

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 8 September, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

Well, Labor Day Weekend is over, and we're back to the grind.

Hope everyone had a good time and managed to get some R&R.

I also hope that as the "rushing around" and "being busy" intensifies, you take some moments to collect yourselves in prayer from time to time.

Something like the following would be good:

O God,
I come to You as a child to its mother.
Listen to me, inside -
under my words, where the shivering is;
in the fears that freeze my living;
in the anger that can chaff my listening;
in my doubts, which chill my hoping;
in my pretenses, which stiffen my loving.

Listen to me, Lord, as a mother;
hold me warm and forgive me.
Soften my experiences into wisdom;
my pride into acceptance,
my longing into trust,
and soften me into love...
for others
and for You.

May God help each of you to stop what you're doing and learn how to trust, how to forgive and how to love.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

FATHER BURNS

will be invested as "Monsignor" by Archbishop Edwin O'Brien, of the Military Archdiocese, at the 1100 Mass on this coming Sunday. Everyone is invited.

PARISH PICNIC

The Fall PARISH PICNIC will be held at Camp Buckner this coming Sunday, 8 September,

starting at 1230. A bus will be provided for cadets who wish to attend; the bus will leave from the Supe's Box at 1230. Uniform is Gym-A.

9/11 MASS

On next Wednesday (11 Sept), a Memorial Mass will be offered at the Chapel at 1845 for all the victims of last year's tragedy. Uniform is AFC.

DID YOU KNOW?

CATHOLICS AMONG THE MORMONS:

(Part 2 of a 2-part series)

Last time, we sketched some basics about Mormon belief and history in Utah. This time, I'd like to list the basic beliefs of the Mormon faith. That way, you can compare them with your own sense of Catholic belief.

From the Latter-Day Saints "Articles of Faith":

- 1) We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
- 2) We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgressions.
- 3) We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
- 4) We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are:
first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;
second, Repentance;
third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins;
fourth, laying-on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- 5) We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying-on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer the ordinances thereof.
- 6) We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church: namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists and so forth.
- 7) We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues and so forth.
- 8) We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.
- 9) We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.
- 10) We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive

its paradisiacal glory.

- 11) We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may.
- 12) We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honoring and sustaining the law.
- 13) We believe in being honest, chaste, true, benevolent, virtuous and in doing good to all men.

Obviously, a Catholic would have little trouble with Number 11 or 13.

On the other hand, though, the Catholic view of Jesus and His message is very different from the Mormon view, and one can see this in other numbers above.

For example, Number 8 speaks about the Bible being the word of God, but it also talks about the Book of Mormon being the word of God as well. For a Catholic, the Bible (and the Church's Tradition of it) contain the essential "revelation" of God.

Or Number 10, which speaks about the restoration of Israel according to the Old Testament model, the establishment of "Zion" on the American continent and the return of Christ to rule the earth someday...all of this has nothing to do with Catholic understanding of the end-of-the-world.

And the Book of Mormon itself introduced innovations in Christian belief that are patently opposite to traditional Catholicism and (some would say) Christianity. These would include:

- a) human existence in a previous spirit-world;
- b) a finite, developing God;
- c) baptism of the dead;
- d) a view of the Trinity which Catholics would consider "tri-theism";
- e) marriage for time and eternity;
- f) humankind's eternal progression to godlike status;
- g) plural marriages;
- h) belief that the United States enjoys special "providential" status and that the US Constitution is divinely-inspired.

But just as there are wide differences, so too are there points of common understanding: Mormon sexual morality is pretty much the same as that of the Catholic Church (no extra-marital sex or homosexuality), as is the attitude toward the needy and helpless.

Mormons are against abortion, and they teach "doing good to all men and women".

They are well-known for healthy lifestyles and stress the importance of the family.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...all the victims of 9/11 and their families.

...anyone in the Corps who's carrying a heavy burden.

...all our military brothers and sister throughout the world - and their families - and especially those in areas of risk.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, I have a question about the Eucharist. After the bread has been consecrated at Mass, it's considered to be Christ. So when people pass it or come near to it, they generally genuflect because of their reverence for Christ's presence. This seems a little foreign to me because I've always considered Christ to be present in everything, all around. Is it OK to say that God is all around and that the bread then can become the Spirit of the humanly Jesus?

A: It's a good question that you ask, and I'd answer it by quoting from the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" on that topic:

The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique...In the Eucharist, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of Christ is truly, really and substantially contained. This Presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is 'presence' in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a SUBSTANTIAL presence by which Christ - God and human - makes himself wholly and entirely present.

#1374

So the Church asks us to think of different types of "presence" when we think about how God reveals Himself to us.

It might be easier to think of comparisons in the world of nature. When we are hypnotized by the beauty of a sunrise or a Fall afternoon - or when we're deeply moved by an emotional event or feel our lives transformed by deep love, it's easy for us to say that "we feel God's presence" in those situations, but we would not say that those situations are God.

The idea of "presence" can be hard to pin down.

God is indeed present in all those human situations, but we would feel a bit odd in claiming that those situations themselves are actually God.

But in the Eucharist, Catholic belief has always held that Jesus is totally present in the form of bread and wine, even though the bread and wine look and feel no different than they did before the words of consecration were spoken over them during the Mass.

Beneath the appearances of bread and wine is the Real Presence of Jesus of Nazareth.

We don't hide the fact that this is difficult to understand, that it is a mystery to us.

Nevertheless, this is what the Church has held from the beginning. This is why Catholics profess belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, while not denying his "presence" in other situations as well.

The Eucharist is the fullest expression of Jesus' "presence" among us, and that's why the Holy Eucharist is considered the center of the Church's life of faith.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

(Note: over the next 10 weeks of CHURCH STUFF, this space will be devoted to a discussion of each of the TEN COMMANDMENTS)

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them."

Exodus 20:2-5;

Deuteronomy 5:6-9

The Catholic tradition of interpreting the FIRST COMMANDMENT can be summarized by the following idea:

God's first call and just demand is that men and women
ACCEPT and WORSHIP him.

And the act of ACCEPTING and WORSHIPING God is built directly on the basic virtues of FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY. These three virtues underlie everything implied in the First Commandment.

Here's a breakdown:

The First Commandment obliges us to protect our FAITH, to nurture our HOPE, and to respond with CHARITY to God's overtures in our lives.

Violating the First Commandment means that we have weakened any or all of these three virtues.

How can one violate FAITH?

Here are the human acts that can eat away at FAITH:

- a) voluntary doubt - undermines the sense of FAITH;
- b) incredulity - it's basically skepticism, which refuses to believe anything;
- c) heresy - it denies a part of revealed truth;
- d) apostasy - repudiates FAITH totally;
- e) schism - cuts oneself off from the body of believers.

Granted, these sound pretty dramatic, but they're really a list of ATTITUDES, and the Church believes that these attitudes, if left to themselves, can certainly eat away at one's FAITH, weaken it and ultimately destroy it.

Violations of HOPE would be as follows:

- a) despair - when someone stops HOPING for salvation
and begins to believe that he or she is without any HOPE at all;
- b) presumption - when someone thinks that he or she can achieve salvation
alone or presumes upon God's mercy and ignores the need
for personal conversion.

And CHARITY can be weakened and deadened by the following attitudes:

- a) indifference - apathy toward God's love;

- b) ingratitude - lack of thankfulness for God's mercy;
- c) lukewarmness - no enthusiasm about one's spiritual life;
- d) "acedia" - a Greek word which means a kind of "spiritual sloth";
- e) hatred of God - antipathy toward spiritual realities.

Basically, active and vibrant FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY in one's life are the foundation of the virtue of RELIGION - which is the "fleshing out" of the First Commandment.

The virtue of RELIGION leads us to do the following in our relationship to God:

- a) ADORATION;
- b) PRAYER;
- c) SACRIFICE;
- d) PROMISES (for example, the kind of PROMISES we make in Baptism or Confirmation or the VOWS that are taken by monks and nuns or by people who marry each other).

In addition to a PERSONAL side, the virtue of RELIGION has a SOCIAL side, in which Catholics are not just bound to practice their Faith PRIVATELY but also to make it a PUBLIC attitude in their dealings with other people. In a practical sense, this would involve the following:

- a) to respect and awaken a love of truth and goodness in everyone;
- b) to make known the truths of the Catholic Faith;
- c) to exercise and respect the RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY for all.

The First Commandment also forbids us to "have other gods" beside the One God, and over the centuries, the Catholic tradition has forbidden the following human acts:

- a) superstition - which attributes divine power to creatures;
- b) idolatry - which worships - as divine - things which are not;
- c) divination and magic - which seeks to control areas which are God's areas;
- d) irreligion - which can be broken down into
 - tempting God (testing God in word and deed);
 - sacrilege (misusing sacred things and persons);
 - simony (buying and selling spiritual things);
- e) atheism - which is a false conception of human autonomy;
- f) agnosticism - which can often include an honest search for God but which also can lead to indifferentism and intellectual laziness.

Understand that in breaking the First Commandment down this way, the Church is not claiming that each and every person who does one or more of these acts or embraces one or more of these attitudes is ALWAYS guilty of personal sin; that is between him/herself and God.

But the Church simply points out the identity of these human acts and analyzes how they can be harmful to the human personality and, more, harmful to a human relationship with God.

So, the First Commandment governs the relationship between people and God and lays out a pattern of PUBLIC and PRIVATE attitudes which, if followed, will produce the proper relationship between humans and God.

And in building a true and vibrant God-human relationship, what humans are actually doing is constructing their own healthy human personalities. In a real way, TRUE love of God amounts to TRUE love of self.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"My biggest problem is PROFESSIONALISM.
I have five sisters getting MD degrees and
far greater numbers getting RN, LPN and MSW degrees.
But a funny thing happens. They come back
from their education, and they are concerned about
titles, offices and parking privileges.
So I send them to the hospice of the dying.
There they hold people's hands, pray with them
and feed them. After six months of that, they get
things straight, and they remember that their vocation
is to be a spiritual presence first and a professional presence
second."

Mother Theresa

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

Hey, best wishes for a great weekend...
and don't forget God in your life.

Woodie