

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 17 November, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

Hey, lift your eyes from the books and off of the monitor-screens for just a minute and notice the beauty of the season.

It's the marvelous season of AUTUMN, and nature is banging on your consciousness for you to notice the magical stuff that happening all around you.

It's worth praying about:

O EXTRAVAGANT God!

In this ripening, red-tinged AUTUMN,
waken in me a sense of JOY in just being alive:
JOY for nothing in general
and everything in particular;
JOY in sun and rain
mating with earth to birth a harvest;
JOY in soft light,
in shyly disrobing trees;
JOY in the acolyte moon
setting haloes around processing clouds;
JOY in the beating of a thousand wings
mysteriously knowing which way is warm;
JOY in wagging tails and kids' smiles
and in this old valley of the Hudson;
JOY in the taste of bread and fruit,
the smell of dawn,
a touch,
a song,
a presence;
JOY in having what we cannot live without -
other people to hold and laugh and cry with;
JOY in love,
in YOU...
JOY that we have all this free of charge.
It is Your GRACE,
and no one can take it from us.

May you not be so busy that God's wonders just pass you by.
May your soul not shrivel up from being smothered by transitory trivia.
May God LIVEN YOU UP this weekend!

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

CATHOLIC CADET PRAYER BREAKFAST
The Fall CATHOLIC CADET PRAYER BREAKFAST will be held at The West Point Club on Wednesday, 20 November, starting at 0615. Duty uniform. We'll have a brief Communion Service and then share breakfast together. Sign up with your Company Catholic Rep.

THANKSGIVING MASS
The annual THANKSGIVING MASS will be held on Tuesday, 26 November, at 1930 at the Chapel. And you're all invited to stay after and share in the abundance of pies provided by the Parish.

TO REMEMBER YOUR BELOVED DEAD
Just stop in at the Washington Hall office, and add their names to the Book of Remembrance...or e-mail me the names, and I'll add them. They'll be remembered each day of November at the 0630 Mass.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR a good Catholic weekly magazine, check out the Jesuit publication "America" at "www.americamagazine.org"

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR a good Catholic Book Club, use the same address...it'll connect you with "The Catholic Book Club"...or you could try "The Liturgical Press" at "www.litpress.org"

DID YOU KNOW?

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH EXTENSION SOCIETY:

This Society is almost 100 years old now, but you've probably never heard of it.

Father Jim Kelley has, though; he flies a single-engine plane week by week to visit a dozen villages in Alaska. So too has Father Cyril Hunkler, who travels treacherous mountain roads in Montana to serve four missions...and Sister Ann Kernan, who works to empower Appalachian women in eastern Kentucky...and Father Jerry Hogan, who ministers to circus performers across the country...and Brother Craig Bonham, who teaches the Faith to Ojibway youth on the White Earth Reservation in Crookston, Minnesota.

All of them have benefitted from the generosity of the Extension Society.

Here's some history: the Extension Society was founded 97 years ago by Father Francis Clement Kelly, a poor priest who headed a parish in Lapeer, Michigan. From time to time, he traveled around on "begging missions", in which he tried to raise funds for his own poor parish. From these travels, he came to know that many of his fellow priests throughout the country lived in abysmal poverty and struggled to keep their churches going in sparsely-populated areas with no hope of local support or outside help.

He went to the newly-appointed Archbishop Quigley of Chicago who told him: "Gather 20 men who will support you, and bring them to my house for lunch."

So Father Kelly got 19 other people - several bishops and several laymen from around the country - and they gathered on 18 October, 1905, to found a society which has become The Extension Society. The Archbishop of Chicago has always served as Chancellor ("chairman of the board") of the group, although the Society has no affiliation with the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Since 1905, the Society has raised and distributed \$250,000,000. within the Catholic Church in the USA. It has built 10,250 churches and chapels. In 1994 alone, it provided \$12.3 million to home missionaries in 75 dioceses of this country.

One of its more colorful chapters was the pre-World War I days, when the Society owned three railroad cars - the "St. Anthony", the "St. Peter" and the "St. Paul". These cars were pulled from town to town by the Union Pacific Railroad, and when a car arrived at a particular town, it was pulled off the main track to a side track, where it remained for several days. The cars were 72 feet long, with a chapel section that had seating for 50 and a separate section that provided housing for the itinerant priest.

Once in a town, the priest would offer Mass, baptize, preach, administer the sacraments and do whatever else his small congregation needed. Then the Union Pacific would pull the car to another town. Chapel cars were used until after World War I, when the automobile became the transportation of choice.

An observation by a recent Director of the Society offers the following observations on the Catholic Church's presence in the more impoverished areas of this country:

In terms of statistical comparison, there is a greater need for evangelization in these areas than in foreign lands. Uganda is 40 percent Catholic, and Catholics in Madagascar number 22 percent. But Catholics in North and South Carolina and Tennessee comprise less than three percent of the total population in these three states.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...cadets and their fiance(e)s who are making this weekend's Engaged Encounter.

...the intention of "peace in the Middle East".

...since this is November, when we remember our dead in a special way, let's take time to pray for our beloved departed.

...all our military brothers and sisters - and their families - throughout the world,

especially those in areas of risk.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, would you explain the Church's view on contraception and why it's considered to be wrong? Is the Church realistic in recommending "abstinence" in a society in which premarital sexual experience is so common?

A: In the present climate in Western culture, the Catholic Church has definitely taken lots of criticism for its view on "artificial contraception". It's certainly not a popular view.

But the Church has remained committed to that view, and here, from the "Catechism of the Catholic Church", are the details of what it is and why it is.

In Catholic morality, married Catholics

...may wish to space the births of their children.

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In doing so, they are asked to remember that

It is their duty to make certain that their desire
is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity
with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood.
ibid.

Furthermore, they are asked that this process of "spacing their children" be accomplished by "natural" means, not by artificial ones. The Church believes that there's a world of difference between "natural" family planning and the use of artificial methods of birth-control.

In talking about the "natural" procedures, the Church says this:

These methods respect the bodies of the spouses,
encourage tenderness between them, and favor
the education of authentic freedom.

#2370

Contrarywise, the reason the Church disapproves of "artificial" methods of family planning is because it is felt that the bodies of the spouses are NOT respected, tenderness is often ignored, and one or both of the spouses is not "authentically" free in performing the act of marriage.

In short, the Church feels that the marriage act should always be open to life and not performed only for the "sex" aspect, especially outside of marriage.

This reason also comes into play when the Church explains her belief that premarital sex is wrong. In the Church's view, premarital sex puts all the emphasis on the pleasure of the participants and totally ignores any sense of responsibility for the "transmission of life". The sexual power becomes a "plaything" and is taken for granted rather than being viewed as a sacred act and a wonderful miracle.

The Church would say that premarital sex does nothing to safeguard the sacredness of the sexual act, cheapens and violates the whole process of "transmission of life" and, more often than not, doesn't lead to a stable marital relationship.

So the issue of contraception has a lot of facets to it, and it's not an easy subject to discuss. Many people just resent the Church telling them how to live their private lives, and they refuse to consider any of the Church arguments about the whole topic.

You asked whether it's "realistic" for the Church to hold its views on contraception and premarital sex, etc.

From the Church's point of view, it definitely is realistic because the Church feels that its teaching reflects the truth about the sacred nature of sex and human responsibility and reflects the true nature of human personality.

How each Catholic reacts to the teaching is, of course, a matter for his or her personal conscience.

Hope this has answered your questions.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

(Note: we continue with the discussion of each specific Commandment where we left off three weeks ago)

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Exodus 20:16

Deuteronomy 5:20

The Eighth Commandment forbids MISREPRESENTING THE TRUTH in our relations with others.

As Catholic Christians, we believe that we are a HOLY people who are called to BEAR WITNESS to God Who is TRUTH. This means that:

1) we must LIVE IN TRUTH:

God is TRUE, and we, His people, are called to LIVE IN TRUTH. In Jesus, God has shown TRUTH in its fullest form, and as disciples of Jesus, we are bound by his advice: "Let your 'yes' mean yes and your 'no' mean no" (Matthew 5:37).

TRUTHFULNESS is the virtue by which we show ourselves TRUE in DEEDS and TRUTHFUL in WORDS. In doing so, we avoid duplicity, dissimulation and hypocrisy.

TRUTHFULNESS keeps to the middle road between what ought to be expressed AND what ought to be kept secret; it entails HONESTY and DISCRETION.

The virtue of TRUTH means that we give to each person what is his or her DUE.

2) we must BEAR WITNESS to the TRUTH:

The Catholic tradition believes that the Eighth Commandment doesn't just FORBID actions; it also DEMANDS actions. It demands that we WITNESS to the truth of the Gospel message in word and deed.

Of course, the supreme act of WITNESS for a Christian is MARTYRDOM - giving up one's life in the profession of the Faith.

3) we must AVOID OFFENSES AGAINST TRUTH:

The specific offenses are as follows:

A) false witness and perjury: these compromise the exercise of justice and the fairness of legal decisions, and they are serious offenses.

B) disrespect for others' reputations:

this can be done in the following ways:

a) rash judgement - assuming the worst about someone without sufficient foundation;

b) detraction - revealing someone's faults and failings without sufficient reason;

c) calumny - harming someone's reputation by repeating untruths about them.

(Slander and libel would also be included under calumny:

- slander is "uttering defamatory statements that damage the reputation of someone";

- libel is "written, printed or pictorial statements that damage the reputation of someone".)

C) adulation, flattery or complaisance - these are usually small offenses, but they can become serious when they are used to encourage people to do evil.

D) boasting and irony (irony can be wrong if one intends to disparage someone else by maliciously caricaturing his or her behavior).

E) lying - speaking falsehood with the intent to deceive.

The moral gravity of a lie is determined by:

a) the nature of the TRUTH it deforms;

b) the circumstances;

c) the intention of the liar; and

d) the harm suffered by the victim.

The final comment to be made in this section is that even if someone asks for and receives forgiveness for any of these, IT IS STILL NECESSARY TO MAKE REPARATION to the injured party for the injuries that have been done. The nature of the REPARATION depends on the damage done.

4) we must RESPECT THE TRUTH:

Truth needs to be respected. Not everyone has a right to receive it.

Any request for information or communication should be judged by charity and respect for the truth. No one is morally bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it. Reasons NOT to reveal the truth in particular situations would be:

- A) the good and safety of others;
- B) respect for legitimate privacy; and
- C) the common good.

Information received in sacramental Confession cannot be violated in any situation. This means that no priest has the right to reveal what has been told him in Confession. This is called the "Seal of the Confessional". There are also "professional secrets" - confidential information held by lawyers or physicians - that should not be revealed. All of this falls under the consideration of RESPECT FOR TRUTH.

5) we must USE THE MEDIA TRUTHFULLY:

Society has a right to information based on TRUTH, freedom, justice and solidarity. One should practice MODERATION and DISCIPLINE in the use of the media.

6) we must PROMOTE THE TRUTH:

TRUTH carries within itself a certain spiritual beauty, which is expressed by ART, especially SACRED ART. The Eighth Commandment implies that each Christian artist has a special responsibility to ensure that his or her ART expresses the beauty of the TRUTH. True ART should uplift people and not downgrade them.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"Speak when you're angry,
and you'll make the best speech you'll ever regret."
Ambrose Bierce
"The Devil's Dictionary"

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!!

Know that God loves you.
Know that your value is immeasurable.
Know that your life is unconquerable.
All best wishes!!

Woodie