CHURCH STUFF
(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)
Week of 9 February, 2003

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

One of the purposes of prayer is to center ourselves...to allow the thoughts of the prayer to help us focus on what we are, what we're doing and what we need to do to improve our spiritual lives...

The following prayer can help us do that.

Come, Holy Spirit of God!
Replace the tension within us
with a holy relaxation.
Replace the turbulence within us
with a sacred calm.
Replace the anxiety within us
with a quiet peace.
Replace the fear within us
with a strong faith.
Replace the bitterness within us
with your healing grace.
Replace the darkness within us
with a gentle light.
Replace the coldness within us
with a loving warmth.
Replace the night within us
with your shining day.
Replace the winter within us
with your warm spring.
Straighten our crookedness.
Fill our emptiness.
Dull the edge of our pride.
Sharpen the edge of our humility.
Light the fires of our love.
Quench the flames of our lust.
Let us see ourselves as you see us
so that we can inherit the rewards
that you promised to those who have a pure heart.
Let us remember Tennyson's words about Sir Galahad:
"His strength was as the strength of ten
because his heart was pure."
Amen.

Have a blessed week and a good walk with God.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

RETREAT

If you're looking to get some quiet time for yourself, think about making a quiet RETREAT. Fr. Jerry and I will be offering a RETREAT for Underclasses over 100th Night Weekend (28 Feb to 2 Mar). More details to follow.

APOLOGETICS COURSE

"Apologetics" is the art of "explaining one's faith". MAJ Tom Bell and his wife Elisa are offering a course in Apologetics each Sunday afternoon in the Chaplain's Office at 1500. The course will last about two months. Everyone is welcome.

DID YOU KNOW?

VALENTINE'S DAY:

Once again, we come to the great celebration of romantic love that we celebrate each year at this time: St. Valentine's Day.

And yet-again, we EXPERIENCE it as a long-standing, always au-courant, lively and therapeutic festival that celebrates the only thing in life that makes sense without making any sense: HUMAN LOVE.

There were at least two Valentines in the Church's history, and they both gave up their lives for the Faith.

The one celebrated on 14 February each year was probably a priest and was killed on 14 February, AD 270, during a persecution of Christians by the Roman emperor Claudius II. In Rome, a basilica was dedicated to his memory in AD 350, and it wasn't too long before his death-day was associated with men and women exchanging a promise of love.

This was done in different ways over the centuries, but the custom of exchanging "valentines", gifts and other expressions of love and affection soon evolved.

The legend says that VALENTINE was in jail, awaiting execution for his Faith, and he sneaked a note to the daughter of his jailer, signing it with the words "From your Valentine".

Another legend says that he cured the jailer's daughter of blindness, and another set of stories describes him as the friend of children, and they tossed notes of affection into his cell during his imprisonment.

Non-Christian legends claim that our celebration was linked to the "Lupercalia" – a Roman pastoral celebration of the pagan god Lupercus ("Pan", in Greek mythology). This celebration came under the patronage of Juno, goddess of marriage, and it was a time on or around 14 February when young Romans chose partners, proposed marriage or became engaged.

According to this version, when the Roman Empire became Christian, Valentine replaced Juno as the patron of this custom.

Some people claim that in early England, there was the belief that birds chose their mates on this day. Chaucer mentioned this belief, and he also observed that "notes of love" were exchanged on "Valentine's Day".

Others hold on to the belief that this "valentine" tradition was more or less an accident. They claim that it was accidentally associated with Valentine's feast-day because it always falls at the time of nature's transition to Spring, the season of lovers.

Whatever the background, 14 February is as good a time as any to let those who are special to you know that you love them...

AND DON'T FORGET TO SEND YOUR MOTHER A VALENTINE!!!

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...the astronauts who died on "Columbia" and their families.

...the father of a cadet's fiance ('03), who had two heart attacks earlier this week.

...the father of a cadet, who will undergo a serious operation on 10 Feb.

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

...the intention of "peace in the world".

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, what does the Catholic Church think about the significance of dreams?

A: Well, I should start by saying that the Church regards psychological analysis of DREAM PATTERNS and DREAM SYMBOLISM as a legitimate scientific process.

Such a process is based on the desire to understand the physical or emotional nature of the human being, and it can be a means of increasing the mental and psychological health of patients and of better understanding the human being.

The "scientific" interest is a beneficial thing.

What the Church isn't so happy about is the process of interpreting dreams in a RELIGIOUS sense. All through the centuries, all kinds of people have tried to interpet their dreams as sources of DIVINE REVELATION. The trouble is, this can easily descend into simple superstition and can be a threat to the true understanding of what RELIGION is supposed to be.

Certainly, the Church believes that God CAN speak to human beings through dreams (the example of Joseph in the Book of Genesis, as well as lots of other biblical stories, gives testimony to this).

The trouble comes when one asks the question: how does somebody know when a given dream is a "divine" sign. The Church would discourage people from assuming "civine intervention" in 99% of such cases simply because of the real danger of SUPERSTITION and even EXPLOITATION of individuals in these situations.

This is an aear in which simple ignorance and the human desire "to know divine secrets" and "to predict the future" can easily overcome good judgment.

The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" has this to say about such dangers:

> God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints. Still, a sound Christian attitude consists in putting oneself confidently into the hands of Providence for whatever concerns the future and giving up all unhealthy curiosity about it...
>
> All forms of DIVINATION are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or deomns, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm-reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They CONTRADICT the honor, respect and loving fear that we owe to God alone.
>
> (#2115 and #2116)

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

SUNDAY:

I guess we don't usually think of "Sunday" as being a "theological" topic, but it really is. It's the weekly celebration of everything that's at the heart of our Faith: the Resurrection of Jesus.

And over the years, the Church has invested Sunday with a dignity that is meant to preserve its uniqueness and remind Catholics of its sacred nature.

For example, it used to be that all "servile" work was forbidden on Sundays, although you don't hear that word too much anymore.

The word itself means "having to do with a slave"...and in using that word, the Church was originally attempting to make sure that in the early days, slaves and menial workers in the Christian Roman Empire had some relief – at least once each week – from the backbreaking work that was their daily lot. Sundays became a day of rest, designed by the Creator not only for worship, but for "human recuperation".

As the Church organized itself and formed its own code of law (Canon Law), the word was kept. Prohibiting "servile" work on Sundays was the Church's way of trying to make sure that Catholics not only worshipped on Sundays but also preserved Sundays as different from ordinary "workdays".

The point was to try and increase appreciation that Sundays were "Resurrection" days and that they should be filled with the worship of God and also relaxation of mind and body.

The current Canon Law doesn't use that word anymore, but the emphasis is still the same:

> On Sundays and other holydays of obligation, the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass. They are also obliged to refrain from such work or business that would inhibit the worship to be given to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, or the due relaxation of mind and body.

Catechism of the Catholic Church
#1247

In commenting on the observance of Sundays, the Catechism says that Sunday should be consecrated to Christian piety, good works and humble service to the sick and elderly. It urges Christians to devote time and care on Sundays to their families and relatives and to use the day for reflection and meditation (which futhers the growth of the interior life).

The Catechism also asknowledges that traditional activities like sports and dining-out requires some people to work, something which is also true for public and social services and necessities. But everyone should set aside some time for leisure and worship, and employers should be respectful of their employees.

The emphasis of the law is based on the belief that Catholics should use the day for prayer, leisure and family, rather than for that kind of work which is "dehumanizing" (or "servile"). People should not engage in the kind or amount of labor that destroys the spirit of the day and makes for "business as usual".

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"Great FAITH is not the FAITH
that always walks in the light
and knows no darkness...
but the FAITH that perseveres
in spite of God's seeming silences."

Fr. Andrew, SDC
"Meditations for Every Day"

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!!

Best wishes for the weekend.
Hope it will be grace-filled and restful.
Let's pray for one another.

Woodie