis on the history of Christianity in the Latin West with particular attention to the medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary. She is the author of From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary and most recently of Mary and the Art of Prayer, which will be the subject of her talk.

June 14—Dr. Peter Kwasniewski, Thomistic theologian, liturgical scholar and choral composer, is a graduate of St. Thomas Aquinas College in California and The Catholic University of America. He was on the founding team of Wyoming Catholic College where he taught theology, philosophy, music and art history and directed the choir and schola. He is now a full-time author, speaker, editor, publisher and composer. The subject of his talk will be: “What Good Is a Changing Catechism?: Revisiting the Purpose and Limits of a Book.”

July 12—Fr. Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap., is a highly regarded and accomplished American theologian who is former chief of staff for the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine and a current member of the Vatican’s International Theological Commission. He is the author of several books and numerous articles for both academic and popular publications. Fr. Weinandy made public a three-page letter he had sent to Pope Francis on July 31, 2017. The letter expresses Fr. Weinandy’s concerns about several aspects of the current pontificate, including the much-debated Chapter 8 of Amoris Laetitia, the Holy Father’s apparent low regard for Church doctrine, and the clear sense that many bishops “fear that if they speak their mind” about their concerns, “they will be marginalized or worse.” That will be the subject of his talk, including the sign he received from Our Lord that the letter should be written.

Winter 2019 Update

After ordering the bishops not to vote on a proposal to address the sexual abuse crisis in the Church at their semi-annual meeting in November of 2018, the pope announced a summit at the Vatican for all the heads of bishops conferences around the world for February 21–24, billed as Protecting Minors in the Church. The problem is that the sexual abuse crisis is not about minors, but about homosexual predation and adolescent boys and seminarians.

Cardinal Blase Cupich was appointed to lead the summit, and that raises some questions. At the meeting in November 2018, Cardinal Cupich brought up the difference between abuse of adolescents or consensual homosexual contacts, seemingly condoning the latter. The subject of all sexual activity outside of marriage being gravely sinful didn’t come up. He also supports giving Holy Communion to homosexual couples if they feel justified in their consciences. The Holy Father and Cardinal Cupich have identified the problem as clericalism—not homosexual abuse.

A new petition has been initiated by Ecclesia Dei and LifeSiteNews to rid the church of homosexual networks. It has already reached nearly 11,000 signatures and has recently been endorsed by Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Astana, Kazakhstan. I urge you to go to LifeSiteNews and sign the petition.

What can we do? Remember the Gospel reading about the storm and Jesus asleep in the boat? As a young priest in his recent homily stated: “It’s time to wake Jesus; there are pirates in the ship.” Pray that the summit will produce fruit that will last. Pray for our beloved Church and the protection of faithful priests and bishops. Pray for the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church.

Mass Obligation

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2181 The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.