Gerhard Cardinal Muller Issues Testimony of Faith

The German theologian, who was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith from 2012 to 2017, wrote what he called a “Manifesto of Faith: Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled” (John 14:1). The five-page manifesto was released to several Catholic news sites February 8, 2019. Following are excerpts.

To keep silent about the truths of the Catholic faith or to teach the contrary is form of religious deception that comes from the anti-Christ. The purpose of the Church and its members is to lead people to Jesus. And so, all Catholics, but especially priests and bishops, have a responsibility to recall these fundamental truths and to strengthen the Faith by confessing the truth which is Jesus Christ himself.

In the face of growing confusion about the doctrine of the Faith, many bishops, priests, religious and lay people of the Catholic Church have requested a public testimony about the truth of revelation. Pope St. John Paul II emphasized that “a sure norm for teaching the Faith “is the Catechism of the Catholic Church. But that teaching has been put to the test by what Pope Benedict XVI called the “dictatorship of relativism.” Quoting extensively from the Catechism, Cardinal Muller summarized five key tenets of Catholic doctrine: belief in the Trinity; the nature and authority of the Church; Christ’s presence in the sacraments; the “liberating truth” of moral law; and the reality of hell and promise of eternal life.

Many wonder today what purpose the Church still has in its existence, when even bishops prefer to be politicians rather than to proclaim the Gospel as teachers of the Faith. They have forgotten what Pope Benedict XVI has emphatically stated in the face of secularism: It is more important that we be faithful, not popular. The role of the Church must not be watered down by trivialities, but its proper place must be addressed.

Death and judgment must be remembered: A purification is still necessary for the person to enter in the blessedness of heaven. However, there is also the dreadful possibility that a person will remain opposed to God to the very end, and by definitely refusing his love, condemns himself immediately and forever. The eternity of the punishment of hell is a terrible reality, and it is the place where souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend.

Regarding the sacraments of the Church, it must be remembered that the truth revealed in Jesus is the point of reference, not the opinion of the majority or the spirit of the times. The task of the magisterium of the Church is to preserve God’s people from deviations and defections, so that they may profess the true Faith without error, particularly concerning the Church’s seven

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If We Believe Christ’s Promises

Excerpt from Fr John Zuhlsdorf’s response to a question, Fr Z’s Blog wdtprs.com 26-11-2019

I am not going to get into the arguments for or against Francis as pope or antipope. For what I have to say to the idea of leaving the Church because of him, one way or another, I don’t have to get into that controversy. Why? Holy Catholic Church is indefectible. This is one of the three attributes of the Church, along with authority and infallibility.

Your question holds two possible implications. First, “I don’t like Bergoglio, so I’m going somewhere else.” That’s just whining, like a kid who doesn’t like broccoli and goes hungry.

Otherwise, your implication is that if Francis isn’t really the pope, the Vicar of Christ, then somehow the Church is now defective and you might as well go someplace else. No. And no! And Hell no!

If we believe Christ’s promises—and I sure do—then we hold that the Church will not fail even to the end of the world when he returns to take all things to himself and submit them to the Father. The Petrine Ministry is part of the fabric of the Church as the Lord designed. Somehow, until the ending of the world, the Church—and hence the papacy—cannot fail, even though we don’t know how.

As necessary as the papacy is, a pope is Christ’s vicar, not Christ himself. As the sarcastic Latin acrostic puts it, a vicarius is Vir Inutilis Carens Auctoritate Rare Intelligentiae Umbra Superioris, that is, “A useless man, lacking authority, rarely of intelligence, the shadow of his superior.” That’s every pope, compared to Christ. It is dangerous to place too much emphasis on any pope .... For centuries people had no idea who the pope was, even his name, and they lived good Catholic lives, minding their own business and trying to be holy in their vocations .... Only one thing is clear about popes, and the Romans get this right: Muore un papa se ne fa un altro ... A pope dies, you make another. We make another until Christ returns. Somehow that’s the way our Church will always be even if we don’t like the choice.

When it comes to priestly ordination, it is not possible to ordain women. To imply that this impossibility is somehow a form of discrimination against women shows only the lack of understanding for his sacrament, which is not about earthly positions but the representation of Christ, the bridegroom of the Church. To keep silent about these and other truths of the Faith and to teach people what is contrary to the Faith is the greatest deception against which the Catechism vigorously warns.

Muller continued from page 1

sacraments. Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of reconciliation before coming to Communion. For example, and practically speaking, divorced and civilly remarried persons, whose sacramental marriage is considered valid before God, Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and those who are not “properly disposed” must not receive Communion.
An Obituary Printed in the London Times … Absolutely Dead Brilliant!!

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;
- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch, and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student, but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses, and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home, and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death, by his parents, Truth, and Trust, by his wife, Discretion, by his daughter, Responsibility, and by his son, Reason.

He is survived by his five stepbrothers; I Know My Rights, I Want It Now, Someone Else Is to Blame, I’m a Victim, Pay Me for Doing Nothing. Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone. If you still remember him, pass this on.

About Our Happiness

St John Henry Newman

God has determined, unless I interfere with his plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name; he knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and he means to give it to me …. the medicines necessary for our souls are very different from each other. Thus God leads us by strange ways; we know he wills our happiness, but we neither know what our happiness is, nor the way. We are blind; left to ourselves we should take the wrong way; we must leave it to him.
Initially, men are made new by the rebirth of baptism. Yet there is still required a daily renewal to repair the shortcomings of our mortal nature, and whatever degree of progress has been made, there is no one who should not be more advanced. All must therefore strive to ensure that on the day of redemption no one may be found in the sins of his former life.

Dear friends, what the Christian should be doing at all times should be done now with greater care and devotion, so that the Lenten fast enjoined by the apostles may be fulfilled, not simply by abstinence from food but above all by the renunciation of sin.

There is no more profitable practice as a companion to holy and spiritual fasting than that of almsgiving. This embraces under the single name of mercy many excellent works of devotion, so that the good intentions of all the faithful may be of equal value, even where their means are not. The love that we owe both God and man is always free from any obstacle that would prevent us from having a good intention. The angels sang: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. The person who shows love and compassion to those in any kind of affliction is blessed, not only with the virtue of good will but also with the gift of peace.

The works of mercy are innumerable. Their very variety brings this advantage to those who are true Christians, that in the matter of almsgiving not only the rich and affluent but also those of average means and the poor are able to play their part. Those who are unequal in their capacity to give can be equal in the love within their hearts.

The Ringing of Church Bells

The use of bells in the Church dates back to the fifth century, when Saint Paulinus, the Bishop of Nola, introduced them as a means to summon monks to worship. In the seventh century, Pope Sabinianus approved the use of bells to call the faithful to the Mass. The Venerable Bede, an English saint of the eighth century is credited with the introduction of bell ringing at Requiem Masses. By the ninth century the use of bells had spread to even the small parish churches of the western Roman Empire. Church bells are rung to create a joyful noise to the Lord as described in Psalm 98:4 “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth in joyous song and sing praises!”

Protected under the Constitution, church bells can ring whenever, as often, and as long as the Church wants them to ring.

The practice of ringing bells to create a joyful noise for the Lord is based to some degree on the use of tintinnabula (or tiny bells) that were part of the Judaic worship. Ringing the bells also gave notice to those unable to attend the Mass (the sick, slaves, outside guards, etc.) that something divine and miraculous was taking place inside the church building. The voice of the bell would allow people to stop what they were doing to offer an act of adoration to God. Additionally, the bells helped to focus the attention of the faithful inside the church on the miracle that was taking place on the altar of sacrifice.

“Let us understand that God is a physician, and that suffering is a medicine for salvation, not a punishment for damnation.”

—St Augustine of Hippo
Bringing God back into the World
by Lawrence P. Grayson

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia said in a 2010 address: “God has never been more absent from the Western mind than he is today. Additionally, we live in an age when ... there is a basic confusion about what—if anything at all—it means to be human.”

How do individual Catholic Americans react to this profound secularism? Most are indifferent, as long as it does not affect them personally. Oh, they may express interest in the events of the day or indignation at the latest atrocities, but they go no further. Jaded by a desire to assert the “self,” materialism and a drive for wealth, prestige and pleasure, they have organized their public and private lives in a totally temporal way. The result is a crisis of faith. God has become an afterthought, with one’s conscience, no matter how ill-formed, becoming the standard for personal behavior. Too many Catholics now lead their lives as if God does not exist, while others make a perfunctory commitment to religion just in case he does. This is the “modern day heresy” of Secularism which, according to Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis I must be resisted by the faithful.

Reversing this widespread secularism will not be easy. The world is brutal and indifferent, but is not too dissimilar from the one Our Lord sent the apostles to evangelize. He said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (Mt 10:28). And so, a courageous faith is necessary for all of us!

America, and indeed the world, must be reevangelized! God must be brought back into public consideration. We must remember that the freedom of religion in our nation is not freedom from religion. The secular world around us, lead by our elected officials, wishes to limit our religious freedom to a freedom of worship ... meaning, we’re free to worship as we please within the walls of our churches, but, we may not bring those religious beliefs into the world and allow them to permeate our institutions and activities. But, that evil of secularism and rejection of the principle of freedom of religion must be resisted and rejected.

Let us—you and I—lead this effort by example. Pray to Our Lord, for he never fails his people. Listen for his voice in your life. Detach yourself from the allure of the world, and with faith, say the simple proclamation: “Jesus, I trust in You!” Make the Rosary, Eucharistic adoration and frequent attendance at Mass the means to enable you to personally experience the love of our merciful savior and become his instrument to change our society.

Reprinted from the bulletin of St. Isaac Jogues Parish, Hinsdale

Hard Times
by Archbishop Charles Chaput, in an address to seminarians

The temptations to fear, anxiety, depression and fatigue are experiences we all share, especially in hard moments for the Church like today. Fear, like anger, is a good and healthy thing when it's in its proper place—and toxic when it's not.

So, do we really believe in Jesus Christ or not? That’s the central question in our lives. Everything turns on the answer. Because if our Christian faith really grounds and organizes our lives, then we have no reason to fear, and we have every reason to hope.
A Simple Way to Pray Always
by Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan

After my liberation many people said to me: “Father, in prison you must have had a lot of time to pray.” It was not as simple as one might think. The Lord permitted me to experience all my weakness, my physical and mental fragility. Time passes slowly in prison, particularly in solitary confinement. Imagine a week, a month, two months of silence .... There were days when I was so worn out by exhaustion and illness that I could not manage to say a single prayer! This reminds me of a story.

There was an older man named Jim who would go to church every day at noon for just a few minutes and then he would leave. The sacristan was very curious about Jim's daily routine, and one day he stopped him to ask: “Why do you come here every day?” “I come to pray,” Jim answered.

“That’s impossible! What prayer can you say in two minutes?” “I am an old ignorant man. I pray to God in my own way. ‘I say: ‘Jesus, here I am; it’s Jim.’ And then I leave.”

After some years, Jim became ill and had to go to the hospital where he was admitted to the ward for the poor. When it seemed that Jim was dying, a priest and a nurse, a religious sister, stood near his bed. The priest asked, “Jim, tell us how it is from the day you came to this ward everything changed for the better? How is it that patients have become happier, more content and friendlier?” “I don’t know. When I could walk around, I would try to visit everyone. I greeted them, talked a bit with them. When I couldn’t get out of bed, I called everyone over to me to make them laugh, to make them happy. With Jim they are always happy.”

“But why are you happy?” “Well aren’t you happy when you receive a visitor?” asked Jim. “Of course, but we have never seen anyone come to visit you.”

“When I came here, I asked you for two chairs. One was for you, Father, and one was reserved for my guest.” “But what guest?” the priest asked. “I used to go to church to visit Jesus every day at noon. But when I couldn’t do that anymore, Jesus came here.”

“Jesus comes to visit you? What does he say?” “He says: ‘Jim, here I am; it’s Jesus!’” Before dying, Jim smiled and gestured with his hand toward the chair next to his bed, as if inviting someone to sit down. He smiled for the last time and closed his eyes.

When my strength failed and I could not even pray, I repeated: “Jesus, here I am; it’s Francis.” Joy and consolation would come to me and I experienced Jesus responding: “Francis, here I am; it’s Jesus.”

Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan (2002) was imprisoned by the Vietnamese government for 13 years.

The Obligations and Rights of all Christ’s Faithful (Cannon Law)

Can. 212§1 Christ’s faithful are at liberty to make known their needs, especially their spiritual needs, and their wishes to the pastors of the Church.

Can. 212§3 They have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church. They have the right also to make their views known to others of Christ’s faithful, but in doing so they must always respect the integrity of faith and morals, show due reverence to the pastors and take into account both the common good and the dignity of individuals.

Can. 213 Christ’s faithful have the right to be assisted by their pastors from the spiritual riches of the Church, especially by the word of God and the sacraments.
Let’s Not Be Impressed

Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in an interview with Edward Pentin of the National Catholic Register, 23-09-2019

Edward Pentin: In recent years, the Church has suffered many controversies related to the questioning, according to some, of the Church’s moral teaching by Church leaders, for example on Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love), ignorance of the magisterium of John Paul II (which the Pontifical John Paul II Institute has recently modified in a clear manner), efforts to undermine Humanae Vitae (Human Life) and the revision of the death penalty, to name just a few. Why is this happening, and should the faithful be concerned?

Cardinal Sarah: We are facing a real cacophony from bishops and priests. Everyone wants to impose their personal opinion as a truth. But there is only one truth: Christ and his teaching. How could the doctrine of the Church change? The Gospel does not change. It is still the same. Our unity cannot be built around fashionable opinions.

The Letter to the Hebrews says: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good to have our hearts strengthened by grace and not by foods, which do not benefit those who live by them” (13:8–9)—because [of] “my doctrine,” says Jesus. “My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me” (Jn 7:16). God himself often repeats it to us: “I will not violate my covenant; the promise of my lips I will not alter. By my holiness I swore once for all” (Ps 89:35–36).

Some people use Amoris Laetitia to oppose the great teachings of John Paul II. They are mistaken. What was true yesterday remains true today. We must hold firmly to what Benedict XVI called the hermeneutic of continuity. The unity of faith implies the unity of the magisterium in space and time. When a new teaching is given to us, it must always be interpreted in coherence with the preceding teaching.

If we introduce ruptures, we break the unity of the Church. Those who loudly announce revolutions and radical changes are false prophets. They are not looking for the good of the flock. They seek media popularity at the price of divine truth. Let’s not be impressed. Only the truth will set us free. We must have confidence. The magisterium of the Church will never contradict itself.

When the storm rages, you have to anchor yourself to what is stable. Let us not chase after fashionable novelties that may fade before we have even been able to grasp them.

Liturgical Celebrations

Because the celebration of the Mass and sacraments, the liturgy, is the official act of worship of the Roman Catholic Church, the source and summit of the Christian life and true Christian spirit, its celebration is carefully and diligently safeguarded and legislated by the Church. The laws governing worship are binding on both priest and people, even if they are unaware of them, or don’t “agree” with them. The liturgy is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, and way Christ gives himself to his people. Because of this, every liturgy is a sacred action surpassing all others. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1964).

Canon law is very clear: The liturgical books, approved by the competent authority, are to be faithfully observed in the celebration of the Mass and the sacraments; therefore no one on personal authority may add, remove, (ignore) or change anything in them. (Canon Law #846.1.)
If He Was Only a Man, Then He Was Not Even a “Good” Man

Venerable Fulton Sheen, Life of Christ (p.7, 8)

… Christ does not fit, as the other world teachers do, into the established category of a good man.

Good men do not lie. But if Christ was not all that he said he was, namely, the Son of the living God, the Word of God in the flesh, then he was not “just a good man”; then he was a knave, a liar, a charlatan and the greatest deceiver who ever lived. If he was not what he said he was, the Christ, the Son of God, He was the anti-Christ! If he was only a man, then He was not even a “good” man.

But he was not only a man. He would have us either worship him or despise him—despise him as a mere man, or worship him as true God and true man. That is the alternative he presents.

It may very well be that the Communists, who are so anti-Christ, are closer to him than those who see him as a sentimentalist and a vague moral reformer. The Communists have at least decided that if he wins, they lose; the others are afraid to consider him either as winning or losing, because they are not prepared to meet the moral demands which this victory would make on their souls.

If he is what he claimed to be, a savior, a redeemer, then we have a virile Christ and a leader worth following in these terrible times; one who will step into the breach of death, crushing sin, gloom and despair; a leader to whom we can make totalitarian sacrifice without losing, but gaining freedom, and whom we can love even unto death. We need a Christ today who will make cords and drive the buyers and sellers from our new temples; who will blast the unfruitful fig-trees; who will talk of crosses and sacrifices and whose voice will be like the voice of the raging sea.

But he will not allow us to pick and choose among his words discarding the hard ones and accepting the ones that please our fancy. We need a Christ who will restore moral indignation, who will make us hate evil with a passionate intensity and love goodness to a point where we can drink death like water.

The Weight of a Priest

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the pontifical household, in his first Advent sermon 2019

A priest’s “specific weight” depends on his faith. His influence on others will be determined by his faith.

A priest’s, or pastor’s, task among his people is not simply that of distributing the sacraments and of service, but it is also that of enkindling faith and being a witness to it. He will really be one who guides and leads souls to God to the extent to which he believes and has given his freedom to God, as Mary did.

The essential thing that the faithful sense immediately in a priest or in a pastor is whether he believes or not, whether he believes in what he is saying and in what he is celebrating.

Whoever is seeking God through a priest will realize this immediately. Whoever is not seeking God through him may easily be deceived and, in turn, deceive the priest himself, making him feel important, clever, and with the times, whereas in fact he, too, may be empty, like the man without grace we mentioned in the last chapter. Even a nonbeliever who approaches a priest with a searching spirit immediately understands the difference. What can provoke him and cause him to positively query his way of life are not, generally speaking, the most gifted discussions on faith, but simple faith itself.

Faith is contagious. Just as contagion does not take place by simply talking about or studying a virus but by coming into contact with it, so it is with faith.
**Abortion, a Singular Injustice**
*by Monica Migliorino Miller, Citizens for a Pro-Life Society*

We could quote Church documents all day long, but let’s cut to the chase. When it comes to abortion the first thing to be considered is the horrific body count. No other grave injustice in America, or in the world, has claimed as many lives. In the United States over 60 million human beings have been put to death since 1973. No other group of people perishes at the rate of 3,000 per day as do the unborn. Moreover, no other group—even those who are victimized and oppressed—are formally declared by law to be “non-persons.” Only the unborn have been systematically and legally cast out of the human community. For the purposes of their right-to-life the unborn are reduced to the level of a thing; even worse than a thing, they are reduced to trash, their bodies treated as so much waste or sold for scientific research.

The unborn are the most oppressed group in America. Their oppression should shake us to the core of our souls as only these totally innocent persons are subjected to a violent obliteration protected by law. The injustice of abortion is staggering. And for all the foregoing reasons, even if the bishops never say so—abortion is the preeminent priority as a social justice issue. Thus it is incumbent on the shepherds of the Christ’s flock to guide the conscience of the Catholic voter to first take the injustice of abortion into account when selecting public officials.

**Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion**

Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, when he was prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, declared, in a document called, “Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion: General Principles,” 3:

Not all moral issues have the same weight as abortion and euthanasia. For example, if a Catholic were to be at odds with the Holy Father on the application of capital punishment or on the decision to wage war, he would not for that reason be considered unworthy to present himself to receive Holy Communion. While the Church exhorts civil authorities to seek peace, not war, and to exercise discretion and mercy in imposing punishment on criminals, it may still be permissible to take up arms to repel an aggressor or to have recourse to capital punishment. There may be a diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not however with regard to abortion and euthanasia.

**Aim of the Catechism**
*Catechism of the Catholic Church*

11 This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church’s Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church’s Magisterium. It is intended to serve “as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries.”

12 This work is intended primarily for those responsible for catechesis: first of all the bishops, as teachers of the faith and pastors of the Church. It is offered to them as an instrument in fulfilling their responsibility of teaching the People of God. Through the bishops, it is addressed to redactors of catechisms, to priests, and to catechists. It will also be useful reading for all other Christian faithful.
**The Conscience**

Conscience, simply put, is everyone’s equal access to objective truth. For most people, nowadays, conscience is the “right for everyone to hold their own subjective truth.” Erroneously, people seem to equate conscience with whatever a person thinks or feels. But, in fact conscience is much more than opinion or “how I feel.”

We not infrequently identify doctrine with conservativism and antiquity (which is often, for whatever reason, seen as an evil to be shunned). Something to be abandoned. And, on the contrary, we tend to think of “pastoral ministry” and interpretation in terms of adaptation, reduction and accommodation (the automatic “good” to go after). But we need to recognize the fact that not every innovation and new thought is good, or for the best. Rather, doctrine and pastoral application build on, compliment and rely on the other. They cannot exist apart from each other or cancel the other out.

Conscience can’t simply be reduced to whatever one thinks. In fact, it is often the role of our conscience to challenge what we think and feel. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes conscience as a deep sense of right and wrong, put into our hearts by the hand of God. The Catechism is not written for you, but will ask everything of you … it is the “pearl of great price!” and has much to teach us about the moral good to which we are called: “Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment … For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God …. His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths” (CCC, #1776).

Just as our conscience is not ruled by our passions, desires and “feelings,” nor is it ruled by our intellect alone. The conscience is much deeper than any one of the complex parts that makes up our “person.” The catechism says, “Conscience is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives” (CCC, #1778). What is very clear is that the conscience is, in a way, beyond us. The well-formed and well-informed conscience is the voice of God directing us, and challenging us through the gift of our God-given free will.

Since conscience involves the practical intellect and the virtue of prudence especially, it is proper to say that conscience can be “formed.” But “formed” does not mean it is acquired from scratch, or is a product of the emotions, passions, desires and feelings. There is good medical and scientific evidence, which conforms to the teaching of faith, that the conscience is present even in the youngest children who can readily and innately grasp basic moral principles. The “formation” of conscience, therefore, involves the learning necessary to listen well to conscience and apply its voice to moral acts in each and every circumstance. Conscience is also formed when we acquire better and deeper knowledge regarding complex moral situations.

*Reprinted from the bulletin of St. Isaac Jogues Parish, Hinsdale*

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Upcoming Speakers

March 13—Mr. J. P. DeGance, founder and president of Communio, an organization that increases human flourishing by equipping communities and churches to build proven strategies that strengthen families, marriages and faith. In a successful project in Florida, the divorce rate dropped by 28 percent in just two years and churches served by Communio’s efforts saw increases of more than 10,000 average weekly congregants over a two-year period. Prior to Communio, he worked with The Philanthropy Roundtable, working to strengthen our free society. The subject: Strengthening Families, Marriages and Faith.

April 10—Good Friday—No Luncheon

May 8—Canon Matthew Talarico is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Raymond Burke in June of 2007 for the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. Canon Talarico studied at the international seminary of the Institute of Christ the King in Florence, Italy. He is currently serving as Rector of the Shrine of Christ the King in Chicago, which is home to a 17th-century statue of Christ the Infant King. Canon Talarico is likewise the provincial superior for the Institute’s American Province. The subject of his talk for the month of May will be: Our Lady of Fatima.

June 12—Rev. D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D., is a senior research associate of the Ruth Institute. He recently retired as professor of sociology at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC. Dr. Sullins is a leader in the field of research on same-sex parenting and its implications for child development. He has written four books and over 100 journal articles, research reports and essays on issues of family, faith and culture. He is frequently consulted as an expert on the crisis in the Church, particularly with regard to homosexuals in the priesthood. Formerly Episcopalian, Dr. Sullins is a married Catholic priest.

July 10—Mr. Stephen Auth, The Missionary of Wall Street, was a long-standing Wall Street executive, frequent guest on CNBC, Fox Business News and a chartered financial analyst. Mr. Auth went from managing money to saving souls on the streets of New York City. For the last 10 years, he has led mission trips to Wall Street and has written a book about the experience. He describes his work as two rivers being your spiritual journey and your worldly journey coming together on your road to heaven. The subject: The Missionary of Wall Street.

Luncheons are at 11:45 A.M. at the Union League Club of Chicago, 65 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago. Tickets $40. Business Attire. Reservations required. Call Maureen at 708-352-5834. Please note: Luncheon tickets are now $40. Subscription tickets are also available—Buy five, get one free!

The Role of the Church

“The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963
Winter 2020 Update

The March for Life this year reported greater than ever numbers of participants. In an historic first this year, President Trump addressed the March in person and delivered an inspiring speech on the blessing of children as a creation of God and a gift of joy for a family. May our country once again recognize that truth.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the Pope’s Apostolic Letter on the Amazon Synod will have been released. Various and contradictory stories alternately report that Pope Francis will approve married priests and women deacons or that he will not. The German Synodal Path is ready to move to ordain married priests and women deacons, but pretend they are waiting for the pope to approve, although it is reported that their final reports are already written. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and Cardinal Sarah have produced a book defending and praising celibacy, From the Depths of Our Hearts, and have been subjected to attacks from many quarters of the Church. Cardinal Sarah recently stated, “Stop the attacks, Read the book.”

Don’t become discouraged, pray for the Church and remember Christ has promised to be with his Church until the end of time and the Blessed Mother has promised that her Immaculate Heart will triumph. As we approach the season of Lent, we can look upon it as a time of penance and reparation for our Beloved Church. Pope St. John Paul II always encouraged us: “Be not afraid.”

Evangelium Vitae

by Pope St. John Paul II

“We are in fact faced by an objective ‘conspiracy against life,’ involving even international institutions, engaged in encouraging and carrying out actual campaigns to make contraception, sterilization and abortion widely available. Nor can it be denied that the mass media are often implicated in this conspiracy, by lending credit to that culture which presents recourse to contraception, sterilization, abortion and even euthanasia as a mark of progress and a victory of freedom, while depicting as enemies of freedom and progress those positions which are unreservedly pro-life.”

He exhorted the world: “In the name of God: respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life! Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness!”