

## WHY WE RESIST CHANGE

All of us of a certain age will remember having to memorize the "Seven Deadly Sins": Pride, Envy, Anger, Lust, Greed, Gluttony, and Sloth. We were told that the worst of these was the first one, Pride. Following Eve, we wanted to "be like God," as the serpent suggested (of course the serpent was right, for in Genesis 3 God remarks: "Look, they [Eve and Adam] have become like one of us!"). The same was said to be true of the devil, Lucifer - he wanted to be like God - who for his trouble was cast down to hell by that stalwart St. Michael the Archangel. This story, of course, is extra-biblical.

As a good pious Catholic lad, I of course accepted the word of Sister Mary Euthanasia - uh, no, um, what was her name, back 70 years ago? Never mind, it was all reinforced by Msgr. O'Hooligan anyhow!

It seems, however, for our pope and good bishops Pride doesn't take the pride of place, but rather Lust does. That is what they seem to be talking about all the time in one form or another: SEX! It seems to me, however, in the Catholic Church we have made both too much of sex - almost all the controversial issues hang on sex (birth control, abortion, divorce, homosexuality, married priests, women priests....) - and not enough - thinking that one can just turn it off at will, that the only reason for it is to produce progeny....

After many years of experience and thought, I have come to the conclusion that it is neither the first on that list - Pride - nor the most talked about - Lust - that is our deepest human flaw. Rather, it is the one that brings up the rear - which is only proper, given its name and reality - namely, Sloth. A more up to date name for Sloth is, of course, Laziness. Why do I find Laziness as our fundamental Human Flaw?

Think about it. If someone makes an effective argument to us that X is not really the most accurate description of Reality, but Y is, what

ineluctably follows? First, we would have to change the way we act in the world to conform to this now more accurate view of Reality, for how we perceive Reality determines how we act in the world. We can't avoid it! But whoa! I don't want to change the way I act in this regard, if for no other reason than all the benefits I receive from that way of acting. Hence, I am going to tend to find every excuse I can for sticking to X and not accepting Y.

But where does Laziness come into this equation? Well, perhaps many times not a lot of benefit is riding on the particular way of acting dependent on whether Reality is Y instead of X. However, my consequent action is not the only thing dependent on shifting from X to Y in my understanding of Reality. Now I must rethink every other idea about Reality that is in any way connected with X and make it dependent on Y. Wow! That is a lot of thinking work! Not only that, all the things that had to be rethought now in connection with Y instead of X also have to be rethought and following on that - a veritable cascade of rethinking! Thinking, remember, is the hardest kind of work of all!

In summers during my youth I used to work building houses - digging ditches, mixing mortar, hammering nails, sawing boards.... You name it, I did it. Exhausting physical work. However, I could see that my boss did the really tough work - agonizingly tough, at times - when he came up against a problem that demanded rethinking the whole business of building this house, or some aspect of it. He really sweated! Me, I had it easy - because I didn't have to think. He did.

To repeat: Thinking is the hardest work of all. Having to rethink all the consequences of accepting Y instead of X? No thank you. Too much work!

Perceive the Church not as an Imperium (X), but as a Democracy (Y) in the spirit of Vatican II? No thank you, too much work!

Leonard Swidler, President



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: "THE YEAR FOR PRIESTS": AN ASSESSMENT

We have had the dubious pleasure these last four years of learning more and more of the preferred liturgical practices of our Most Holy Father in Rome. Mass is to be in Latin, even when the congregation is in the process of saying the responses in the vernacular. The celebrant and what he is doing are to be camouflaged as much as possible, either by turning the altar around to face the wall (preferred method) or by inserting a wall of large gold candlesticks or flowers or both between the celebrant and the congregation. The broadest kneeler which can be found is to be placed between the outside of the altar and the congregation. Those wishing to receive Communion are to kneel before the celebrant and put out their tongues, like infants, and they will be fed a host. Doubtless, some would feel that seeing these changes as indicative of Benedict XVI's liturgical ideals, or even hints of his theology, is a foolish extrapolation where none is warranted. Catholic liturgy has become so overlaid with memories, both good and bad, it has become such a volatile issue in itself, that one should tread with caution when deciding how much weight to give any particular action. Yes, one must tread carefully when trying to interpret the possible theology behind liturgy, especially that of a pope who spent a large part of his life teaching, but what about his writings, statements, and exhortations, in other words, his teaching documents? Those would definitely seem to contain his theology.

In June of this year, Pope Benedict sent a letter to all Catholic priests announcing that he was designating the year beginning June 19th, 2009 as "The Year For Priests" in celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the Curé of Ars, whom the Pope sees as a model for present-day priests. Some of the longest paragraphs in this missive are quotes from the Curé of Ars (1786-1859) describing the priest. They are frankly astounding to modern ears.

O, how great is the priest! ... If he realized what he is, he would die. ... God obeys him: he utters a few words and the Lord descends from heaven at his voice, to be contained within a small host.

Without the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we would not have the Lord. Who put Him there

in that tabernacle? The priest. Who welcomed your soul at the beginning of your life? The priest. Who feeds your soul and gives it strength for its journey? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, bathing it one last time in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest, always the priest. And if this soul should happen to die [as a result of sin], who will raise it up, who will restore its calm and peace? Again, the priest. ... After God, the priest is everything! ... Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is.

Benedict does not seem uncomfortable with the extremes of the Curé of Ars' language, which he says merely shows the esteem in which he held the priesthood. In fact, he goes on to quote: "Without the priest, the passion and death of Our Lord would be of no avail. It is the priest who continues the work of redemption on earth. . . What use would be a house filled with gold were there no one to open its door?" Finally, "Leave a parish for twenty years without a priest, and they will end by worshipping the beasts there."

As the last quote above demonstrates, the contrast between the Curé's and Pope's views of the clergy and the laity are striking, to say the least. Benedict does manage to encourage priests to "welcome the springtime which the Spirit is now bringing about in the Church, not least through the ecclesial movements and the new communities." He specifies that the charismatic movements can be helpful to priests. It is, however, the union of priests with their bishops that will "enable priests to live their gift of celibacy" although he does not explain how that will happen. He encourages priests to pray for the grace to learn the "pastoral plan" of the Curé of Ars, which requires first and foremost a complete identification of the man with his ministry. He also emphasizes the example which the Curé of Ars set for his flock, especially by his constant presence in Church, administering the Sacrament of Penance. A few days after the publication of this letter to the world's priests, Pope Benedict traveled to San Giovanni Rotondo, site of the tomb and church bearing the name of the second priest held up as a model for today's priests, St. Padre Pio. There, the Pope emphasized that it was his devotion to prayer, the Eucharist, and especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confession, that made Padre Pio an exemplar

priest. In his homily at Mass, Benedict emphasized "The sacrament of penance must be valued more highly and priests must never resign themselves to seeing their confessionals deserted nor limit themselves to noting the faithful's lack of appreciation for this source of serenity and peace,...."

This pope has made it clear on many occasions that he considers our time an age of "secularization," a condition he deplores and perhaps even fears, and he seems to see revival of the importance of Confession as central to the revival of Catholic life. If one resists the simpler temptation to characterize these as the ramblings of an old man, and assumes, as I think we must, that Benedict XVI is still in possession of all his faculties, one must ask why these two particular priests and insistence on the importance of confession are so important to this former "Enforcer of the Faith."

There is no doubt that Benedict is a product of his time and country, as we all are to some degree. He is certainly not the only priest for whom the Curé of Ars was held up as a model in the seminary; the statue of the Curé that sits on his desk to this day is proof of how well that lesson took. And Padre Pio? He was reputed to have received the Stigmata, the marks of Christ's passion on his own body, which was probably the secret desire of many pious young priests in the pre-Vatican II era.

How could the ultra-orthodox Ratzinger not see him as a priest to be emulated? But I think there is more than nostalgia and hero worship at work here. Confession can indeed be a tremendous source of peace and reassurance for the believer, but it can also convey the most complete control of a Catholic's beliefs and spiritual life by giving the confessor effective control of the penitent's moral compass, his conscience.

A person approaching this sacrament is often in a particularly vulnerable position, in need of affirmation and reassurance. Confession, as traditionally conducted, re-establishes the hierarchy Benedict prefers: priest as judge/expert/director and laity as the judged directee. Given the very traditional, even restorationist, views of many of the recent graduates of American seminaries, one can venture a guess what the penitent will hear. How better to "correct" liberal ideas and conform the

laity's beliefs to those of the Magisterium than through the confessional? This is all the more true if the confessor has also followed Benedict's exhortation to accept the views of the new ecclesial movements, which are, with few exceptions, extremely dogmatic and conservative. Thus, confession is not only a source of peace, as Benedict preaches, but also a potential source of control.

No, Pope Ratzinger's Year for Priests and especially its emphasis on the duty of priests to re-establish regular confession in the life of every Catholic is not just the rambling of an old man afraid of new times: it is also the organization and strategy of a canny watchdog to reverse those new times. Confession can be one of the sanest, most grace-filled rites of the Church, unless it is used as a means of control more attuned to the needs of the institution than to those of the believer.

Devoting a year to the study and development of the Catholic priesthood is a worthy idea, so long as it truly is for the spiritual growth and benefit of priests, to whom we owe a great deal and on whom we depend in so many ways – so long as it is not hijacked to become another instrument of oppression.

Christine M. Roussel

#### REVIEW OF EDGAR DAVIE, *ILLICIT CELIBACY AND THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH* (2007)

Believing that variety is the spice of life, in this issue of *ARCC Light* we offer a review of an unusual but extremely persuasive book on a hotly-disputed topic – mandatory clerical celibacy.

The Vatican, especially under the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, has been adamant on maintaining mandatory celibacy for Catholic priests. The Church argues that celibacy is sacred, and that the priest's celibacy is a symbol of Christ's marriage to the Church. John Paul II was so taken with this idea that priests who wanted to be laicized in order to marry during his pontificate had to wait at least ten years before the Vatican would even consider their cases.

But edicts, pat symbolism, and wishful thinking have not laid the issue to rest, despite the possibility of papal displeasure at any questioning of the rightness of, indeed, the necessity for, priestly celibacy.

Edgar Davie is a retired businessman who lives in Tennessee. He is a devout Catholic with seven

grown children and an active, inquiring mind. Some years ago, he began to wonder how the Church had come to embrace mandatory clerical celibacy. Finding conflicting claims, he started to seriously research the question. This book – almost 200 pages of densely-packed information – is the fascinating result of that research.

In his desire to be thorough and complete, Mr. Davie gives the reader a great deal of information – indeed, he gives almost too much, and there are repetitions which can the reader might find somewhat disorienting. That is, unfortunately, a risk in trying to write the intellectual and political history of a controversial idea which was proposed and fought for a thousand years in the Western and to a lesser degree, the Eastern Church. It is also almost inevitable when dealing with local history in a period of frequently interrupted communications.

As Mr Davie rightly points out, Christianity was born a Jewish religion, and it remained Jewish for many years. Celibacy was not a highly-held Jewish value. On the contrary, the Old Testament has God telling man quite clearly to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth. Christ's apostles were clearly married, St. Paul may or may not have married during his ministry, and some scholars find the lack of any mention of a wife for Jesus to be surprising, and possibly the result of later editing of the texts that became the Gospels. Be that as it may, clearly the body, marriage and the production of children were seen as extremely positive in the early Church. The texts saying that widows should not be forced to remarry were just that: a plea for their freedom of action, for their freedom to serve the community full-time or prepare for the expected coming of Christ if they wished. Davie's careful examination of the literature of the two centuries before the accession of Constantine in the early fourth century makes it very clear that Christian priests were usually married, and their sons tended to imitate them and become priests as well. House churches were often, in fact, family businesses. In the Roman Empire, Christianity found itself in competition, as it were, with many other religions, mystery cults and Greek philosophy. It was, however, as the Church moved more into the Hellenized East, especially after the Roman destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, that it became less tied to its Jewish roots.

It was in the Hellenized East that the Patristic Fathers whose names are still so familiar – Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose, Gregory, Augustine, Jerome – became the dominant thinkers and writers of Christianity. With them,

the gnostic and Manichean suspicion of the physical world, and especially women and the physical body with their needs and demands, came to the fore and celibacy became the most holy state. The first mandated celibacy for priests was decreed at the Council of Elvira, Spain, in AD 306, but, given the poor communications of the times and the lack of a reigning Pope, it was not implemented. However, over the following centuries, numerous increasingly harsh decrees were passed relating to married priests, such as reducing their wives and children to slavery, until the Second Lateran Council in 1139 finally forbade the marriage of priests. It only took 1100 years! By then the Eastern Church had separated itself from Rome, so mandatory celibacy was not an issue for Eastern Rite priests unless they wished to become bishops.

Mr Davie is certainly not the first to see gnostic philosophy as a major factor in changing Christianity's view of the body, sexuality, all of created matter, from good and positive to dangerous and to be avoided, as perusals of the works of Hans Jonas, Robert M. Grant, Peter Brown and others attest, but he might be one of or the first to link the imposition and maintenance of mandatory clerical celibacy to Gnosticism this forcefully.

As mentioned earlier, Davie examines and analyses the controversy over mandatory celibacy in great detail and thus provides a huge amount of information on philosophers, theologians, and Church Councils. That is the strength of this book but occasionally it is also its weakness. Despite his careful chronological organization and good use of chapter headings and subheadings, one occasionally feels overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the information. Since there is no index in this book, the reader might do well to write a broad outline of significant people and events as he or she reads to simplify retrieving data later. There is also, unfortunately, a great deal of repetition of basic questions and ideas. When one is as deeply believing and as convinced of the wrongness and damage of a practice as Davie is, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of emphasis and repetition objectively. This book was definitely in need of a professional editor with a fearless red pencil to catch the typos, trim away the excess, and tighten the flow of the text. Good editors can unfortunately be difficult to find and expensive when one does find them, which are serious problems in self-published books on tight budgets.

For all the books's limitations, Mr. Davie proves his point: mandatory clerical celibacy was

not part of the original Deposit of Faith, and it has not been an accepted part of Church practice, let alone dogma, since the Apostles. As summarized particularly in chapters 16 through 20, it is most fundamentally a means of control – control of priests by isolating them, control of Church property by preventing its being bequeathed to offspring, and control of truth and healthy sexuality by passing off man-made rules as divine law.

Mr Davie knows the shortcomings of his book. His hope is that a more expert writer, a theologian, will be able to take the material he has unearthed and create a scholarly work worthy of this critically important problem. We share his hope.

Christine M. Roussel

WELCOME LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE  
ANGLICAN/EPISCOPAL COMMUNION WHO WILL  
JOIN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

By Ray Temmerman

We, the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, wish to extend a very warm welcome to our brothers and sisters of the Anglican / Episcopal communion who are clergy and spouses, as well as laity, discerning the call to become members of the Roman Catholic Church under the recently announced Apostolic Constitution.

As committed and enthusiastic Catholics working for the renewal of the Church, we recognize the primacy of an informed conscience in making any such discernment and decision. To that end, we wish to offer the following observations, that you may be informed of the realities of the Roman Catholic Church of which you may choose to become a part.

You bring with you an experience of collegiality and synodality at the parish and diocesan level which, provided you are allowed to retain its practice, will provide a strong complement, even as it stands in strong polar opposition, to the top-down authority structure of the Roman Catholic Church, where collegiality and synodality function only haphazardly, and almost exclusively at the international level.

You will find yourself members of a Church rich in the liturgy that flowed from the authentic conciliar tradition of the Second Council of the Vatican (Vatican II).

You will find yourself in a Church where at least 39% of marriages now take place across

denominational lines<sup>i</sup>, and where truly interchurch couples (those who continue to worship faithfully together as much as possible in both their Christian traditions) offer an imperfect but real preview of the anticipated unity for which Christ prayed.

If you are a priest, you will find yourself a member of a Church where your Anglican / Episcopal priesthood, exercised with fidelity over the years, is considered 'absolutely null and utterly void'.<sup>ii</sup> You will be required to reject the validity of your earlier ordination and then seek re-ordination within the Roman Catholic Church.

If you are a priest, you will find yourself in a Church where, should your spouse die, you will from that day forward be called to be celibate, foregoing forever the joy and solace of a loving spousal relationship.

You will find yourself members of a Church where at least 60% of its members are in favor of married clergy and the ordination of women,<sup>iii</sup> and many are welcoming of gay and lesbian unions.

You will find yourself likewise in a Church which decries homosexuality, yet where some 20-30% of the clergy (bishops, priests and deacons) have a homosexual orientation.<sup>iv</sup>

You will find yourself in a Church with a rich variety of theologies and practices, some of which you will find yourself in ready agreement with, others which you will find difficult to accept, yet all of which are held under the banner of the Roman Catholic Church.

Should you find yourself able to accept all these things, and in conscience believe that the offer of priestly ordination within the Roman Catholic Church is a true call from God, then we welcome you with open arms, for you have accepted the Church as it is, rather than the sentimental and false image of purity which some would hold forth.

Sincerely,

ARCC

<sup>i</sup> <http://moses.creighton.edu/kripke/news/F97-4.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Apostolicae Curiae, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII On the Nullity of Anglican Orders, September 15, 1896, [http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs\\_le13ac.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_le13ac.htm)

<sup>iii</sup> Associated Press-Ipsos poll, reported in *Americans Favor Church Update*, Eugene Register Guard, 5 April 2005,

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1310&dat=20050405&id=PIAVAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ePADAAAIBAJ&pg=6347,1346313> Accessed 7

Nov 2009. A Gallup poll published in the *National Catholic Reporter* of 30 Sep 2005 and cited by *FutureChurch* indicates even higher percentages, showing 75% in favor of ordaining married men, 61% in favor of ordaining celibate women, and 54% in favor of ordaining married women. See

<http://www.futurechurch.org/fpm/optcel/callsforoptionalcelibacy.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Richard Wagner, *Gay Catholic Priests*. Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, San Francisco, 1980. P.12, cited in Richard Sipes, *Are American Bishops Gay?* <http://www.richardsipe.com/2009-09/US%20Catholic%20Bishops%20-%20Are%20They%20Gay.pdf>. Also Richard Sipes, *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy*, 1990 Michael Robb <jackwcoke100@yahoo.com>

## GOOD-BYE

This is my last issue as Editor of *ARCC Light*. By the time this reaches you, I will have had the first of three or perhaps four operations to replace joints destroyed by arthritis. Each of these surgeries requires a fair amount of rehabilitative therapy afterwards, so I will be concentrated on my physical health for the foreseeable future.

*ARCC Light* requires more attention than I will be able to give. I am very happy to tell you that Ingrid Shafer will continue as Editor, so *ARCC Light* will continue to be timely, scholarly, and informative. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to write for this publication for the past four years. I thank those of you who have written to me with your reactions, opinions, and compliments. Hopefully, when I am in better health, I will be able to contribute an occasional review or article to our ongoing dialogue.

Christine M. Roussel

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